

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 10 March 2021

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.

AGENDA

PART I

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 10 FEBRUARY 2021

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 10 February 2021 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 –

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 26 January 2021

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17 February 2021

Pages 17 – 26

4. COVID-19 UPDATE

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

5. THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION

To consider the adoption of the Impact of Development of Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.

Pages 27 – 126

6. DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION

To consider the adoption of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document.

Pages 127 – 194

7. HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

To consider an update on the Housing First approach to accommodate rough sleepers; and to consider the options for implementing the Housing First approach for the financial year 2021/2022, for the purposes of assessing its viability, beyond the current “protect directive” for the medium to long term.

Pages 195 – 234

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

To consider the proposed final Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024 for onward recommendation to Council.

Pages 235 – 274

9. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER THREE 2020/21

To consider the Council’s performance across key priorities and themes for Quarter Three 2020/21.

Pages 275 – 314

10. 3RD QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2020/21

To consider the 3rd Quarter General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Revenue Monitoring Report 2020/21.

Pages 315 – 328

11. 3RD QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2020/21

To consider the 3rd Quarter General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Monitoring Report 2020/21.

Pages 329 – 338

12. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

13. 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.

14. FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUPPLY OF AGENCY WORKERS

To consider details for the procurement process for the new Framework Contract for the provision of Agency Workers.

Pages 339 - 350

15. SG1 ACCELERATION

To consider an update on the progress of the SG1 project and work carried out to review opportunities to accelerate the delivery of future phases of the project.

Pages 351 - 376

16. APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR AT DUNN CLOSE

To approve the appointment of a principal contractor for the Dunn Close garage site redevelopment scheme.

Pages 377 - 396

17. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 10 March 2021 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 10 February 2021

Time: 1.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

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

Also Present: Councillors Phil Bibby CC, Robin Parker CC and Simon Speller (observers).

Start / End Time: Start Time: 1.00pm
End Time: 4.14pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Vice-Chair opened the meeting and immediately adjourned it.

At 1.30pm, the Chair re-opened the meeting.

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 20 January 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 13 January 2021 be noted.

4 COVID-19 UPDATE

The Executive considered a presentation providing an update on the Covid-19 pandemic from the Strategic Director (RP), assisted by other officers. The presentation covered national updates; a national vaccination update; Covid-19 Hertfordshire data; the latest from the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum; and Stevenage updates.

In reply to Members' questions, officers replied:

- It was understood that there were sufficient supplies of the various vaccines in the UK to allow for second doses to be administered to all;
- It was currently illegal for the use of unpaid volunteers to deliver election material on behalf of political parties ie. only paid delivery services could be used, although it was noted that lobbying was taking place to seek to change this position;
- Although electors would be encouraged to attend polling stations to vote using their own writing implements, pencils would be provided should they arrive without them; and
- Although electors would be asked to wear face masks within polling stations, there was no legal power for Presiding Officers to enforce the wearing of such masks.

Officers were requested to progress the following actions:

- To provide Members with more detailed information, when received, of the Government's indemnity to Election Returning Officers for running safe elections during the Covid-19 pandemic (it was also noted that a number of Returning Officers' questions regarding the holding of safe elections in May had yet to be answered by the Government);
- To advise Members of the results of data gathering in relation to the surge testing for the South African Covid-19 variant carried out in Broxbourne and other locations across the UK;
- To prepare a Surge Testing Plan should it be required for Stevenage; and
- To submit information to the next Coronavirus Emergency Committee meeting with regard to the types of Covid-related initiatives/projects supported financially by Members over the past year through the use of their Local Community Budgets.

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

5 **DRAFT COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the draft Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities advised that the report and Strategy outlined what had been achieved over the past 3 years, but also looked forward to the next 3 years. She referred to the 5 key priorities contained in the Strategy, as summarised in Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report. The aim was to tie in these priorities with SBC's Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme, in order to encourage the reporting of "hidden" crimes, such as domestic abuse and hate crime, as well as anti-social behaviour.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities stated that the Strategy also sought to tackle drug and alcohol misuse throughout the town, as such concerns were raised regularly by the public and at Police Priorities Meetings.

The Community Safety Manager explained that the Strategy had been supported by

the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) and SBC Members via a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting. The implementation of the Strategy would be achieved through co-operative working with communities and key partners, via the activities of the Joint Action Group, and overseen by the Responsible Authorities Group. It had also taken into account the involvement of the Stevenage (Survivors) Against Domestic Abuse Board.

The Community Safety Manager drew attention to the 5 key priorities contained in the Strategy, as follows:

1. To divert young people from becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour;
2. To provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery;
3. To promote reporting of hate crime and equality in the community;
4. To tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol; and
5. To work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime.

It was agreed that consideration be given to inclusion in the Strategy of the following issues:

- In view of the frequency of the matter being raised by the public and at Police Priorities meetings, a reference to the concerns about traffic speeding throughout the Borough; and
- The work on hate crime referred to in the Strategy should link in with the work of the SBC Equalities Commission.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the draft Community Safety Strategy (the Strategy) accompanying this report be approved noting its focus on the work of the SoSafe partnership.
2. That the decisions taken in Resolution 1 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.
3. That, once the Final Strategy has been recommended for adoption by the Executive and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it be referred to Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.
4. That the Chief Executive, in his capacity as Chair of the SoSafe Partnership, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities, be authorised to make changes to the Strategy post consideration by the Executive.
5. That it be noted that implementation of the Strategy (once approved in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules) will be achieved through co-operative working with communities and key partners through the

activities of the Joint Action Group and overseen by the Responsible Authorities Group.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 STEVENAGE CONNECTION AREA ACTION PLAN: ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Executive considered a report with regard to the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration introduce the report and, by way of background context, stated that, after reviewing Stevenage's Local Plan during the Holding Direction, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) asked Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Stevenage Station Gateway Area (identified in the Local Plan as Site TC4). An Area Action Plan (AAP) was an optional development plan document which provided specific planning policy and guidance for a particular location or area of significant change. The AAP could create new policy over and above the Local Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration explained that the AAP document appended to the report had been developed in conjunction with consultancy David Lock Associates, and was a draft "Issues and Options" version. The AAP outlined the core issues that were present within the station area, as well as the background policy and wider context that would affect its development. It was an early stage of the preparation of an AAP, and initial high level scenarios and options that focussed on mobility were presented for feedback from targeted stakeholders.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration commented that it was important to note that the Issues and Options AAP contained key concepts at this early stage, but did not suggest specific proposals for the Railway Station and Lytton Way.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that the Local Plan regulations stated that an Area Action Plan, as a Development Plan Document, must be consulted on publicly for no less than 6 weeks. Once the Issues & Options public consultation had been completed and feedback analysed, work would begin to prepare a Preferred Options for the Station Gateway AAP. A further minimum 6 week public consultation would be undertaken for the Preferred Options AAP, with representations considered and incorporated into the final version of the AAP. The final version would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Public Examination, ahead of formal adoption of the AAP by the Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport added that he would be interested to hear the view of stakeholders regarding the options for Lytton Way set out in Chapter 6 of the AAP document. He advised that the Regeneration Team was in the process of finalising a brief for a new Multi-storey car park adjacent to the

Station, which would be integrated into the AAP document. Hertfordshire County Council was also carrying out highway modelling work regarding the options for Lytton Way, including their wider impact on surrounding highways. It was hoped that the work would run in parallel with the consultation on the Issues and Options AAP.

The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) advised that the overriding aspiration for the document was to provide a sustainable development which fitted in with the aims and objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

The Planning Policy Manager stated that he would ensure that the AAP was aligned with other key documents, including the Future Town Future Transport Strategy, and the work on Sustainable Travel Towns.

The Chair of the Planning and Development Committee confirmed that the Committee was supportive of the Issues and Options AAP consultation document.

Members requested Officers to give consideration to the following proposals as part of their further work on the Area Action Plan:

- The revised recommendation stipulating a minimum 8 week period for consultation on the draft Plan was supported, although two separate 6 week consultation periods was suggested above the minimum level;
- The consultation process should take advantage of innovative consultation methods, including online/digital formats, with appropriate publicity/advice on how to respond to the consultation exercise;
- There should be specific consultation with Borough Councillors and the County Councillor in whose Ward/Division the Station area was situated;
- A recognition should be given to the high-tech traditions of Stevenage by ensuring that high-powered digital access was available for those arriving in the town at the Railway Station;
- Clear signage should be provided in the Station area, in order that those arriving were shown exactly where they were in the town to allow them to swiftly orientate themselves;
- Access to the Station for all modes of transport, as well as pedestrians and the disabled, should be promoted; and
- The impact of the possible narrowing of Lytton Way on nearby traffic routes (such as St. George's Way) would need to be modelled.

The Chair pointed out that the references in the recommendations in the report to the "Assistant Director: Environment and Regeneration" should be changed to the correct designation of "Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation".

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report be noted.
2. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final

preparation of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report prior to publication for consultation.

3. That the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report, as attached at Appendix A, be approved for consultation for a minimum 8 week period following the Executive meeting, consultation dates to be determined by the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation.
4. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee be invited regarding the content of the report.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2021/22

The Executive considered a report with regard to the final General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting for 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the Financial Security options remained unchanged from the draft report and the report now included commentary from the Leader's Financial Security Group (LFSG) and Overview & Scrutiny Members, as set out in Paragraphs 4.1.2 - 4.1.4 of the report. The LFSG voted unanimously for 44 out of 45 options, and a majority voted for a reduction in Local Community Budgets.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the report now estimated that there would be Income Guarantee scheme compensation for 2020/21 NDR losses of £195,390 (based on losses of £260,518). The losses were spread over a 3 year period, as directed by the Government, and the income scheme funding had mirrored this approach in the General Fund.

The Executive was informed that NDR losses were not as bad as contained in the draft January report which estimated losses of £500,000 (versus a total £300,000), however this still needed to be realised and would not be known until the NDR3 was completed. Due to the risk, the NDR pooling gains of £367,000 were recommended to be transferred to a reserve in 2020/21 and returned to the General Fund in 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder for resources explained that the Government Finance settlement had not been received at the time of writing the report, however the non-Covid elements were announced on 4 February 2021 and remained unchanged for lower tier grant and New Homes Bonus.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that there were 2021/22 NDR gains of £586,565, however due to the risk to collection in 2021/22 the majority (80%) or £474,440 had been transferred to a reserve and could be returned to the General Fund when the gains were realised after year end 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that the 2021/22 Net budget had

increased by £437,120 to £1,165,480, but that this contained the transfer of NDR gains to reserves until gains were realised for 2020/21 and 2021/22 (£864,310), which was offset by lower interest on borrowing (garages) and a higher return from the Section 31 grants reserve. If these were excluded from the calculations, the net budget for 2021/22 would be £10.37Million.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that there was £2.8Million of allocated reserves by 31 March 2021, of which of £1.298Million related to NDR reserves. The General Fund was £544,000 above minimum balances of £3.65Million, but the Chief Finance Officer still recommended that an additional £500,000 of savings be identified in case the financial position worsened in 2021/22.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 24 February 2021:

1. That the 2020/21 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £11,056,840 be approved.
2. That a draft General Fund Budget for 2021/22 of £1,165,480 (as adjusted for the transfer from S31 grant allocated reserve to the General Fund of £8,395,960 to allow for the repayment to the Collection Fund of that amount) be proposed for consultation purposes, with a contribution from balances of £326,067 and a Band D Council Tax of £220.57 (assuming a 2.32% increase).
3. That the Risk Assessment of General Fund balances of £3,650,000 be approved.
4. That the contingency sum of £400,000, within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2021/22 (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount).
5. That the 2021/22 Fees and Charges increase of £131,700 be noted, as approved at the January 2021 Executive (Appendix I to the report).
6. That the 2021/22 proposed Financial Security Options of £1,703,728, of which £1,462,182 relates to the General Fund (Appendix C to the report), be approved.
7. That the Growth bids of £260,365, of which £166,966 relates to the General Fund share (Appendix E to this report), be approved in principle, as set out in the report, and the priority order of implementation be approved, as set out in Paragraph 4.3.2. of the report.
8. That the General Fund pressures of £656,540 be noted, (Appendix E to the report).
9. That the 2021/22 Council Tax Support scheme be approved, as set out in section 4.8 of the report.
10. That use of New Homes Bonus be noted (section 4.4 of the report refers).

11. That the Financial Security targets for the General Fund, as set out in section 4.11. of the report, be approved.
12. That the use of the additional COVID grants, as set out in sections 4.5 and 4.6 of the report, be approved.
13. That the Strategic Leadership Team be requested to identify further options totalling £500,000 which could be implemented if the impact of COVID and other recessionary pressures are worse than projected (Paragraph 4.1.5 of the report refers).
14. That the Strategic Leadership Team be requested to bring forward a Productivity Focused Transformation Programme by June 2021 to set out the plan for future savings (Paragraph 3.9 of the report refers).
15. That, in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, the Council continues with the current Co-operative Corporate Plan, subject to further review in Autumn 2022 (Paragraphs 4.16.4 - 4.16.5 of the report refer).
16. That the comments from Overview and Scrutiny, Leaders Financial Security Group and all Member group (as set out in Paragraphs 4.1.2-4.1.4 of the report) be noted.
17. That the Equalities Impact Assessments, as appended to the report in Appendices G and H, be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

8 FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020/21 - 2024/25

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Final Capital Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that, in the January 2021 draft Capital Strategy report, whilst recommending in principle that the bids of £553,000 be approved, the report identified funding gaps of £161,000 for 2021/22 and £472,000 for 2022/23. A further review of the Strategy had taken place, and bids now totalling £514,000 were recommended for approval. If approved, the Capital Programme was now fully funded for 2021/22.

In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revised draft Capital Strategy budget for 2020/21 – 2025/26, the Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that this totalled £211.86Million, of which £51Million was earmarked for spend in 2021/22. The programme had been reviewed, identifying slippage of £2.2Million from 2020/21 to 2021/22, and growth of £309,000 was requested.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources recommended that the £250,000 contingency level remained unchanged for 2021/22 in respect of unexpected capital expenditure arising in year for which no approved funding was available. A limit of £250,000 was

also set for schemes for each Fund that had new resources or match-funded resources identified in addition to those contained within the report. This limit applied individually to both the General Fund and the HRA. This contingency sum constituted an upper limit on both funds within which the Executive could approve supplementary estimates, rather than part of the Council's Budget requirement for the year.

In relation to 1 for 1 receipt-based schemes (such as grants to Registered Providers), the Portfolio Holder for Resources recommended that the contingency allowance of £500,000 for such schemes remained unchanged for 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources recommended that the Executive be given delegation to approve increases to the Capital Programme for 100% grant funded projects, when external funding sources had been secured, as outlined within the report. A contingency allowance of £5,000,000 was proposed for this purpose.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 24 February 2021:

1. That the final General Fund Capital Growth Bids for 2021/22 only, as detailed in Appendix A (and incorporated into Appendix D) to the report, be approved.
2. That the final General Fund Capital Savings and Slippage for 2020/21 – 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix B (and incorporated into Appendix D) to the report, be approved.
3. That the final HRA Capital budget requests for 2020/21 – 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix C (and incorporated into Appendix E) to the report, be approved.
4. That the updated forecast of Capital resources 2020/21, as detailed in Appendix D (General Fund) and Appendix E (HRA) to the report, be approved.
5. That the final 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix D to the report, be approved.
6. That the final 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix E to the report, be approved.
7. That the Council's investment strategy for non-treasury assets, as detailed in Appendix F to the report, be approved.
8. That the approach to resourcing the General Fund Capital programme, as outlined in the report, be approved.
9. That the progress on Locality Reviews, as outlined in the report, be noted.
10. That the actions taken to ensure the General Fund Capital programme is funded, as outlined in paragraphs 4.2.2 - 4.2.3 of the report, be noted.
11. That the 2021/22 de-minimis Capital expenditure limit (Section 4.10 of the report) be approved.

12. That the 2021/22 Capital contingency allowances, set out in Paragraphs 4.11.1 and 4.11.2 of the report respectively, be approved.
13. That the Executive delegation set out in Paragraph 4.11.3 of the report, allowing approval for increases to the Capital programme for grant funded projects, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: as contained in report.

9 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS 2021/22

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that cash balances were projected to be £72.7Million by 31 March 2021. These balances had been allocated for future (not new) spend and for payments due to third parties (eg) the County Council's share of Council Tax.

It was noted that the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy had a planned use of resources over a minimum of 5 years, and that the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan (HRA BP) had a planned use of resources over a 30 year period, which meant that, whilst not committed in the current year, they were required in future years.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that returns achievable on the Council's investments were currently modest based on the low Bank of England base rate. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had not changed the Bank of England base rate since it was cut to 0.10% on 19 March 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. For the financial year 2020/21 to 31 December 2020, returns on SBC investments had averaged 0.71%, and total interest earned was £330,511, contributing to General Fund and Housing Revenue Account revenue income.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that there had been no breaches of Treasury Management counter party limits during 2020/21 to date.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources concluded by referring to a proposed change recommended for counter party limits to remain flexible for volatile cash balances (held by the Council on a short term basis). It was recommended that investments of up to one year, including Money Market Funds, the limits be increased from £8Million to £10Million, while cash balances were higher than £30Million.

The Executive supported the amendments to the report proposed by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 9 February 2021, set out by the Strategic Director (CF) as follows:

- Paragraph 4.5.3 – the actual operational boundary limits should be included in

- this paragraph;
- Paragraph 4.6.1 – the date in the bottom row of the table should read “31 December 2020”;
- References to “Queensway Properties LLP” be changed to “Queensway Properties (Stevenage) LLP”; and
- Paragraph 4.3.3 – the colours in the table on projected external investment balances contained in this paragraph to be changed to make the table easier to read.

In response to a Member’s question, the Strategic Director (CF) confirmed that the Council’s investments were all placed with established banking institutions.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 24 February 2021:

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That the prudential indicators for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved.
3. That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, as set out at Appendix B to the report, be approved.
4. That an increase to counterparty limits for short term investments (invested for up to one year) from £8Million to £10Million, when cash balances are higher than £30Million, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: as contained in report.

10 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

11 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.

12 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 20 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of Executive held on 20 January 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

13 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 26 January 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.20pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 15 DECEMBER 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 December 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director Housing and Investment agreed to follow up the suggestion of contacting the Stevenage MP in relation to the request to the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government to recognise and assist with the significant funding gap now experienced by Local Authorities operating a Housing Revenue Account.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee considered the decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 20 January 2021.

Minutes of the Executive – 9 December 2020

Noted.

Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

Covid-19 – Update

The Strategic Director (RP) advised that he would be providing a brief update on the latest Covid-19 position at the Council meeting on 28 January 2021 and a fuller

report to the Coronavirus Executive Committee on 2 February 2021.

In response to a series of Members' questions, the Strategic Director replied as follows:

- Statistical information relating to the rate of those individuals who had refused the vaccination had been requested from the Local Resilience Forum and would be shared with Members when it was available.
- A lot of coverage had been made recently regarding the efficacy of the vaccine since the change in the timing of the administration of the second dose. Further clarity was awaited from the Director of Public Health.
- In relation to the provision of free school meals, the SD advised that free school meals had been confirmed for February half term but that confirmation was currently awaited from the County Council regarding the provision for the school summer holidays.
- The armed forces had been involved in the planning of the Mass Vaccination Centre at Robertson House. The testing centre at Primett Road had been established by the County Council and SERCO.
- In terms of the upcoming elections, officers were continuing to prepare for the May 2021 polls following the formal Government advice to continue to plan for the poll.

Launch of Stevenage Amenity Tree Management Policy

In response to Members' questions, the Environmental Policy and Development Manager replied as follows:

- Although less trees were being planted than in the past, a wider, more interesting selection of trees were now being used.
- Any new developments in the town would require the developers to replace trees on a 3 to 1 basis. Where resources allowed the Council would replace any felled trees on a 2 to 1 basis.

Launch of Stevenage Cemetery Policy

In response to a question, the Cemeteries Services Supervisor advised that she would look at the suggestion of the Council providing a service to tend graves when nobody was able to look after them once resources would allow the Council to consider it.

Future Town Future Transport Strategy

Members were pleased to note that the Executive had requested a further report back in 12 months' time in order to review progress on the Strategy post-pandemic.

Council Tax Base 2021/22

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) advised that although every year was different, this was the first year she had ever seen a decrease in the

Council Tax Base. She also advised that there had been a marked increase in Council Tax Support claims.

Final Housing Revenue Account and Rent Setting 2021/22

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) advised that there were 2 free rent weeks per year at Christmas and at the end of the financial year.

Draft General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22

A Member expressed concern regarding the level of LCB's and in particular that the Stevenage Youth Mayor's budget was higher than the rest of the Members. The Strategic Director (CF) advised that following consideration it had been agreed to reduce all budgets by 40%.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that due to the current financial situation no modelling had been undertaken in respect of a zero increase to the Council Tax.

Draft Capital Strategy 2021/21 – 2025/26

Noted.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

The Strategic Director (TP) reported to the Committee on the lifting of the holding direction by the Secretary of State on the SG1 planning application.

6 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15 DECEMBER 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered the Part II decisions on the following matters arising from the Executive meeting held on 20 January 2021.

Locality Review land and Sites Disposal Report

Noted.

The Formation of a Wholly Owned Housing Development Company – Renewed Business plan Approval and Financial Projections

The Borough Solicitor gave an explanation to the Committee on the differences between a Wholly Owned Company and a Local Authority Trading Company.

Leisure Contract – Covid-19 and Mitigation Measures

Noted with the additional recommendation agreed by the Executive.

9 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 17 February 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Michelle Gardner, Andy McGuinness, John Mead, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.15pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 26 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 20 January 2021.

Minutes of the Executive – 20 January 2021

Note.

Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees

Noted.

4. Covid-19 Update

The Strategic Director (RP) presented a report in relation to Covid- 19 update. He outlined the following key issues:

- The Strategic Director (RP) advised that he provided an update on the latest Covid-19 position at the Executive meeting held on 10 February 2021, and a detailed update was also provided to Coronavirus Executive Committee

meeting held on 2 February 2021. He advised Members that there had been a reduction in Covid-19 cases, and currently stood at 150 per 1000 population in Stevenage, which was a 38.1 percent decrease for those over the age of 60.

The Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that the following actions would be taken following the Executive meeting on 10 February 2020.

- Officers were queried to provide further information on running a safe election during the pandemic.
- Further information would be provided to Members on South African variant, once received by the Officers.
- Information on how Members used their Local Community Fund to support Covid-19 would be shared with the Coronavirus Executive Committee on 26 February 2021.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that Stevenage had the highest number of infections in the County, and the Council was closely liaising with the Director of Public Health to explore the underlying causes of the highest infection rate, and also to identify if there were further actions that needed to be taken.

5. Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024

The Community Safety Manager presented Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024. She advised Members that the Draft Community Safety Strategy was reviewed by the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) in October 2020, followed by Portfolio Holders Group in January 2021, where Members supported the objectives set out in the Strategy. She advised Members when the Strategy was reviewed for 2018 – 2021; soSafe secured over £450,000 of external funding which resulted in the delivery of innovative projects including the SOS project associated with the anti-social behaviour and crime, SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse), and the Operation Urban which tackled homelessness and aggressive street begging.

In response to a question, the Community Safety Manager advised Members that Hertfordshire County Council had the Hate Crime Strategy and its consultation under their remit, and was a County wide strategy. The Council would be closely monitoring the Strategy outcome. She advised Members on third party reporting centres on hate crimes.

The Committee noted the Draft Community Safety Strategy for 2021 – 2024.

6. Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for Public Consultation

The Planning Policy Manager updated Members on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan. He advised Members that the options proposed were high level,

strategic options to develop an improved environment, maximise density of space and economic opportunities around Stevenage Railway Station. He clarified the Issues and Options Report contained key concepts at this early stage and did not suggest specific proposal for the Railway Station and Lytton Way.

Members discussed the connectivity and ease access, safety, promotion of cycling and walking, demonstration effective engagement and design quality. Members noted that the report recommended sustainable travel considered throughout, green infrastructure in the public realm and considered climate change in all development decisions.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulations advised Members there would be a minimum of six weeks consultation, and an additional six weeks. He clarified that the second six weeks would more likely to be face to face if lockdown measure were lifted. Members would be informed about the process via email.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (TP) advised Members that the consultation would be accessible and Council would be responsive for options to the consultation outcome. He explained that it would be for the public to decide which options they would want the Council to explore.

The Committee noted the draft Stevenage Connection Area Plan.

7. Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estates presented report in relation to Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22. She updated Members on 2021/2022 and 2020/2021 budgets including Financial Security options and growths bids and pressures, Council Tax and Council Tax Support Scheme. She advised Members that the January Draft General Fund report to Executive set out the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's General Fund budgets, the cost of homelessness and elections resourced from Covid-19 funding included in the provisional finance settlement.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (CF) advised Members on allotments. She explained that the Council took on the responsibility for the running of the allotments from the Allotment association in 2020, which had resulted in increased costs to the Council. Members agreed for the increased charge for the allotment in 2020/21 budget.

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estate (CF) would take Members comments on board regarding increased communication between the Council and the allotment holders. She also clarified that there would be more targeted Members trainings, and there was still budget left for it.

The Committee noted the Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2021/22.

8. Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 2025/26

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estate presented report on Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 20215/26. She reminded Members that the report was received by this Committee in January, where there was shortfall of £161,000 for 2021/22. She advised Members that the review had taken place for the shortfall, which resulted in a balance capital strategy recommended to Council.

The Committee noted the Final Capital Strategy 2020 – 2025/26.

9. Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22

The Assistant Director for Finance and Estates (CF) updated Members on the key issues of the report. She explained that the Council was increasing the counterparty limits for short term investments from £8Million to £10Million when cash balances were higher than £30Million.

The Committee noted the Annual Treasury Management Strategy Prudential Code Indicators 2021/22.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved 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 considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Committee considered the Part II decisions of the Executive meeting held on Wednesday 20 January 2021.

9 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 10 March 2021



THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION

KEY DECISION

Author Debbie Coates | 2865
Lead Officer Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257
Contact Officer Debbie Coates | 2865

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the consultation responses to the Draft Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) between November 2020 and January 2021.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an overview of the changes made to the Draft Biodiversity SPD to take account of consultation responses.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval to adopt the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (Appendix A).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD consultation be noted.

- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD prior to its adoption.
- 2.3 That the Executive approve the adoption of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD as a material consideration for planning applications.

3 BACKGROUND

SBC The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add detail to the policies included in an adopted Local Plan. They are used to build upon and provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Whilst they are not part of the Development Plan for an area, and cannot add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development, the contents of a SPD are a material consideration when determining a planning application.
- 3.2 The Council does not have a Biodiversity SPD. The overarching aim of the SPD is to ensure that development in Stevenage results in a net gain for biodiversity. It requires developments to adopt the mitigation hierarchy and demonstrate that impacts to biodiversity have been avoided, where possible, and minimised before compensation is considered.
- 3.3 In November 2020, the Executive approved the publication for consultation of The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD.
Consultation
- 3.4 A link to the Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (which was placed on the Council's consultation page) was sent to all individuals who had signed up to the Council's planning consultee register. The register mainly consists of individuals who have responded to previous Local Plan consultations or specific planning applications, and also contains all statutory consultees and Duty to Cooperate bodies, as required by Regulations.
- 3.5 Those who provided an email address when registering to the list were sent an email with a link to the document and an explanation of the consultation process. This was the majority of consultees. Approximately 200 letters were also sent to individuals who had not provided an email address. The letters advised recipients how they would be able to view the document (both electronically and physically) and the process for responding to the consultation.
- 3.6 In addition, the consultation document was advertised on the Council website, on social media, in The Chronicle and hard copies were made available in Daneshill House, in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions at the time.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the outcomes of the Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD consultation be noted.

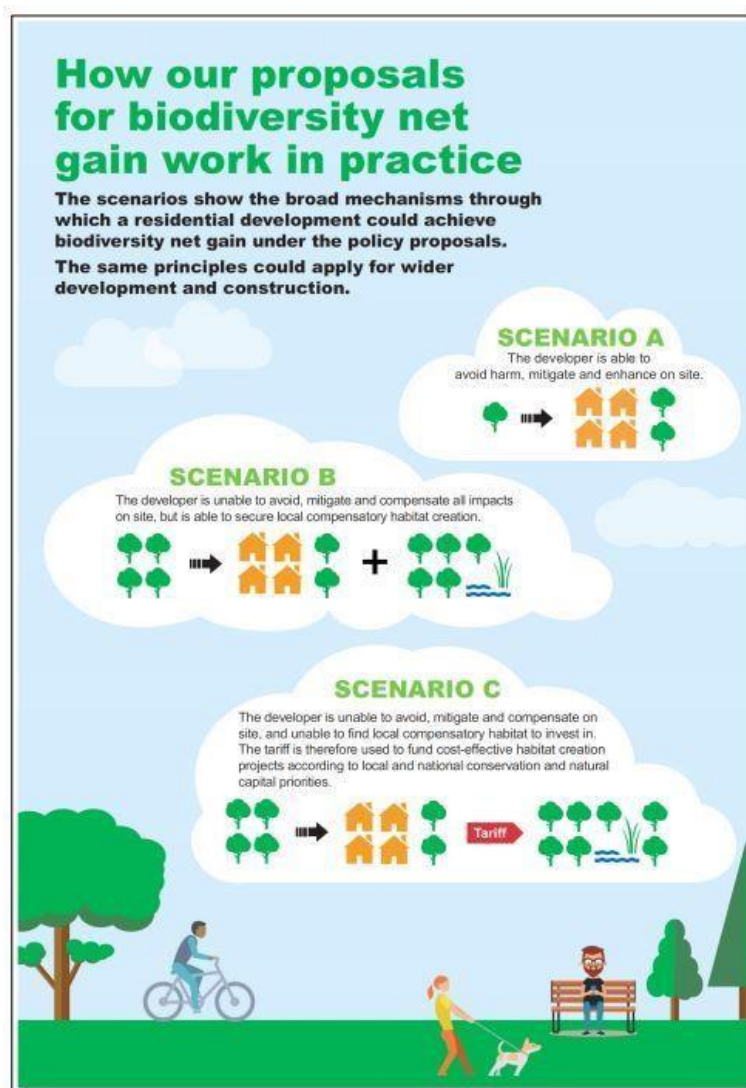
- 4.1 Consultation on the draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD was held between 30 November 2020 and 25 January 2021, meeting the requirements stipulated for SPD consultations in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 A total of 29 representations were received from a number of key consultees as well as internal teams and committees.
- 4.3 Responses were received from:
- External bodies / individuals:
- Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust
 - Growth and Infrastructure Unit (incorporating Hertfordshire Ecology comments), Hertfordshire County Council
 - Councillors
 - Five individuals
- Comments were received from several SBC Committees:
- The Executive
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 4.4 A full summary of responses is provided in Appendix B together with officer responses to each comment as well as a description of any amendments made to the SPD as a result of the submitted comment.
- 4.5 The key responses and amendments to the Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD are summarised below:

Amendment	Reasons for Amendment
Visualisation of what a 10% increase in biodiversity might look like.	For clarity, to allow for visualisation of what a 10% increase in biodiversity might look like on a site.
Change to nomenclature.	To ensure that the SPD is as up to date as possible and to aide updates to the SPD in the future.
MAGIC (Multi Agency Geographic Information on the Countryside) maps to be removed.	The inclusion of the maps is confusing as the Habitat potential they include may conflict with that on the Ecological/network mapping.
Add title to Appendix 3 regarding the biodiversity financial agreement.	To provide clarity as to the intention of the Appendix.
Include Acid Grassland to Field	The addition of this grassland allows for a

Assessment Table 2.	wider range of grassland communities to be included and considered in the SPD.
Add title to Appendix 5 regarding the Natural England Biodiversity Metric	To provide clarity as to the Version of the Metric that is being used in the document and to aide updates to the SPD in the future.

Visualisation of 10% increase in Biodiversity

- 4.6 A SBC Councillor commented that it would be useful to provide some more context of what a 10% net gain in biodiversity might look like, possibly by means of a visual aid.
- 4.7 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust have been contacted to see if they are able to provide us with such a visual aid based on their previous experience with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 4.8 A visual aid from DEFRA has been included in the document in order to provide some additional clarity to the calculations and also to aide visualisation of the 10% net gain requirement.



Update nomenclature

- 4.9 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Herts County Council noted that references to the Natural England Biodiversity Metric were out of date. The Document referenced para 4.3 as the biodiversity metric. For clarity, this shall be amended to the Biodiversity Metric 2.0, Natural England December 2019. This shall clarify the version that the document relates too and will also aide updates to the SPD in the coming years as Natural England roll out new, updated versions of the Biodiversity Metric.

MAGIC Maps

- 4.10 HCC noted that the use of MAGIC Maps at fig 5 and fig 6 are confusing in that Habitat potential that they include may conflict with that on the Ecological/network mapping.
- 4.11 HCC also noted that the maps for an area of central Stevenage which show as potential arable assemblage for farmland birds and the remainder as potential Stone Curlew habitat is clearly inaccurate and misleading.
- 4.12 We agree that the removal of these maps would make the document simpler and less confusing.

Addition of titles to Appendix 3 and Appendix 5

- 4.13 HCC noted that both Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 are in need of titles for clarity.
- 4.14 Appendix 3 refers to a biodiversity financial agreement and so we are happy to make this amendment to Appendix 3.
- 4.15 Appendix 5 refers to The Defra Biodiversity Metric with supporting documents, this has been amended to reflect the version of the Metric and that it is Natural England's Metric.

Inclusion of Acid Grassland to Field Assessment

- 4.16 HCC noted that the Field Assessment table should include a wider range of grassland communities.
- 4.17 We are happy to broaden the range of grassland communities in this table.

Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD prior to its adoption.

- 4.18 The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD is included in Appendix A. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to its adoption. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.19 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

Recommendation 2.3: That the Executive approve the adoption of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document as a material consideration for planning applications.

- 4.20 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.21 Now that consultation has been completed, the Council must make the SPD document available together with an adoption statement, and send a copy of the adoption statement to each of the bodies who asked to be notified of the adoption of the SPD.
- 4.22 In line with Regulation 12, the Council will also need to provide a statement setting out the persons consulted when preparing the SPD and a summary of the main issues raised by those persons and how those issues have been addressed in the adopted SPD document. This statement is included as Appendix B.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with adopting the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 Any potential schemes that are mentioned in the SPD will need to be subject to a business case and/or will require third party funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 Adoption of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD will be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, specifically Regulations 12, 14 and 15. There are no further direct legal implications associated with adopting the SPD.
- 5.4 The legal ramifications of any potential schemes mentioned in the SPD will need to be considered at the point of planning and delivery.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 There are no significant risks associated with adopting the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD.

Policy Implications

- 5.6 The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).
- 5.7 The document is also aligned with other corporate Council documents such as the Healthy Stevenage Strategy, the recently-declared Climate Emergency Motion and the emerging Climate Change Strategy, Action Plan and Charter.

Planning Implications

- 5.8 The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD will supplement the recently adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).
- 5.9 The document will not form part of the Development Plan for Stevenage. However, it will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.10 The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD has the potential to have a positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits that prioritising the biodiversity net gain through development and minimising its loss on site.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.11 The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. When implementing any of the proposals mentioned in the SPD, 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 Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031](#)
BD2 [Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD 2020, SBC](#)

APPENDICES

- A Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD, 2021 (changes from Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD 2020, consultation version highlighted in yellow)
- B Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity Consultation Statement
- C Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD, Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

DRAFT

The impact of development on Biodiversity SPD

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Introduction

1 Introduction

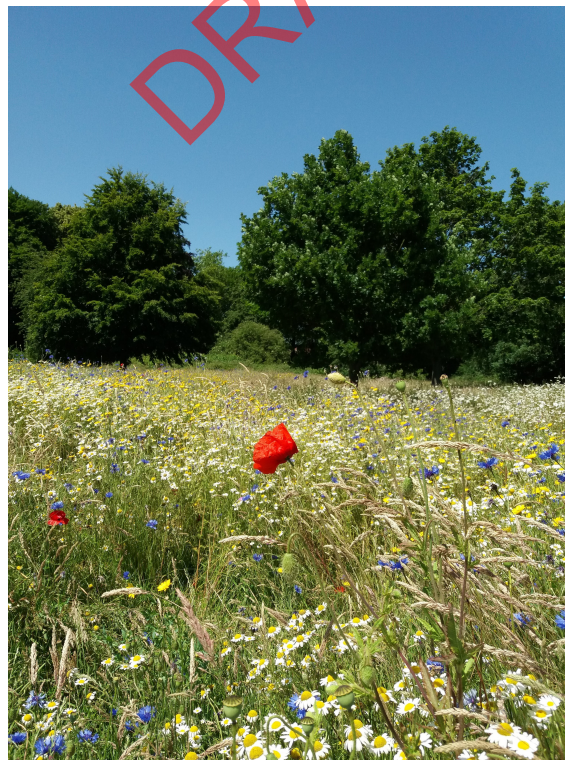
1.0.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) relates to policies concerning biodiversity net gain in the [Stevenage Borough Local Plan](#) and the [National Planning and Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#). It applies to all categories of development for which planning permission is required and includes a framework for assessing impacts to biodiversity using a biodiversity accounting system (a metric). This guidance is intended as a transparent and auditable mechanism for assessing the impact of applications on biodiversity and meeting the requirements of NPPF to achieve measurable net gains to biodiversity through development.

1.0.2 This SPD outlines:

- How the Council will assess planning applications, which will have an impact on biodiversity.
- The information applicants will need to provide to enable the Council to apply the government metric to quantify and assess impacts.
- The standards expected for impact calculations and any offset delivery.

1.0.3 The UK government supports the use of SPD to set out detailed guidance on the way in which development plan policies will be applied in particular circumstances. The Government is also supportive of Local Planning Authorities introducing a biodiversity accounting system (using the government biodiversity metric) as a way of measuring impacts to biodiversity. SPD must be consistent with development plan policies and national planning policy guidance and may be taken into account as a material planning consideration in planning decisions.

Shephalbury Park



DRAFT

Policy context

2 Policy Context

2.0.1 The policies and frameworks that support the introduction and application of a net gain compensation strategy using a biodiversity accounting system, or 'biodiversity offsetting' (the government metric) are:

[EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020](#);

[NERC Act 2006](#);

[Making Space for Nature 2010](#);

2.0.2 [25 year Environment Plan 2018](#);

[The Draft Environment Bill 2018](#);

[National Planning Policy Framework 2019](#);

[Biodiversity Net Gain. Good Practice principles for development 2019](#);

[Planning Practice Guidance, Natural Environment, July 2019](#);

[The Environment Bill 2019 \(not yet approved\)](#)

2.0.3 For further details and context of these policies and guidance please see 16 'Appendix 7 - Planning policy, legislation and guidance references to measurable net gain'.

2.1 Other relevant guidance and standards

['The National Design Guide' \(MHCLG 2019\)](#);

['British Standard for biodiversity in planning' \(BS 42020:2013\)](#);

[Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland' \(CIEEM 2018\)](#);

[Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 - 2022](#).

Emerging Hertfordshire Growth Board Sustainability/ Carbon Reduction/ Climate Change Policy (2020)

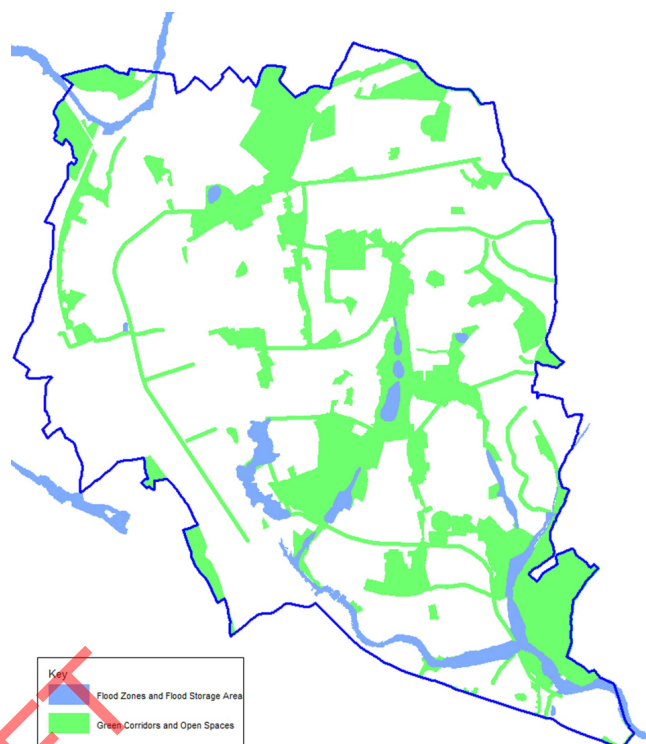
Emerging Parks and Green Space Strategy

Emerging Amenity Tree Management Policy

Emerging Climate Change Strategy

2.1.1 All these recommend this system of biodiversity accounting ('offsetting') as an appropriate mechanism for delivering biodiversity compensation.

Blue and Green Spaces in Stevenage



2.1.2 This approach is supported within Stevenage Borough by The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Environment Agency and the RSPB.

2.2 Local Development Plan Policies

2.2.1 The Policy in the [Stevenage Borough Local Plan](#) relating to nature conservation and biodiversity is set out below.

Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure and the natural environment

The green infrastructure, natural environment and landscape of Stevenage will be protected, enhanced and managed, and we will positively acknowledge its influence on Knebworth Woods SSSI and Lea Valley SPA. We will:

- a. Create, protect and enhance key areas of open space and biodiversity value including:
 - i. parks, recreation grounds, amenity spaces and woodlands which are integral to the open space structure of Stevenage as Principal Open Spaces. This will include Fairlands Valley Park;
 - ii. locally important wildlife sites; and
 - iii. a series of ten green links around the town. These will be collections of spaces that are worthy of protection for their connectivity and their recreation, amenity or wildlife value.
- b. Preserve, create, protect and enhance locally important linear features including:
 - i. the historic lanes and hedgerows which pre-date the New Town; and
 - ii. structural green spaces along major routes within the town.
- c. Create and protect multi-functional green space and sports facilities as an integral part of new developments in accordance with the latest standards and permit the creation of other new open spaces where they will meet an identified deficit;
- d. Mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the loss of green infrastructure or assets of biodiversity importance resulting from development; and
- e. Only grant planning permission if an adequate assessment of priority habitats and species has been undertaken. Any identified impact on these habitats and/or species will need to be avoided, mitigated or compensated.

- *5.146. Identifying and conserving a network of green spaces is a vital part of the planning process. Government guidance recognises the importance of providing access to high quality open spaces. It recognises that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. We should plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity.*
- *5.152. New developments will be required to make reasonable provision of open space to cater for the additional demand they will create. The balance between on-site and off-site*

provision and contributions will be assessed on a site-by-site basis and will be commensurate with the size of the proposed development. Opportunities for biodiversity offsetting should be considered in determining the most appropriate green infrastructure strategy.

2.2.2 In addition to the Local Plan Policy, Stevenage has an adopted [Biodiversity Action Plan](#) (BAP). This is an internationally recognised programme addressing threatened species and habitats and is designed to protect and restore biological systems. A five year Biodiversity Action Plan for Stevenage Borough covering the period June 2010 – June 2015 inclusive was prepared in response to the updated Hertfordshire Biodiversity Plan. The work achieved locally through the action plan contributed to targets set for the county through the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

DRAFT

Ridlins Wood

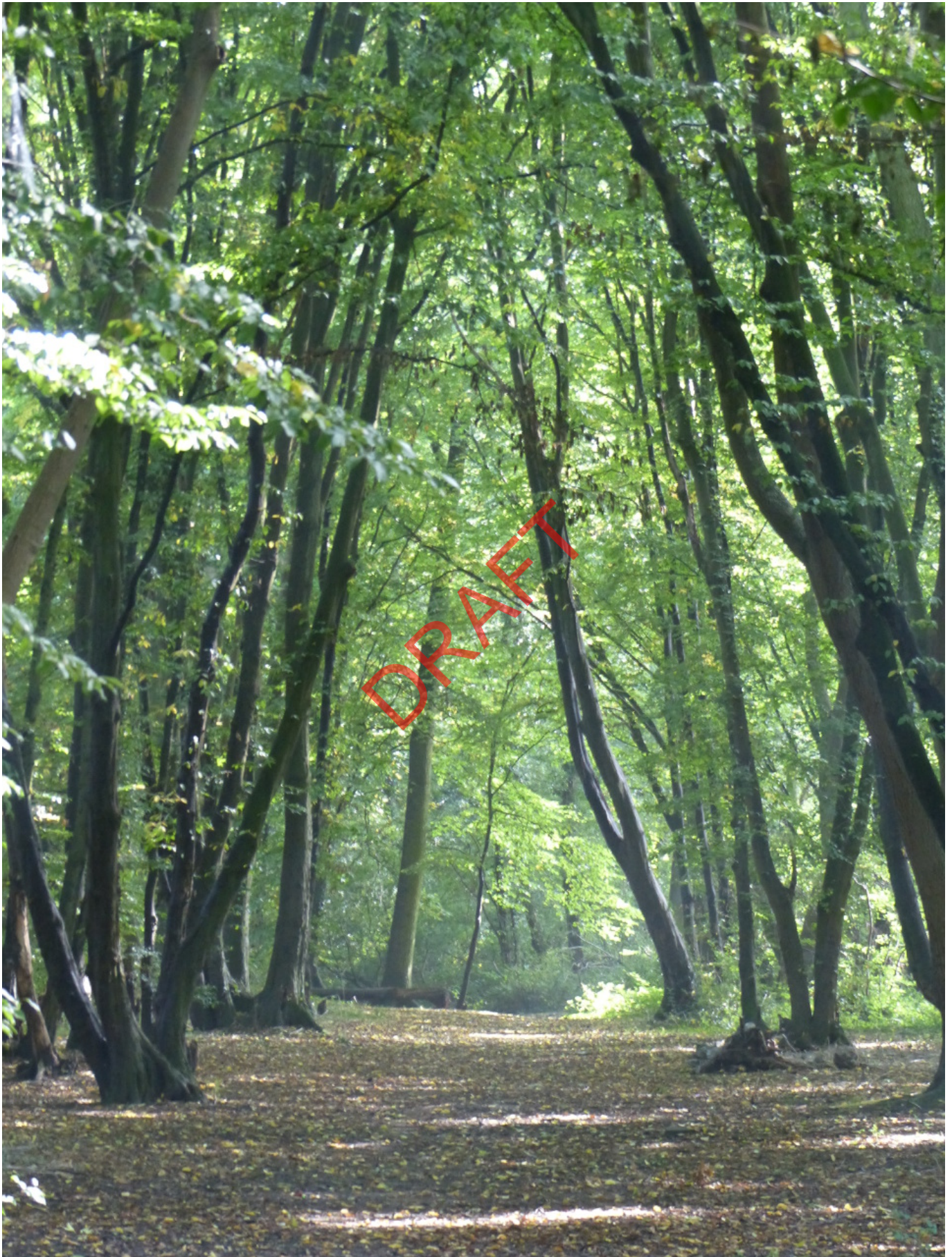


Figure 1 Ancient Lanes and Hedgerows in Stevenage

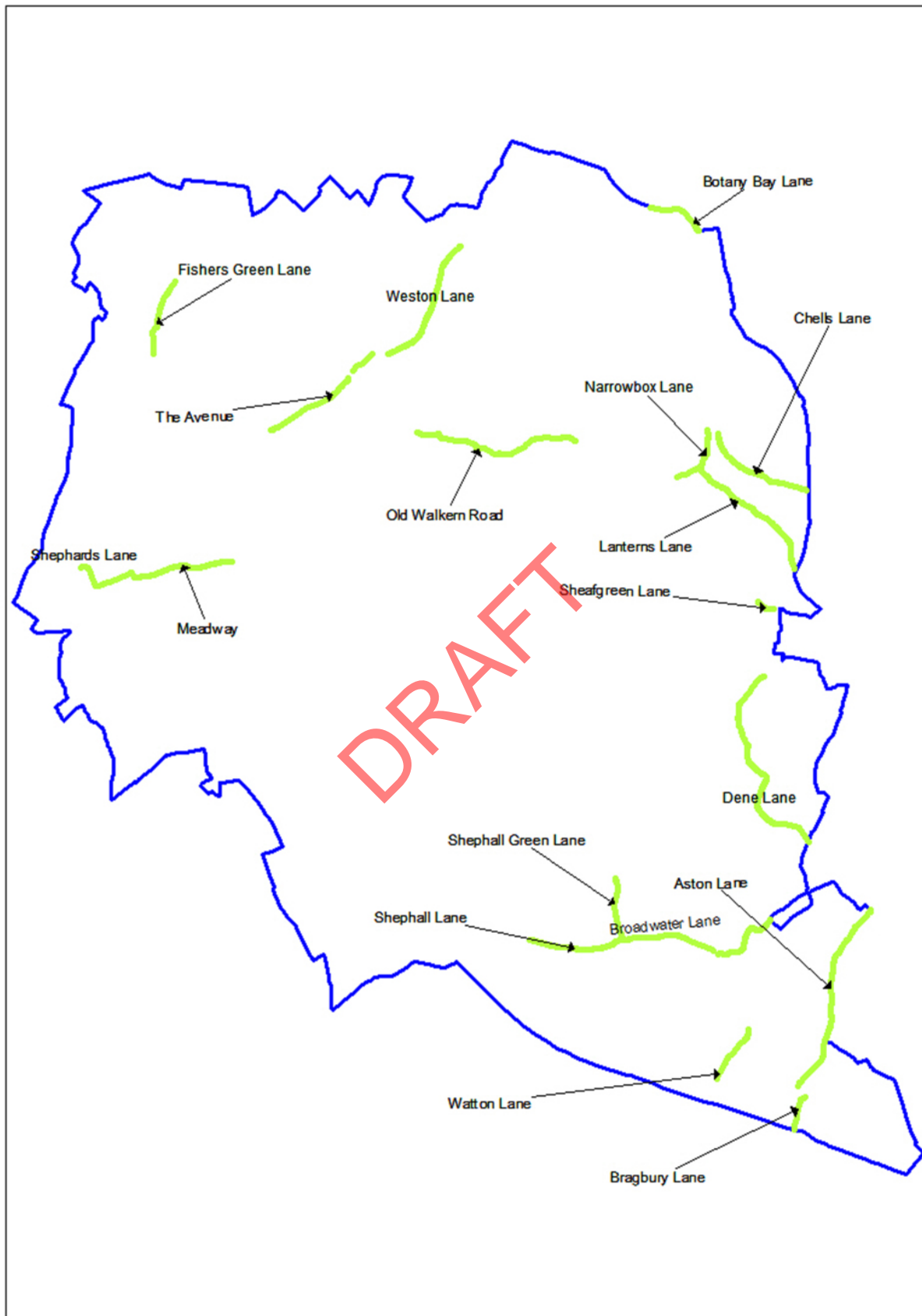


Figure 2 Wildlife Sites in Stevenage

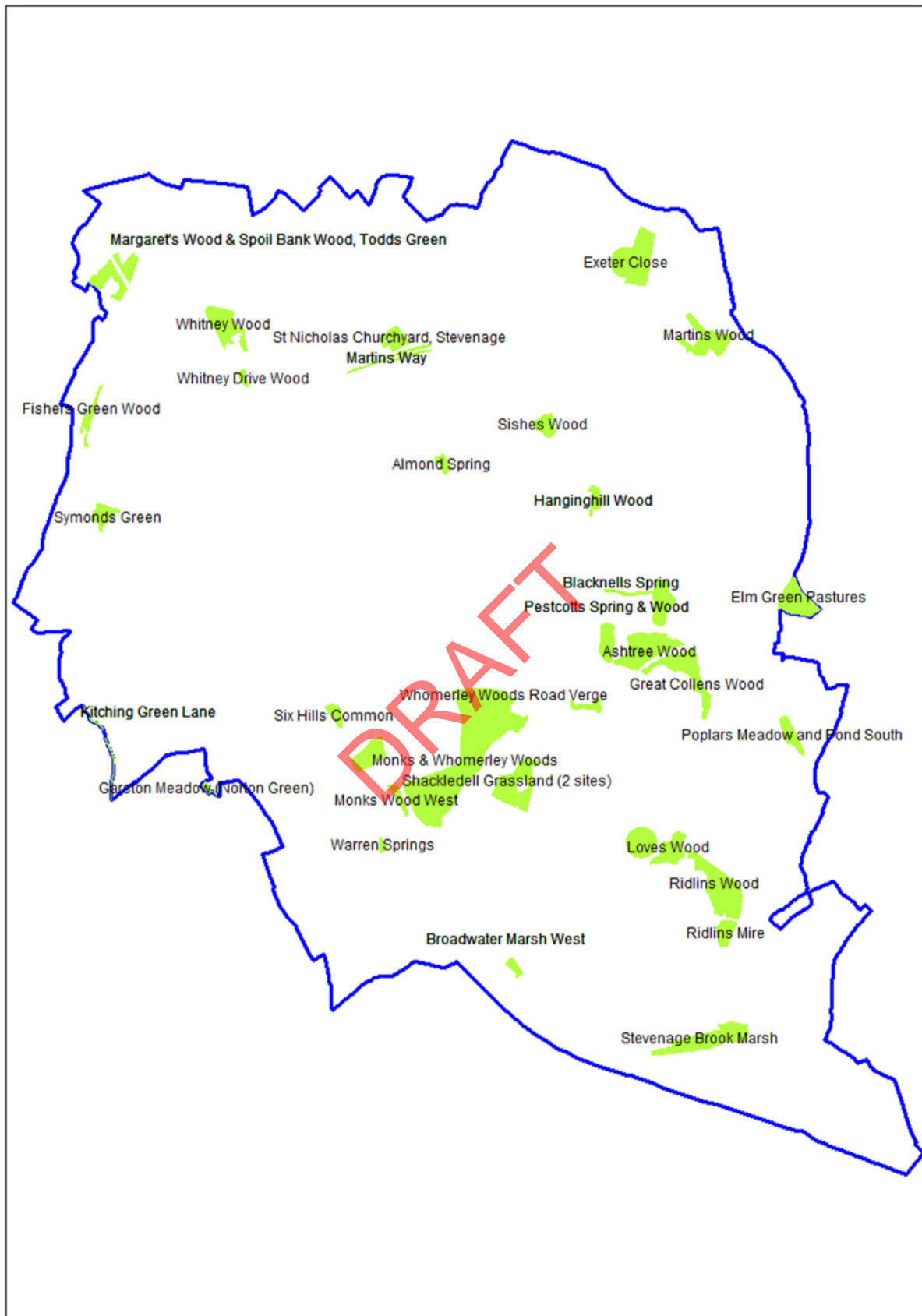
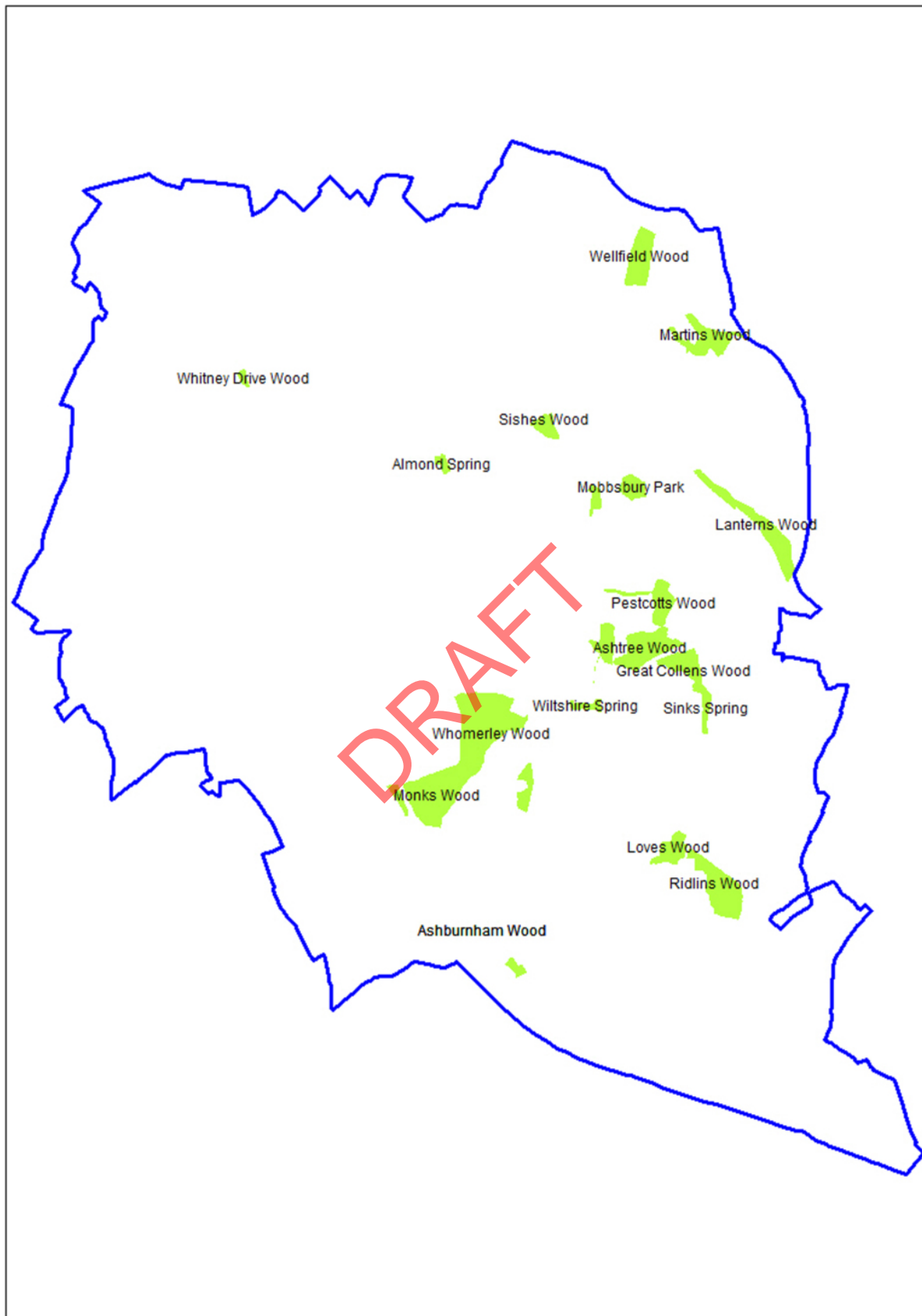


Figure 3 Woodlands in Stevenage



2.3 National Planning Policies

2.3.1 Policies in the [National Planning and Policy Framework](#) relating to net gain are:

8. *Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity

170. *Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

174. *To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:*

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

175. *When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:*

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.



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Climate Change and the benefits of biodiversity

3 Climate Change and the benefits of biodiversity

3.0.1 The [Councils Climate Strategy](#) identifies biodiversity and its role in reducing carbon measures and ensure that we have a holistic approach to the wider sustainability impacts we as humans are having on our local ecology. Using nature's way of addressing the human impact of climate change is the most effective method of taking action.

3.0.2 It is now widely recognised that climate change and biodiversity are interconnected. Biodiversity is affected by climate change, with negative consequences for human well-being, but biodiversity, through the ecosystem services it supports, also makes an important contribution to both climate-change mitigation and adaptation. Consequently, conserving and sustainably managing biodiversity is critical to addressing climate change.

3.0.3 Conserving natural terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems and restoring degraded ecosystems (including their genetic and species diversity) is essential. Ecosystems play a key role in the global carbon cycle and in adapting to climate change, while also providing a wide range of ecosystem services that are essential for human well-being.

3.0.4 Biodiversity can support efforts to reduce the negative effects of climate change. Conserved or restored habitats can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thus helping to address climate change by storing carbon.

3.0.5 Stevenage Borough Council is extremely proud to have a longstanding commitment to preserving and enhancing biodiversity in the borough. The vision has always been to increase Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats; to increase awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife; to encourage participation in conserving its biodiversity; and to ensure that nature is close to everyone's doorstep. The Council has worked closely with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife trust for many years and continues to work in partnership with this organisation to improve our green spaces. As The Council looks to tackle the issues presented by the changing climate, there is an opportunity to continue to prioritise the town's natural environment, while being mindful of what species and ecosystems already exist, when considering projects such as tree planting.

3.0.6 A link to The Councils [Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2020](#) details actions being taken for wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, and ancient hedgerows. The woodland action plan, stressing the importance of the borough's woodlands as a carbon dioxide store. The Council reaffirms its commitment to biodiversity in the town and will strive to protect and enhance woodlands.

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Assessing impacts - biodiversity accounting

4 Assessing impacts - biodiversity accounting

4.0.1 As required by the NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance, the Council must achieve measurable net gains in biodiversity at development sites and across the Borough. The relative weight given to biodiversity factors will depend on the particular circumstances of the site and proposal, but can be more easily assessed if impacts (losses) to biodiversity, along with any gains (via mitigation and enhancement) are quantified.

4.0.2 To do this, the [DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0](#) must be applied by to all minor and major planning applications when requested to do so (described further below).

4.0.3 The DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (or as subsequently amended) allows efficient and standardised calculation of impacts. To enable a standardised approach in assessment, other calculators or tools will not be accepted.

4.0.4 **To achieve a biodiversity net gain a development must deliver a minimum of 10% net gain post development, when compared with the pre-development baseline.**

4.1 What triggers the use of the biodiversity metric?

4.1.1 **Delivering biodiversity net gain will be mandated for proposed developments within the scope of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.** This includes buildings and structures for any use, including:

- commercial;
- industrial;
- institutional;
- leisure; and
- housing or other accommodation, where permission from local planning authorities is required.

4.1.2 This guidance document applies to all major and minor applications other than the following exemptions currently suggested by The Government:

- Permitted development;
- Householder development, including extensions;
- Nationally significant infrastructure, which falls within scope of the Planning Act 2008;
- Some brownfield sites with marginal viability and substantial constraints. It is expected that full details to be set out in secondary legislation, but considerations are likely to include where sites contain a high proportion of derelict land and buildings and only a small percentage of the site is undeveloped, land values are significantly lower than average, and the site does not contain any protected habitats; and
- Developments that would not result in measurable loss or degradation of habitat, for instance change of use of or alterations to building

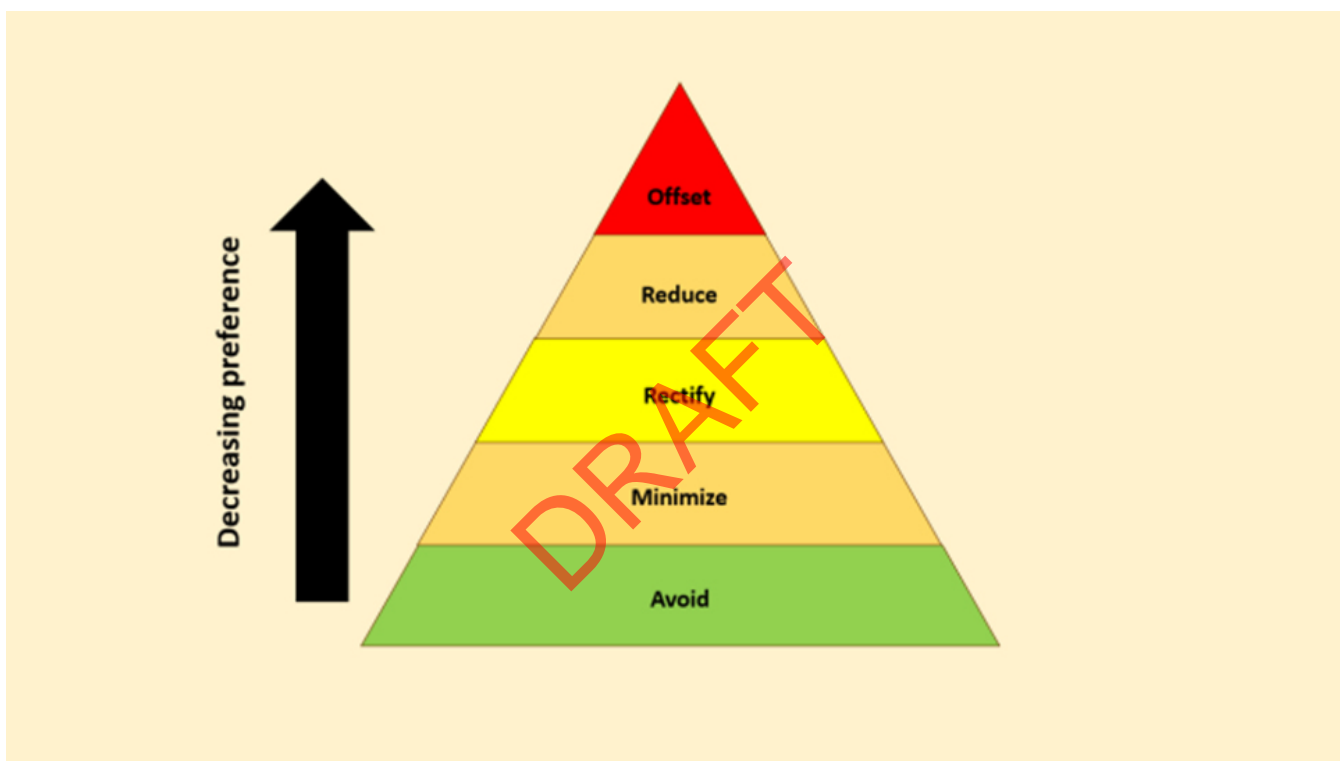
4.1.3 Stevenage Borough Council will follow these exemptions, until such time as exemptions are set out in primary or secondary legislation, at which point those exemptions will be followed.

4.1.4 The delivery of biodiversity net gain involves the use of the biodiversity metric, which is used to calculate the ‘habitat units’ of biodiversity gained or lost as a result of development on a site. **SBC or their ecological advisors should be contacted to assess whether a biodiversity metric assessment is required on a development proposal. It is recommended that this advice is sought at the pre-application stage.**

4.2 The mitigation hierarchy

4.2.1 Planning applicants must demonstrate the following mitigation hierarchy has been followed;

- impacts to biodiversity have been avoided, then,
- minimised, before,
- any compensation is considered; first onsite and then offsite.



4.2.2 National and local planning policy contains strong direction that development should not be permitted on statutory and non-statutorily designated sites for biodiversity (e.g. SSSI, LWS), unless there are exceptional circumstances present. Similarly, impacts on species and habitats of principle importance for nature conservation are strictly discouraged. Impacts on habitats falling within these categories should always be avoided if possible. If impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated then they must be compensated in a measurable way to achieve net gain.

4.2.3 Biodiversity is not limited to designated sites or priority habitats. In fact most of our biodiversity occurs on non-priority habitat. NPPF requires that planning delivers a measurable net gain to all biodiversity. In order to achieve this, a standard method of measuring impacts on all habitats (not just priority habitat) must be applied to planning decisions.

4.2.4 The metric is not designed to measure impacts on species. Separate species surveys will be required where appropriate. The results of these surveys will have a material influence on habitat provision because the habitat requirements of the species revealed must be reflected in the mitigation or compensation proposals.

4.2.5 The metric described below will be used by the Council in consideration of adherence to the mitigation hierarchy, and to inform compensation on all habitats.

4.3 The Biodiversity Metric 2.0, Natural England December 2019

4.3.1 The biodiversity metric was designed by Natural England and introduced by Defra in 2012 as the main component in Government pilot schemes set up to test 'biodiversity offsetting' delivery systems. Following the review of the pilots the metric was reviewed and version 2 was released in 2019, to support the aims of the Governments 25 year environment plan for measurable net gain.

4.3.2 **The metric does *not* assume compensatory sites will be required and can, in fact, demonstrate on-site biodiversity gain has been achieved. If an offset is required, the same metric is used to evaluate the predicted gains at compensation sites so that measurable net gain, of biodiversity is achieved.**

4.3.3 All habitats are important, but some e.g. ancient woodland, limestone pavement, are irreplaceable and their loss cannot ever be fully compensated for. The metric evaluates impacts for a wide range of habitats, but it does not override existing law or policy that protects nationally important sites and species. In essence, the higher the biodiversity value of a habitat the higher the metric score. Therefore, compensation for impacts to unprotected, but ecologically high value habitats, will be greater compared to arable farmland, for example.

4.3.4 The metric calculates the scale of a habitat impact or enhancement by multiplying the area (hectares), distinctiveness (habitat type) and condition (quality) of each habitat parcel (Fig.1).

4.3.5 When losses are assessed – where impacts to habitats will occur - the calculation provides a negative score as habitat is being lost to development. This provides an evidence base for discussions regarding on-site mitigation and off-site compensation requirements, as per the mitigation hierarchy.

Figure 4 Example of pre-intervention and post-intervention elements included in calculating habitat units

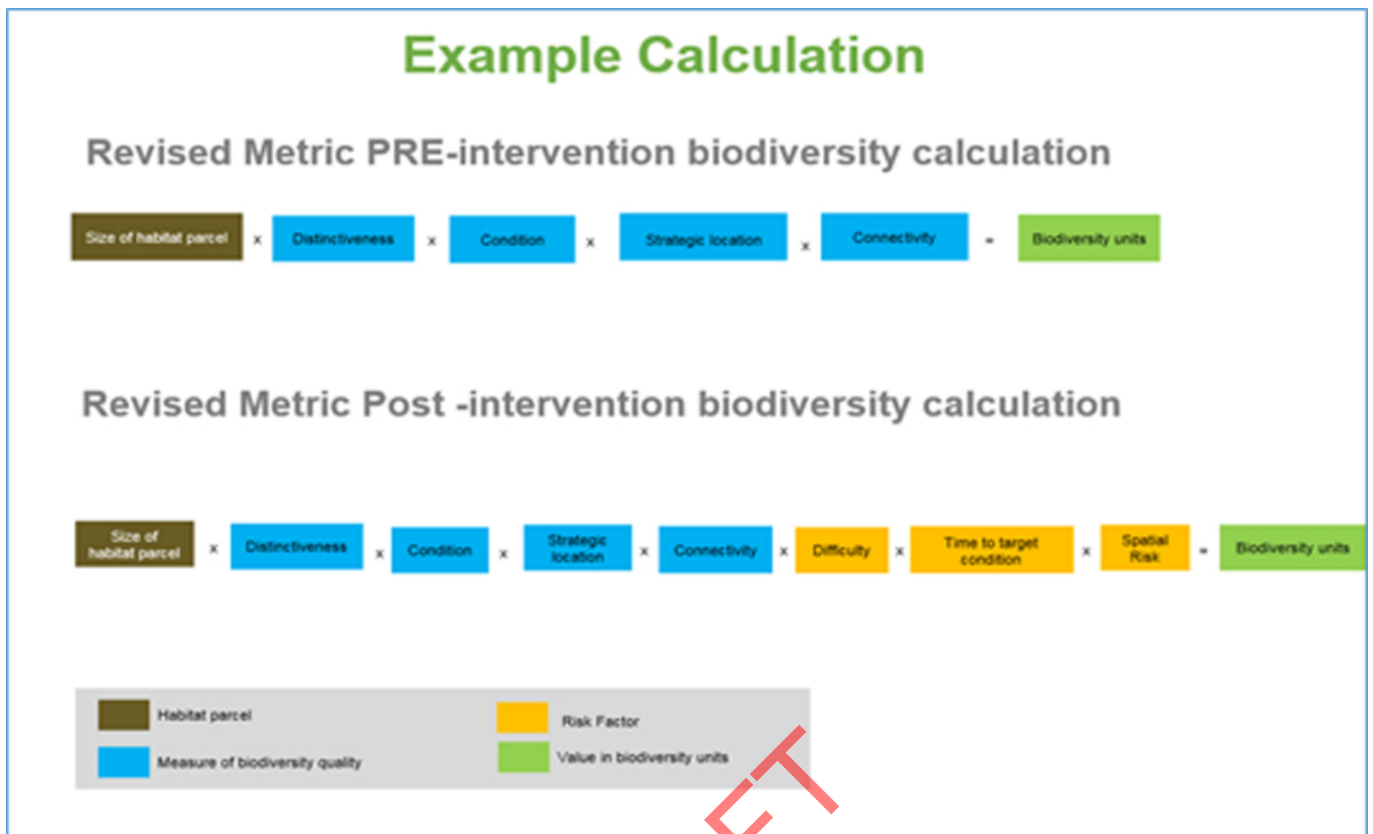
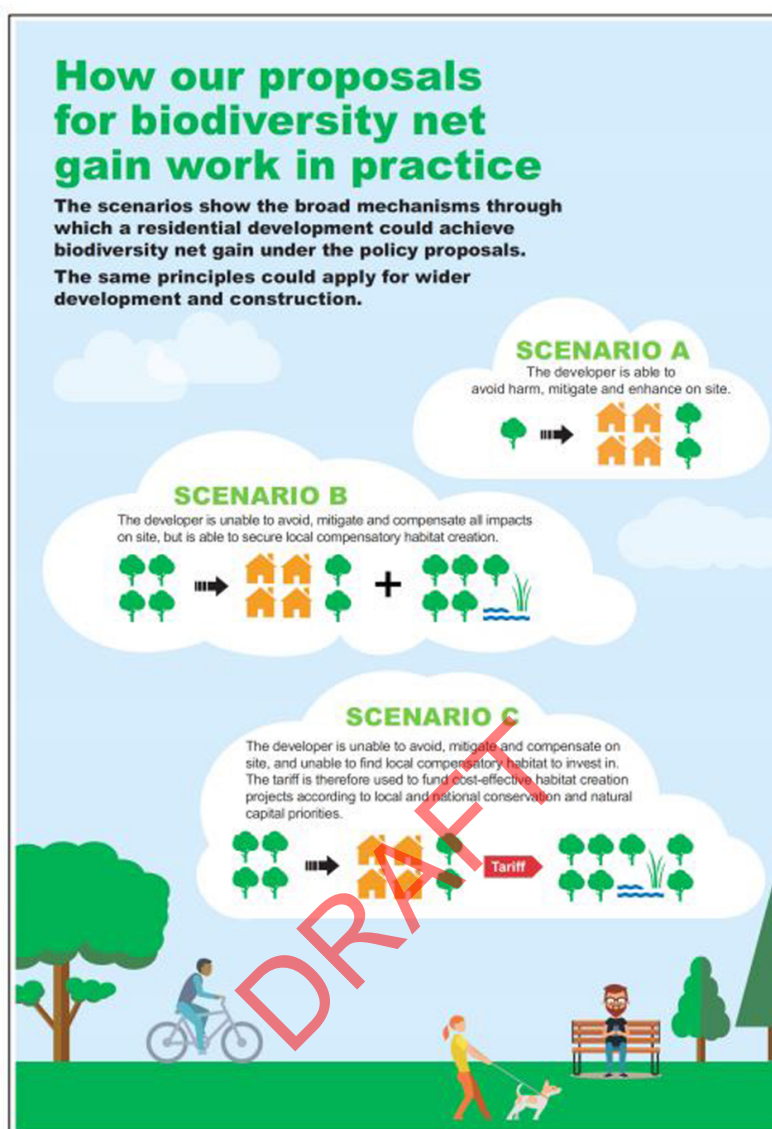


Figure 5 DEFRA - What does 10% net gain look like



4.3.6 When gains are assessed – where habitats are enhanced or created on-site, or off-site – a similar calculation is made but risk factors that account for difficulty and temporal delays are also applied (Fig. 1). The score will be positive where gains are being delivered. Habitats that are more difficult to restore or that will take a long time to reach a set target condition will score lower, these generate fewer credits and therefore a larger area is required to deliver sufficient mitigation or compensation.

4.3.7 The baseline habitat unit score should be used to inform development layouts, to maximise ecological gains on-site.

4.4 Residual loss

4.4.1 When on-site gains do not outweigh on-site losses by 10% and a net biodiversity loss is calculated, this negative biodiversity loss will become an offset requirement, if approved by the Council.

4.4.2 There is a 'no down-trading' policy within the metric, whereby habitat loss must be compensated for with habitat of the same value or higher - loss of high distinctiveness habitats such as lowland meadow and broad-leaved woodland must be compensated for like-for-like.

4.4.3 In addition to the difficulty and temporal factors applied to any gain calculations (on and off-site), a spatial factor is also applied to account for the location of a compensation receptor site in the local landscape.

4.4.4 This is accounted in the metric as:

- Compensation inside LPA/NCA, or deemed to be sufficiently local to site or biodiversity loss.
- Compensation outside of LPA/NCA of impact site but within neighbouring LPA/NCA.
- Compensation outside of LPA/NCA and beyond neighbouring LPA/NCA.

4.4.5 Strategic significance is also applied to account for the local areas strategic delivery plans and ambitions. In this context if a site is not within an area identified in the [Herts Ecological Networks Map](#) as a site with a high priority for habitat restoration or creation (categories 2 and 3a), the credit value of the site is reduced and, again, a larger area will be required to deliver the appropriate compensation (in conservation credits).

4.4.6 Strategic factors, dependant on development location (e.g. contribution to landscape connectivity) are as follows:

- Within area formally identified in local strategy. **Strategic: x 1 – category 1,2, 3a**
- Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy. **Semi-strategic: 1.1 – category 3b**
- Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy. **Non-strategic: 1.15 – category 3c**

4.4.7 Offset compensation schemes within a strategic area are preferred. Non-strategic schemes are permitted but the conservation credits generated by sites must be reduced by a factor of up to 1.15. For rivers and streams, strategic plans include the [river basin management plan](#) and actions identified with [local catchment plans](#).

4.5 Thresholds

4.5.1 Whilst there is no minimum size of development or impact for which this system applies, applicants should contact the Council to confirm if the following information is required if they are unsure. Householder applications or applications on sites devoid of biodiversity interest, such as areas of hardstanding, are unlikely to require a biodiversity metric assessment. Applications which do not require an Environmental Statement may still require the information below, unless the Council has advised otherwise.

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Information required

5 Information required

5.0.1 So that impacts on biodiversity interests can be properly assessed using the biodiversity metric, applicants are required to submit the following information to the Council:

5.1 Purpose of ecological report

5.1.1 **The purpose of the ecological report is to demonstrate compliance with national planning policy, local planning policy and legislation regarding planning and biodiversity. It should not be an ecological inventory followed by a series of recommendations.** It must clearly and definitively show; what is there, how it will be affected by the development, how the development is compatible with policy, how any negative impacts will be avoided, mitigated or compensated so that a measurable net gain to biodiversity can be demonstrated.

N.B. Only definitively stated mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures to achieve net gain are acceptable – in accordance with BS 42020. Only statements that detail what ‘will’ be provided will be allowed.

5.2 Habitats and Species

5.2.1 Identification of all habitat types present at the site, including non-priority habitats, such as agricultural land, together with species of local distinctiveness will be required. A short description of the habitat will be necessary for the Council to confirm the habitat type (for example; to distinguish between modified grassland and other neutral grassland).

5.2.2 Detail regarding any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations. Descriptions of the habitat must be consistent with the guidance provided to accompany the biodiversity metric (as amended). The location and size of each habitat parcel (pre and post development) must be clearly marked on maps. GIS layers are preferable if available.

5.3 Area

5.3.1 Survey material showing the location and area (in hectares) covered by each habitat type. If possible this should be provided as a GIS layer to enable verification.

5.4 Condition

5.4.1 A description of the condition of each habitat type. If different ‘patches’ of one habitat type exist between which the condition of the habitat varies significantly, then these should be identified (for example; lowland meadow A – 1.2 ha - moderate condition; other neutral grassland B – 4ha - poor condition).

5.4.2 Condition should be assessed using the condition assessment criteria as outlined in the Natural England Biodiversity Metric Technical Supplement JP029. **Each condition assessment should be accompanied by a brief description, or reasoning, to support the assessment made.** If a habitat condition assessment is not found in the Technical Supplement, another method of assessing condition should be employed, with supporting reasoning included. Discussion with the ecological advisors of the council is advised to determine difficult or contentious condition assessments.

5.4.3 High quality quadrat photographs to justify habitat condition assessments are encouraged.

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Losses vs. gains

6 Losses vs. gains

6.0.1 How each of the habitats (and habitat patches) described above will be affected by the proposal must be identified – i.e. will they be lost, retained, or enhanced in some way. Any on-site mitigation or enhancements (gains) proposed must be accompanied by further information regarding the target habitat type and condition to be achieved through management, the time period within which this target will be achieved, and a supporting outline (or full) management plan. The Council will not consider any gains (credits) to balance losses calculated without this information.

6.0.2 Any offset proposals where biodiversity gains are proposed will be dealt with in the same way as the point above.

6.0.3 The above information may also be required for indirect impacts to habitats adjacent to the site.

6.0.4 Results from the assessments above should be summarised in a table, with an accompanying map with each habitat parcel clearly marked on it (pre and post development) and referenced to the excel spreadsheet generated by the biodiversity metric.

6.0.5 Early pre-application discussions with Stevenage Borough Council ecological advisors are recommended to clarify the information required above. All surveys will be expected to be accompanied by an ecological records search from the [Herts Environmental Records Centre](#)

6.0.6 **Ecological assessments should be carried out by qualified, suitable experienced environmental consultants using recognised methodology and at an appropriate time of year. All surveys must be compliant with BS 42020: 2013. Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development.**

6.0.7 Any deviation from these standards must be justified and agreed with the LPA before it can be admitted. All avoidance, mitigation, compensation or enhancement measures must be definitively stated. Reports must only refer to what will be delivered. 'Recommendations' or proposals which 'could', or 'may' be undertaken are not acceptable.

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Standards for offsets

7 Standards for offsets

7.0.1 In addition to the standards set above for assessing impacts using the Biodiversity Metric, if compensation is required, any offset schemes will be required to adhere to the following set of standards.

7.1 Site selection

7.1.1 For each offset receptor site put forward by an applicant, Stevenage Borough Council will approve the site selection by considering the following:

Required

- Minimum ecological unit credit gain of 10% is achieved. This applies to both terrestrial and linear units. Linear and terrestrial units cannot be summed together to achieve Net Gain.
- Any like-for-like requirements for high distinctiveness habitat loss have been met
- That additionality can be demonstrated (where biodiversity gain and proposed management at a site is additional to that which is already in place with secure funding under, for example, an agri-environment scheme).

Potential considerations

- Target habitats are appropriate (if a like-for-like requirement is needed or to meet local targets)
- Sites within categories 1 to 3a will be selected in preference to lower value categories as identified by the Herts Ecological Networks Map.
- Site is within the Stevenage Borough boundary.
- Site is within 10km distance of the development

7.2 Delivery

7.2.1 In approving an offset Stevenage Borough Council will also need to be satisfied that delivery will be assured, such that the following are appropriate:

- Management period, i.e. 30 years;
- Site survey information, biodiversity gain (credit) calculations and management plan have been approved;
- Sufficient funds have been allocated to deliver management long-term, anticipating costs such as legal, administration, monitoring, reporting, foreseeable risks, insurance and inflation;
- A delivery mechanism is available – e.g. enforceable legal agreements to ensure management is undertaken and required condition is achieved in accordance with the management plan;
- Annual monitoring and reporting arrangements have been made, to ensure management is being delivered as per the legal agreements.
- **Biodiversity net gains should be secured for the lifetime of the impacts of the development.** Therefore, the priority for offsets will be on land owned by local authorities, nature conservation organisations, or land managed by nature conservation organisations.

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Biodiversity Financial Contribution

The impact of development on Biodiversity SPD Page 67

8 Biodiversity Financial Contribution

8.0.1 Should a developer wish not to arrange their own biodiversity offset project(s), either on their own site or on a brokered site, then the Local Authority can offer a **financial payment option - known as a Biodiversity Financial Contribution.**

8.0.2 In this model, developers pay a contribution, under full cost recovery, for the LPA to organise the required biodiversity accounting scheme within a set period of time (usually 5 years), monitor their progress towards meeting the required units of biodiversity gain, take action where necessary to ensure the gains are achieved, and to formally report on their progress.

8.1 Components of a Biodiversity Financial Contribution

8.1.1 The Biodiversity Financial Contribution is index-linked and is *the sum total of the following three components:*

Biodiversity Accounting Payment (BAP) ~ (this is the cost of the offset)

$$\text{Set-up Cost} + \text{Habitat Creation Cost} + (\text{Management Cost})^{(1)} = \text{BAP}$$

Contingency Payment (CP) ~ at 10% of the Biodiversity Accounting Payment (Insurance Fund)

$$\text{Biodiversity Accounting Payment} \times 0.1 = \text{CP}$$

Index linked Management Payment (MP) ~ at 20% of the Biodiversity Accounting Payment (Management and Monitoring Fund)

$$\text{Biodiversity Accounting Payment} \times 0.2 = \text{MP}$$

So, overall,

$$\text{BAP} + \text{CP} + \text{MP} = \text{Biodiversity Financial Contribution}$$

8.1.2 A financial calculator that shows the average unit cost for a Biodiversity Financial Contribution is included in 12 'Appendix 3 - Biodiversity financial agreement', together with a table outlining the average areas of amenity grassland needed to deliver 1 habitat unit of uplift.

8.2 Payable to

8.2.1 This Biodiversity **Financial Contribution** will be made payable to Stevenage Borough Council in accordance with the planning condition or legal agreement. On receipt of the agreed sum, monies will be distributed into three funds, based on full cost recovery principles. These funds will be spent as set out below.

Biodiversity Accounting Fund

1 Cumulative indexation for a 30-year management period

8.2.2 SBC will use this fund to arrange one or more providers to compensate for the loss associated with the development. This could be arranged through a broker, or a separate legal agreement arranged by a lead Local Authority. These arrangements will be detailed within a legal agreement, in accordance with an approved Biodiversity Accounting Management and Monitoring Plan.

Contingency Fund

8.2.3 This fund will be formed from the pooling of the individual contingency payments and will be used to secure additional biodiversity enhancements or other ecological projects that enhance biodiversity. These enhancements will compensate for Biodiversity Accounting Schemes that do not fulfil their ecological objectives.

Management and Monitoring Fund

8.2.4 This fund will cover the costs of the Herts Environmental Records Centre associated with collecting data, managing databases, strategic mapping, to be used to determine where best to locate offsets based on supply of units and meeting agreed biodiversity priorities, for sample on-site monitoring and formal reporting of scheme progress. It will also cover distribution of all three funds where necessary.

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Assessing and achieving measurable biodiversity gain on a development site

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9 Assessing and achieving measurable biodiversity gain on a development site

Stage 1: Check with LPA if a biodiversity metric assessment is required

Stage 2: If required, engage an ecological consultant to undertake a biodiversity metric calculation on the site to give a baseline ecological unit score.

Stage 3: Identify all priority habitats and species to be avoided and buffered in accordance with local plan policy. Undertake species surveys, informed by environmental records search.

Stage 4: Design development within the parameters of existing habitats of value, minimum ecological unit requirement to achieve net gain, and species impact mitigation requirements. Use landscaping to maximise net gain potential, e.g. native trees, wildflower verges, SUDs. Ensure all habitats have appropriate management regimes, funding and monitoring specified. All avoidance, mitigation or compensation measures must be definitively stated and marked on maps.

Stage 5: Ensure enhancement features for wildlife as required by local plan are specified and marked on plans, e.g. integrated bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways.

Stage 6: If impact on priority habitat cannot be avoided or if net gain cannot be achieved onsite, seek a legitimately quantified biodiversity offset, engage a biodiversity offset broker to provide an offsetting agreement, or seek a biodiversity financial agreement with the LPA to provide an offset.

Stage 7: Submit planning application

Stage 8: Permission granted, biodiversity offset or biodiversity financial agreement secured by 106 agreement

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Appendix 1 – Ecological Networks Map for Hertfordshire

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10 Appendix 1 – Ecological Networks Map for Hertfordshire

[Link to Hertfordshire Ecological Networks Map](#)

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Appendix 2 – Sample condition wording for outline and full planning decisions;

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11 Appendix 2 – Sample condition wording for outline and full planning decisions:

11.0.1 Definitions:

“Biodiversity Impact Assessment”	means the use of the most current Defra Biodiversity Metric to calculate the biodiversity impact of the scheme measured in Biodiversity Units.
“Biodiversity Loss”	means a negative Biodiversity Unit score.
“Defra Biodiversity Offsetting Metric”	means the Defra mechanism to quantify impacts on biodiversity that allows biodiversity losses and gains affecting different habitats to be compared and ensure offsets were sufficient to compensate for residual losses of biodiversity
“Financial Contribution Calculator”	means the mechanism used to calculate the fixed sum contribution.
“Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme”	means a scheme which will deliver biodiversity enhancements which shall not be less than the Biodiversity Impact Assessment score
“Biodiversity Unit”	means the product of the size of an area, and the distinctiveness and condition of the habitat it comprises to provide a measure of ecological value
“Reserved Matters”	means the details to be approved by the Council in relation to the means of access to the building(s) and the site, the appearance of the building(s), the landscaping of the site, the layout of the site and its relationship with adjoining development, and the scale of building(s)

11.0.2 The Owner covenants:

11.0.3 Commencement of Development which for the purposes of this schedule shall include operations consisting of site clearance, demolition work, archaeological investigations, investigations for the purpose of assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, the erection of a site office, the creation of a site compound, the creation of temporary means of access shall not take place until the Reserved Matters have been approved by the Council.

11.0.4 The approved Reserved Matters shall not result in a Biodiversity Impact Assessment score less than – **XX Biodiversity Units** or such other number as may be agreed with the Council.

11.0.5 Commencement of Development, which for the purpose of this schedule shall include operations consisting of site clearance, demolition work, archaeological investigations, investigations for the purpose of assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, the erection of a site office, the creation of a site compound, the creation of temporary means of access, shall not take place unless approved by the Council until a Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council (“the Approved Scheme”). The Approved Scheme shall be approved with the purpose of ensuring that the Development shall result in a biodiversity net gain of 10% in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

11.0.6 The Approved Scheme shall either include:

- the identity an appropriate receptor site or sites;

- a management plan for the provision and maintenance of such offsetting measures for not less than 30 years from the date of implementation of the Scheme;
- the provision of contractual terms to secure the delivery of the offsetting measures; or
- provide for a fixed sum contribution to be paid to Stevenage Borough Council based on using the Financial Contribution Calculator. The Biodiversity Contribution shall not exceed £xxx exclusive of indexation calculated in accordance with the Relevant Index. The Council shall use the biodiversity contribution to enhance and secure long term management of biodiversity within the vicinity of the Application Site.

11.0.7 If the above applies to implement the Approved Scheme, no changes shall be carried out to the Approved Scheme without the written consent of the Council.

11.1 Full application provisions

11.1.1 Biodiversity Offsetting

"Biodiversity Impact Assessment"	means the use of the most current Defra Biodiversity Metric to calculate the biodiversity impact of the scheme measured in Biodiversity Units.
"Biodiversity Loss"	means a negative Biodiversity Unit score.
"Defra Biodiversity Offsetting Metric"	means the Defra mechanism to quantify impacts on biodiversity that allows biodiversity losses and gains affecting different habitats to be compared and ensure offsets were sufficient to compensate for residual losses of biodiversity
"Financial Contribution Calculator"	means the mechanism used to calculate the fixed sum contribution.
"Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme"	means a scheme which will deliver biodiversity enhancements which shall not be less than the Biodiversity Impact Assessment score
"Biodiversity Unit"	means the product of the size of an area, and the distinctiveness and condition of the habitat it comprises to provide a measure of ecological value
"Reserved Matters"	means the details to be approved by the Council in relation to the means of access to the building(s) and the site, the appearance of the building(s), the landscaping of the site, the layout of the site and its relationship with adjoining development, and the scale of building(s)

11.1.2 The Owner covenants:

11.1.3 The Commencement of Development, which shall include operations consisting of site clearance, demolition work, archaeological investigations, investigations for the purpose of assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, the erection of a site office, the creation of a site compound, the creation of temporary means of access, shall not take place unless approved by the Council until a Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme appropriate to compensate for a Biodiversity Impact Assessment score of xx.xx Biodiversity Units has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council ("the Approved Scheme"). The Approved Scheme shall be approved with the purpose of ensuring that the Development shall result in a Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

11.1.4 The Approved Scheme shall either include:

- the identity an appropriate receptor site or sites;

- a management plan for the provision and maintenance of such offsetting measures for not less than 30 years from the date of implementation of the Scheme;
- the provision of contractual terms to secure the delivery of the offsetting measures; or
- provide for a fixed sum contribution to be paid to Stevenage Borough Council based on using the Financial Contribution Calculator. The fixed sum shall not exceed £..... The District Council shall use the contribution to enhance and secure long term management of biodiversity within the vicinity of the Application Site.

11.1.5 If the above applies to implement the Approved Scheme no changes shall be carried out to the Approved Scheme without the written consent of the Council.

11.2 S106 payment for Broker secured scheme

11.2.1 Biodiversity Offsetting

"Biodiversity Impact Assessment"	means the use of the most current Defra Biodiversity Metric to calculate the biodiversity impact of the scheme measured in Biodiversity Units.
"Biodiversity Loss"	means a negative Biodiversity Unit score.
"Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme"	means a scheme which will deliver biodiversity enhancements which shall not be less than the Biodiversity Impact Assessment score.
"Biodiversity Units"	means the product of the size of an area, and the distinctiveness and condition of the habitat it comprises to provide a measure of ecological value. <i>Note: Based on / extracted from Defra's guidance documents</i>
"Defra Biodiversity Offsetting Metric"	the Defra mechanism to quantify impacts on biodiversity that allows biodiversity losses and gains affecting different habitats to be compared and ensure offsets were sufficient to compensate for residual losses of biodiversity. <i>Note: Based on / extracted from Defra's guidance documents</i>

11.2.2 The Owner covenants:

11.2.3 Within 1 month of signed permission and prior to the Commencement of Development, which shall include operations consisting of site clearance, demolition work, archaeological investigations, investigations for the purpose of assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, the erection of a site office, the creation of a site compound, the creation of temporary means of access, or as agreed by the Council a fixed sum of £xxxx excluding VAT shall be paid to [Name of selected Biodiversity Offset Broker] to enact the approved Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme for [Offset Broker] site xxxxx that has been previously approved by the Council and will appropriately compensate for a Biodiversity Impact Assessment score of xxxxx Biodiversity Units ensuring that the Development shall result in a Biodiversity net gain in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, in the form of the Conservation Offset Purchase Agreement annexed hereto.

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Appendix 3 - Biodiversity offsetting payment template

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12 Appendix 3 - Biodiversity financial agreement

12.0.1 Stevenage Borough Council are offering applicants the option to make a financial payment instead of securing an offset provider through either a broker or other means. The Biodiversity Offsetting Payment will be based on the following precautionary principles.

12.0.2 Should a developer wish not to arrange their own biodiversity offset project(s), either on their own site or on a brokered site, then the Local Authority, on the advice of their ecological advisors, operate an alternative option - a **financial payment option - known as a Biodiversity Financial Contribution**.

12.0.3 This is where developers pay a contribution, under full cost recovery, for the ecological advisors of the LPA to organise the required biodiversity accounting schemes, monitor their progress towards meeting the required units of biodiversity gain, take action where necessary to ensure the gains are achieved, and to formally report on their progress.

12.0.4 **The Biodiversity Financial Contribution is index-linked and is *the sum total of the following three components:***

Biodiversity Accounting Payment (BAP) ~ (this is the cost of the offset)

$$\text{Set-up Cost} + \text{Habitat Creation Cost} + (\text{Management Cost})^{(2)} = \text{BAP}$$

Contingency Payment (CP) ~ at 10% of the Biodiversity Accounting Payment (Insurance Fund)

$$\text{Biodiversity Accounting Payment} \times 0.1 = \text{CP}$$

Index linked Management Payment (MP) ~ at 20% of the Biodiversity Accounting Payment (Management and Monitoring Fund)

$$\text{Biodiversity Accounting Payment} \times 0.2 = \text{MP}$$

So, overall,

$$\text{BAP} + \text{CP} + \text{MP} = \text{Biodiversity Financial Contribution}$$

12.0.5 This **Biodiversity Financial Contribution** will be made payable to the LPA in accordance with the planning condition or legal agreement. On receipt of the agreed sum, monies will be held by the LPA, which will distribute them into three funds, based on full cost recovery principles. These funds will be spent as set out below.

Biodiversity Accounting Fund

12.0.6 SBC will use this fund to arrange one or more providers to compensate for the loss associated with the development. This could be arranged through a broker, or a separate legal agreement arranged by a lead Local Authority. These arrangements will be detailed within a legal agreement, in accordance with an approved Biodiversity Accounting Management and Monitoring Plan.

² Cumulative indexation for a 30-year management period

Contingency Fund

12.0.7 This fund will be formed from the pooling of the individual contingency payments and will be used to secure additional biodiversity enhancements or other ecological projects that enhance biodiversity. These enhancements will compensate for Biodiversity Accounting Schemes that do not fulfil their ecological objectives.

Management and Monitoring Fund

12.0.8 This fund will cover the costs of the Herts Environmental Records Centre associated with collecting data, managing databases, strategic mapping, to be used to determine where best to locate offsets based on supply of units and meeting agreed biodiversity priorities, for sample on-site monitoring and formal reporting of scheme progress. It will also cover distribution of all three funds where necessary.

12.0.9 The average cost of creation/restoration of habitat (2020 estimate subject to annual inflationary charges) will be:

Habitat Type	Set up costs	Create (per ha)	Maintain (per ha per yr)
Grassland	£7,000	£1686	£227
Woodland	£7,000	£1584	£184
Wetland	£7,000	£1212	£70

Average Area Requirements

12.0.10 The table below shows the average areas required to deliver 1 habitat unit uplift on amenity or modified grassland. These figures are based on offset achieving maximum target condition:

Table 1

Habitat	Average area required to deliver 1 habitat unit on amenity grassland including residual value
Grassland - Lowland meadows	0.3 ha
Grassland - Other natural meadows	0.18 ha
Woodland and forest - Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	2.5 ha
Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub	0.12 ha

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Appendix 4 - Biodiversity Offsetting Management Plan Guidance

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13 Appendix 4 - Biodiversity Offsetting Management Plan Guidance

13.0.1 This guidance sets out what Stevenage Borough Council expects to see in a Biodiversity Offset Management Plan

Introduction

13.0.2 The preparation of a management plan is an essential component in the development of a biodiversity offset scheme. The plan should outline the management prescriptions that will be carried out in order to achieve the requisite habitat creation/restoration and for the long-term management (specified in the s106) of the newly created/restored habitat(s).

Evaluation of management plans

13.0.3 The Biodiversity Offset Management Plan needs to be approved by Stevenage Borough Council planning authority and their ecological advisors, who will need to be assured that the scheme is capable of delivering the proposed biodiversity benefits. The assessment will be based on information provided in the BOMP, so it is important that the plan provides adequate information. SBC may request further information from the offset provider, if necessary. In some cases, it may be necessary for an ecologist from the local authority to carry out an on-site visit to confirm the assessment of the initial condition of the site.

13.0.4 We expect that best practice will be followed in managing offset schemes, and this should be reflected in the management plans. A large amount of published advice is available on habitat management for delivering conservation outcomes.

Management plan format and content

13.0.5 Guidance on management plan writing, recommended format and contents is available from several sources. A standard management plan format provides factual information on the site including location, tenure, physical and biological features; an evaluation of the existing site habitats, objectives of management e.g. what is proposed including target condition and timescale to reach target condition; detailed management prescriptions, and the process for monitoring and reporting on the sites progress towards meeting its targets.

13.0.6 The level of detail provided in the management plan will depend on the complexity of the offset site, existing habitat(s) and proposed habitats. Many offset schemes will be small e.g. a single field and the proposed enhancements and management relatively simple (at least in theory). The amount of information provided e.g. site description, should reflect this. However, it is important that all management plans provide adequate information to enable the local planning authority to assess the proposed offset schemes ability to deliver and sustain the proposed biodiversity gains in the long-term.

13.1 The Management Plan

13.1.1 The management plan is likely to require the following information:

Location and description of site

13.1.2 Essentially a collation of information about the site, including general points such as location, tenure, site designations, environmental information, biological information, archaeological & historical information, past uses of the site. The first stage in this process is a desk study of available information. Sources of information must include the Herts Environmental Record Centre. Not all types of information will be relevant or available for all sites. Types of information will include:

Location

13.1.3 A map showing the location and boundaries of the receptor site should be provided together with a grid reference. Basic site statistics such as area (ha) should be provided.

Land tenure

13.1.4 Provide details of land ownership and occupation.

Access and public interest

13.1.5 Provide details and map of access to the site including any public rights of way, access required for management e.g. machinery

Site designation and notable interest

13.1.6 Provide details of any statutory designation (e.g. NNR, SSSI, LNR etc) and non-statutory designations (LWS, Ecosites) within or near to the site (give distances to the site).

Environmental information

13.1.7 This section should provide information geology & soils, hydrology, biological information, habitats & vegetation communities and cultural information. Concentrate on factors which are of importance to the habitats being created or restored e.g. grassland soils.

Geology and Soils

13.1.8 Include information on geology and soils which help in understanding the ecology of the site and which might influence site management. For example, information on geology and soil type will determine whether the site is suitable for grassland creation or restoration and inform decisions on target community (e.g. low available phosphorus and appropriate pH).

13.1.9 Geological information can be obtained from the British Geological Survey (BGS) (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>). Information on soils can be obtained from the UK Soil Observatory/Natural Environment Research Council (<http://www.ukso.org/>) and the National Soil Resources Institute at Cranfield University (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>). These will indicate general soil types in the area but laboratory analysis are required to determine soil properties at the site. See field assessment section below for guidance on soil analysis.

Topography

13.1.10 The topography of a site can influence habitats and possibly management. Briefly describe the topography of the site e.g. slope, aspect, features of importance for management etc.

Hydrology

13.1.11 An understanding of the hydrology of sites is essential for wetlands but can also influence other habitat types e.g. grasslands, and may also affect management. Describe the hydrology of the site e.g. the type of watercourse or water body, directions of flow, water sources, water quality, evidence of inundation etc. Again, concentrate on features that influence habitats to be created or enhanced, and management.

13.1.12 For wetlands including ponds, water quality is the most important factor influencing the wildlife value of a pond. This generally means clean, unpolluted, water with low levels of nutrients (like nitrates and phosphates).

13.2 Biological information

Flora and fauna

13.2.1 It is important to know what existing flora and fauna is present within or the near site. Particular attention should be given to protected and notable species and any other species which will influence or be affected by management e.g. invasive species. Information on the site and its surroundings should be obtained from [The Herts Environmental Records Centre](#)

Habitats and vegetation communities

13.2.2 Provide details of the habitats and, where relevant, vegetation communities found on the site, with distribution extent of each habitat shown on a map. The level of detail will vary from site to site but in most cases the broad habitat type will be sufficient. However, if detailed information exists or there are particular habitats or habitat features of high conservation importance, either in their own right or for key species, this should be provided.

13.3 Cultural information

Land use

13.3.1 Information on past land use and management (if available) is valuable for understanding how the site/habitat has changed over time. The reinstatement of traditional management is often prescribed for the restoration of priority habitats. Please give details of past (especially traditional management e.g. hay meadow, coppicing etc) where known and also present/recent management, especially where this may have influenced the current condition of the site, e.g. intensive agricultural management. Also give brief details of any land use in the area immediately bordering the site if these may have an impact on the site, for example pollution, fertiliser drift or disturbance.

Archaeological, cultural or historical interest

13.3.2 Provide details of any features on the site which are of archaeological, cultural or historical importance. Please consult [The Herts Historic Environment Advisory Service](#)

13.4 Field Assessment

Ecological Survey

13.4.1 The offset site should be surveyed by a competent botanist at an appropriate time of year for the habitat(s) present at the site. Surveys should record and map Phase 1 habitat types, UK habitats or NVC communities. Habitat description categories should be supported by UK habitat descriptions. Phase 1 and NVC habitats should be converted into UK habitats descriptions. Details of grassland conversion from NVC to UK habitats is provided in table 1 below.

Table 2 Stevenage specific conversion of grassland habitats from NVC to UK habitats descriptions used in metric

Habitat type – from metric	NVC equivalent
Lowland calcareous grassland	CG2, CG3, CG6, CG7
Acid grassland	U1, U20
Lowland meadow	MG5, MG4
Modified grassland	MG7
Other neutral grassland	MG1, MG6, MG9, MG10, MG11, MG12, MG13
Tall herb communities	OV22, OV23, OV24, OV25

13.4.2 Full details of the survey should be provided in the Management Plan. This will provide information for the local planning authority to assess the suitability of the offset proposal. It also establishes the baseline of the offset site before creation or restoration management has started and against which the success of the scheme in meeting its target(s) can be assessed.

Site Survey results

13.4.3 The survey results should include:

- A description of the site including habitat(s), dominant/characteristic species, notable species etc; topography, aspect, hydrology, soil (see section below)
- A habitat map should be provided based on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey Handbook (JNCC 2010);
- A full species list;
- Photographs of the site, for example, that highlight the condition of the site e.g. rank grassland, scrub encroachment etc;
- Any factors affecting condition and/or management e.g. is the site suitable for grazing, recreational pressure etc

Baseline condition assessment

13.4.4 The current condition of the different habitats covered by the offset site need to be assessed to establish the baseline unit value of the site. The Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Technical Supplement contains condition assessment tables for most habitats (1.12).

13.4.5 The Technical Supplement does not contain condition assessment for all habitats. In this case, the ecologist should use their professional judgment and experience to determine condition, using attributes such as species-richness, the presence of indicator species (positive and negative), structural and age diversity etc. in relation to the NVC habitat type that the habitat is most similar to.

13.4.6 The field survey and condition assessment should be undertaken under suitable conditions e.g. appropriate time of year. Where conditions are not ideal e.g. grass is tightly grazed, the condition assessment should be carried out at a later date when conditions are suitable, otherwise a precautionary approach should be taken in assigning condition i.e. if it is difficult to determine if the habitat is in poor or moderate condition, the habitat should be assigned to the higher condition category.

13.4.7 When using the Technical Supplement to assess condition, count the number of failed criteria to determine the condition. Habitats are in good condition when all criteria are met, moderate condition where it fails on just one criteria and poor condition when it fails on 2 or more criteria.

13.4.8 Details of the condition assessment should be provided. For example, a condition assessment for grasslands should be based on the Technical Supplement methodology i.e. carry out a structured walk (see also monitoring section below). Photographs showing condition of habitat e.g. rank grassland, scrub encroachment etc should also be provided. Community representative, high resolution quadrat photographs rather than landscape photographs are particularly useful to verify botanical assessments and will be expected.

Table 3 Grassland condition assessment from Technical Supplement (adapted for Stevenage)

Habitat Description		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes both agricultural, recreational, amenity, road verges and semi-natural grassland types including Priority Habitat Grasslands on all soil types Will be dominated by grassland species with very little (is any) dwarf shrub, wetland or wooded species within the sward Will exist above and below the level of enclosure at all altitudes 		
Condition Assessment Criteria		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The area is clearly and easily recognisable as a good example of the grassland type and there is little difference between what is described in the relevant habitat classifications and what is visible on site The appearance and composition of the vegetation on site should very closely match the characteristics for the specific habitat (i.e. as described by the UK Habitat Classification or NVC community), with species typical of the habitat representing a significant majority of the vegetation Wildflowers, sedges and indicator species for the specific grassland habitat are very clearly and easily visible throughout the sward and occur at high densities in high frequency. See relevant Habitat Classification for details of indicator species for specific habitat Undesirable species and physical damage is below 5% cover Cover of bare ground less than 10% (including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens) Cover of Bracken less than 20% and cover of scrub and bramble less than 5% 		
Condition Assessment Criteria Score		
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildflower and sedges listed for the habitat type above 30% excluding White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>), Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) and injurious weeds Meets all the condition criteria with only minor variation None of the indicators of poor condition are present (4, 5 & 6) Newly created grassland cannot reach this level because of invertebrate impoverishment due to colonisation limitations 	3
Fairly good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slightly lower forb ratio than above Newly created grassland cannot reach this level because of invertebrate impoverishment due to colonisation limitations 	2.5
Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total cover of wildflowers and sedges less than 30%, excluding White Clover, Creeping Buttercup and injurious weeds OR clearly fails at least 1 of the condition criteria OR the grassland type has some differences between what is described in the relevant habitat classifications and what is visible on site. It is a lower quality example of the habitat, but clearly recognisable as such 	2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially restorable to grassland Priority Habitat with improved management Cover of undesirable species at 5-15% Newly created meadow grassland can achieve this condition in time frame available 	
Fairly Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorer examples of above with lower forb ratio Proposed wildflower grassland with only one cut, or cuts in Spring and Autumn can only achieve this condition because they will be subject to net nutrient enrichment 	1.5
Poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the condition criteria are being failed Cover of undesirable species above 15% 	1
Undesirable species		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creeping Thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>) Spear Thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>) Curled Dock (<i>Rumex crispus</i>) Broad-leaved Dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>) Common Ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>) Common Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>) Cow Parsley (<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>) Marsh Thistle (<i>Cirsium palustre</i>) Marsh Ragwort (<i>Senecio aquaticus</i>) 		
Notes		
Physical damage to the vegetation from excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, or any other damaging management activities		

Soil analysis

13.4.9 It is important that soil surveys and analysis are carried out where soil is an important factor in habitat creation and management. Advice on how to undertake a soil survey can be found in Natural England Technical Information Note TIN035. The laboratory analysis should include pH, available phosphorus, available potassium, available magnesium, total nitrogen, and hand soil texture. Natural England Technical Advice Note TIN036 gives advice on the interpretation of soil analysis. The results of the soil analysis should be presented in the management plan.

Site evaluation

13.4.10 The results of the field survey and soil analysis should be used to assess site suitability for habitat creation or restoration. Present the results of this assessment in the Biodiversity Offset Management Plan.

13.4.11 It is important that the right site is chosen for the proposed habitat. If site conditions are unsuitable e.g. nutrient levels too high, it is unlikely the scheme will succeed. The local authority has to have confidence that the scheme can deliver the proposed improvements in habitat condition. Where it is not confident that the scheme can deliver, it will request further information or may reject the scheme and request that an alternative site is found.

Calculating the offset biodiversity baseline

13.4.12 The baseline biodiversity unit value of the offset site should be calculated by entering the Phase 1 habitat type, current condition and area into the Biodiversity Calculator.

13.5 The Offset and Proposal Delivery

13.5.1 The habitat creation/restoration proposals must be described in detail. To be acceptable to the local planning authority, the following general principles should be applied to development schemes involving habitat creation and proposals must include descriptions of:

- The location, size and physical characteristics of the receptor site and presented on site plans.
- Details of the habitats/conservation features to be created/enhanced.
- Details of the offset provider (e.g. their resources, skills, experience) to deliver the offset.
- The methodology to be used to create the habitat/features
- Details of the long-term management proposed for the establishment and maintenance of the habitat/nature conservation feature.
- Future ecological monitoring of the habitat.

13.5.2 The appropriateness of all biodiversity offsetting schemes will be assessed by the SBC ecological advisors. Should the scheme be deemed as inappropriate, e.g. the proposed habitat, management prescriptions, target condition or timescales are considered unsuitable/unrealistic, and the scheme is considered unlikely to succeed, then the scheme will need to be amended or a biodiversity offsetting scheme on an alternative site put forward.

Calculating the biodiversity value of the proposed biodiversity offset

13.5.3 The biodiversity gain produced by the proposed offset scheme should be calculated using the biodiversity metric. The following data are required:

- Proposed Phase 1 habitat(s)
- Area of habitat to be created or enhanced
- Target condition
- Time to target condition
- Spatial multiplier e.g. is this offset in a strategically important area

Setting target condition and time to condition

13.5.4 Guidance from the Defra Biodiversity Metric supporting documents (2019) suggested that offset providers should only offer biodiversity units generated from a one step-change in condition (e.g. to improve the condition of the habitat from poor to moderate) to minimise the risks of the conservation action failing to deliver. As management actions are undertaken and the habitat improves then in due course the project can be re-valued and further units released for sale (e.g. a further improvement in condition from moderate to good). We support this precautionary approach. However, under the right conditions (e.g. low soil fertility) and management, for certain habitats, it should be possible to achieve more than a one-step change in condition e.g. poor to good condition. However, evidence will need to be presented in the management plan to justify this.

13.6 Objectives & Management

Objectives

13.6.1 Objectives should identify and describe what will be done i.e. expand (i.e. create) or restore habitat to deliver a change in habitat condition.

Habitat management prescriptions

13.6.2 Provide details of the management activities that are proposed to be carried out during the life time of the management plan in order to achieve the management plan objectives. Details of location (e.g. management plan compartment), timing and methodology should be given for each activity. This will include details of the establishment method e.g. grassland creation and a detailed work programme for the lifetime of the offset (specified in the s106), identifying when works are programmed to take place.

13.6.3 N.B. management prescriptions and habitat creation must be sensitive of the structure required to sustain invertebrate populations. Homogenous and simplistic management to achieve purely botanical aims are not acceptable. For example, rotationally uncut strips within hay meadows will be expected together with features such as permanent bare ground and managed scrub interface. Complex habitat interactions are encouraged such as ponds and wetlands within hay meadows or woodland. For more information on invertebrate habitat management see: Kirby, P. (1992), *Habitat Management for Invertebrates: A Practical Handbook*, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Features Influencing Management of the site

13.6.4 Give details of any features which may influence the management of the site. This may include management constraints e.g. access for machinery or livestock, or legal constraints such as the presence of protected or invasive species.

13.7 Monitoring and reporting

13.7.1 The BOMP should set out the monitoring that will be undertaken to measure the success of the scheme in meeting its objectives.

Ecological Monitoring

13.7.2 Monitoring is an essential element of the management plan. It is required to ensure the successful establishment/restoration of the habitat, evaluating the success of management activities and provide feedback for management.

13.7.3 Any area of the site that is managed as part of an Offset agreement will need to conform to any agreed timetable. This is likely to be the first year of commencement and years 2, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 30 thereafter to evidence that management of the Offset Site is being successfully implemented.

Field assessment

13.7.4 The field assessment should be carried out by a competent botanist at an appropriate time of year. Standard habitat condition assessment methodologies should be followed e.g. structured walks through the habitat stopping at regular intervals to record condition attributes. For example, for grasslands follow the methodology set out in the Technical Supplement i.e. take a representative walk (e.g. a W route) through the grassland, recording species and other required features at a minimum of 10 stops. Site condition should be assessed using standard criteria where available (in most cases this will be based on criteria used in the Technical Supplement). The assessment methodology and the condition assessment criteria to be used should be set out in the BOMP.

Management Plan Review

13.7.5 The Management Plan should be subject to a review every 10 years. The review should include an appraisal of the habitats present at the site (based on the monitoring surveys), assessment of the success of the management plan to date and any required revisions to the plan. The first Plan review will need to cover:

- Success of initial habitat establishment;
- Problems and experience;
- Establish which management techniques have been successful and those that have not;
- An assessment of whether overall management has been effective.

Offset scheme schedule of costs

13.7.6 The management plan should give details of the offsetting scheme cost. The total cost of the scheme will be a combination of the habitat creation costs and ongoing maintenance costs. For example, for grasslands, creation costs might include seed purchase and sowing, ground preparation, weed control, installing stock proof fencing etc. Maintenance costs will include annual management e.g. haymaking and grazing for the duration of the scheme (e.g. 30 years). The schedule of costs should also include the production of the management plan, management plan reviews and ecological monitoring of the offset scheme. All costings should allow for inflation (using an index rate of 3.61% per annum).

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Appendix 5 - The Natural England Biodiversity Metric V2, with supporting documents

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14 Appendix 5 - The Natural England Biodiversity Metric V2, with supporting documents

14.0.1 <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>

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Appendix 6 - Scientific evidence for habitat creation and restoration

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15 Appendix 6 - Scientific evidence for habitat creation and restoration

15.0.1 <https://apps.warwickshire.gov.uk/api/documents/WCCC-863-794>

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Appendix 7 - Planning policy, legislation and guidance references to measurable net gain

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16 Appendix 7 - Planning policy, legislation and guidance references to measurable net gain

16.0.1 EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020;

16.0.2 Paragraph 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2019) states that:

"Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements"

This infers a due regard for the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 which states:

"Target 2: Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services...ensuring no net loss of biodiversity. This will be achieved ... by ensuring that any unavoidable residual impacts are compensated for or offset."

16.0.3 NERC Act 2006;

16.0.4 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of all their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by Government in its Biodiversity 2020 strategy.

16.0.5 Making Space for Nature 2010;

"Biodiversity offsets established through the planning process are another mechanism that could be used to enhance ecological networks."

"The operation of a system of biodiversity offsets could deliver net gains for wildlife.."

16.0.6 25 year Environment Plan 2018;

"We will embed an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure"

"We want to establish strategic, flexible and locally tailored approaches that recognise the relationship between the quality of the environment and development. That will enable us to achieve measurable improvements for the environment – 'environmental net gains' – while ensuring economic growth and reducing costs, complexity and delays for developers."

"Our immediate ambition is to work in partnership with other Government bodies, local planning authorities and developers to mainstream the use of existing biodiversity net gain approaches within the planning system,"

"Actions we will take include making sure that existing requirements for net gain for biodiversity in national planning policy are strengthened,"

16.0.7 The Draft Environment (Principles and Governance) Bill 2018 policy paper;

“Subject to consultation, we intend to legislate on mandatory biodiversity net gain to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and help deliver thriving natural spaces for communities”

16.0.8 National Planning Policy Framework 2019;

“Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains)”

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity,”

“To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

16.0.9 Planning Practise Guidance, Natural Environment, July 2019

“Plans, and particularly those containing strategic policies, can be used to set out a suitable approach to both biodiversity and wider environmental net gain, how it will be achieved, and which areas present the best opportunities to deliver gains.”

“The National Planning Policy Framework encourages net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. It may help local authorities to meet their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.”

“Planning conditions or obligations can, in appropriate circumstances, be used to require that a planning permission provides for works that will measurably increase biodiversity”

“Benefits could be achieved entirely on-site or by using off-site gains where necessary. Off-site measures can sometimes be secured from ‘habitat banks’, which comprise areas of enhanced or created habitats which generate biodiversity unit ‘credits’”

“Tools such as the Defra biodiversity metric can be used to assess whether a biodiversity net gain outcome is expected to be achieved”

“Using a metric is a pragmatic way to calculate the impact of a development and the net gain that can be achieved. The biodiversity metric can be used to demonstrate whether or not biodiversity net gain will be achieved. It enables calculation of losses and gains by assessing habitat:

- distinctiveness: whether the type of habitat is of high, medium or low value to wildlife.
- condition: whether the habitat is a good example of its type.
- extent: the area that the habitat occupies.

To achieve net gain, a development must have a sufficiently higher biodiversity unit score after development than before development.”

“It is good practice to establish a detailed management plan to ensure appropriate management of the habitat in the long term, and to arrange for regular but proportionate monitoring on how the habitat creation or enhancement is progressing, indicating any remedial action necessary. Planning authorities may consider recording where habitat compensation has been established, and how relevant survey and monitoring data can best be utilised to strengthen the local biodiversity evidence base; for example by working with Local Environmental Record Centres.”

16.0.10 National Design Code, Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government, 2019

“93 Open spaces are designed to be high quality, robust and adaptable over time so that they remain fit for purpose and are managed and maintained for continual use.

94 Open spaces include public, shared and private outdoor spaces with:

- well-integrated drainage, ecology, shading, recreation and food production that achieve a biodiversity net gain as required by the 25-year Environment Plan

98 Well-designed developments include site-specific enhancements to achieve biodiversity net gains at neighbourhood, street and household level.”

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Stevenage Borough Council

**The Draft Impact of Development on
Biodiversity Supplementary Planning
Document (2020)**

Consultation Statement

30 November 2020 – 25 January 2021



Introduction

This document has been prepared to show how the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 were adhered to during the production and adoption of the Stevenage Borough Council Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (2020).

The SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions and the purpose of the SPD is to give further guidance and clarity regarding policies SP12: Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment of the adopted Stevenage Local Plan.

Town and Country Planning Regulations

The SPD has been produced in accordance with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The most relevant regulations relating to the process are as follows:

- Regulation 12: Regulation 12(a) requires the Council to produce a consultation statement before adoption of the SPD, this must set out who was consulted, a summary of the issues raised, and how these issues were incorporated in to the SPD.
- Regulation 12(b) requires the Council to publish the documents for a minimum 4 week consultation, specify the date when responses should be received and identify the address to which responses should be sent.
- Regulation 35: Regulation 12 states that when seeking representations on an SPD, documents must be available in accordance with Regulation 35. This requires the Council to make documents available by taking the following steps;
 - Make the document available at the principal office and other places within the area that the Council considers appropriate;
 - Publish the document on the Council's website

Details of consultation

Following approval at a meeting of the SBC Executive, consultation was undertaken on the Draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD for a period of over eight weeks, from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021. Consultation was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Consultees who have previously signed up to the planning consultation list were contacted by email, or by post where no email address had been provided.

The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website home page and Planning Policy pages. It also appeared on the Stevenage Borough Council Twitter page and in a copy of the Chronicle which is delivered to every residence in Stevenage. A hard copy of the consultation document was available at the Council offices and in the Customer Service Centre.

Representations were submitted on the Council's planning consultation portal, Objective (<https://stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/>), or were sent via email to Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk.

Who was consulted?

A list of consultees is provided in Appendix 1.

What were the main issues raised during the consultation?

The main topics raised during the consultation were:

- *Clarity to reveal what 10% net gain in biodiversity would look like physically. Suggestions for additional visuals and graphics to illustrate this.*
- *Changes required bringing the Biodiversity Metric in line with DEFRA Metric Multipliers.*
- *General support for the additional nature and wildlife protection this SPD will help to facilitate.*
- *Consider Biodiversity Net Gain at the earliest possible stages of development.*
- *It may be sensible to wait until further guidance or formal legislation is passed to provide the clarity applicants and the LPA need in respect of requirements for proposals*
- *Remove maps based on data from MAGIC (Multi Agency Geographic Information on the Countryside) as these may prove misleading.*
- *Species considerations are not incorporated within the Metric. Similarly, the role of a biodiversity offset broker is introduced with no previous reference or implication.*
- *Clarifications sought over ownership and who is legally responsible for implementing Biodiversity Net Gain on sites.*
- *In respect of evaluation, appropriate scrutiny is required not only of the plan but also of the initial metric assumptions of the site affected which will determine requirements themselves.*
- *Field Assessment should include a wider range of grassland communities because different grasslands such as calcareous or acid grasslands.*

How has the Council responded to these issues and what changes has the Council made to the SPD document as a result?

The main concepts and principles of the Draft SPD have been maintained and brought forward into the adopted version of the SPD. However, a number of minor amendments have been made to take account of respondents' comments.

A complete schedule of consultation responses, the Council's response to the comments and any changes made to the SPD as a result are provided overleaf:

Name/Organisation	Comment ID	Paragraph	Comments:	SBC Response	SPD Amendment
Member of Public	DIDB1	3	Very important that we remove the bird netting in Stevenage town centre; many of the birds getting trapped and killed in it, including pigeons are protected and should not be subjected to such a cruel situation.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Councillor	DIDB2	4.3	Whilst there's that really clear formula to explain what a contribution will be, there's nothing equivalent to show what a 10% net gain in biodiversity looks like... a little more detail about using the metric could be included, potentially even a quick screenshot as a visual aid to show non-experts.	Noted. Will contact HMWT to see if they are able to provide any graphic visualisations of this.	Amendments to be made if possible.
Member of Public	DIDB3	5.2	Consider making it mandatory for new houses built in Stevenage to have Swift bricks incorporated under the eaves. They do not need any maintenance as Swifts are very clean birds and do not foul their nests.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Member of Public	DIDB4	4.3	Incorrect metric used. Information RE changes required to bring it in line with the DEFRA metric multipliers.	Noted.	Metric to be amended.
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	DIDB5	4.3	Incorrect metric used. Information RE changes required to bring it in line with the DEFRA metric multipliers.	Noted.	Metric to be amended.
Member of Public	DIDB6	2.8	In the Draft Biodiversity SPD 2.8, under policies in the NPPF, it states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has an environmental objective. 174 states: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should: promote.....the protection and recovery of priority species. Mr. C Bennett, CEO Wildlife Trusts, stated (Sept. 2020), The science is very clear. We desperately need to keep the nature we have got and we can't afford to lose any more. It therefore follows that all species, not just priority ones, need genuinely protecting.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Member of Public	DIDB7	12	Alterations to table text.	Noted.	No changes necessary.

Member of Public	DIDB8	1	The Draft Biodiversity SPD as it is too weak to have any impact whatsoever on reversing the drastic decline in nature that we now have in this country. It does not reflect or address the situation, which is the result of development irreversibly destroying wildlife habitats, that we find ourselves in today that of environmental breakdown.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB9	2.3	References in 2.3 to the need to deliver BNG are supported, although the NPPF guidance does not specifically state this is a formal planning requirement as implied.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB10	4	In Section 4 the metric should be correctly referred to as The Biodiversity Metric 2.0, published by Natural England Dec 2019. However, The Biodiversity Metric 3.0 is due to be published in Spring 2021 along with a Small Sites Biodiversity Metric (based on metric 3.0). I advise, therefore, that the SPD is published after these metrics have been published to ensure compliance with the latest tools.	Noted.	No changes as yet but will monitor this as changes occur.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB11	4	BNG now also needs to be an integral component of site allocation at the Development Planning stage, given that it will potentially impact on site viability which is now a consideration of site allocation.	This point is not considered to be appropriate for this Local Plan cycle.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB12	4.3	The principles of how BNG is calculated are outlined in 4.3. References to the Ecological Network Map are provided, although this map may need future revision to make it more practical in terms of influencing BNG.	Noted. This does not need to be reflected in the SPD	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB13	4.5	Development thresholds for BNG are outlined in 4.5 but it may be sensible to wait until further guidance or formal legislation is passed to provide the clarity applicants and the LPA need in respect of requirements for proposals.	Noted.	No changes necessary.

Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB14	5.2	Under 5.2 Fig 5 and Fig 6 are from MAGIC (Multi Agency Geographic Information on the Countryside). They are confusing in that Habitat potential they include may conflict with that on the Ecological / network mapping. Furthermore, for example, an area of central Stevenage is shown as potential arable assemblage for farmland birds whilst the remainder is shown as potential Stone Curlew habitat from NBN data. This is clearly both inaccurate and misleading; there are also no references to these figures in the SPD. They should be removed unless they serve a referenced purpose as currently it is simply a wide range of disparate information, some of it misleading.	Noted.	Maps to be removed.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB15	7	Net gain refers to a net increase in biodiversity resource as a result of development. It can be represented wholly within the development site, partly within the site and elsewhere, or entirely elsewhere. This is not clear from the SPD.	Section 7 opens with a statement that offsets are required when onsite solutions are not sufficient. Later in the document it is made clear that offsets should preferentially be located in Stevenage. In addition, the metric carries with it a penalty for locating an offset outside the administrative boundary.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB16	7.2	In respect of delivery 7.2, the management period will be “in perpetuity” a term not used. This is accepted as a minimum of 30 years; it will be secured through a S106 agreement. These will be requirements of the net gain process by default and not open to discussion, and so any solution must demonstrate this can be achieved or can be paid for. This clarity is not reflected in the SPD.	Noted. We believe this is made clear in the SPD.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB17	7.2	Not convinced that the priority for offsets will be on land owned by local authorities, nature conservation organisations, or land managed by nature conservation organisations is an appropriate statement to make... This should be removed from the SPD which should represent an objective process.	LPA land or nature reserves offer a more secure site for long term BNG delivery. However, this section does not rule out other options. Ultimately a developer can source and provide their own offset (subject to the penalties in the metric) as long as they accord with the SPD. But if they cannot and want to give a sum to the LPA to deliver, it is practical that they look for the best long term solution. But this does not rule out offsets on private land if they are more appropriate or provide better value.	No changes necessary.

Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB18	8	Section 8 details the financial contributions required. Do not understand why this does not include any specific cost expectations (and therefore implications for development) as the Government has clearly outlined its expectations (£9-15k per biodiversity Unit) and a practical approach has already been taken on a number of BNG applications in Hertfordshire (£12k/BU). It is not clear within the main text of the SPD that the financial contribution will be subject to, or part of, the S106 agreement that will secure BNG.	The expected cost implication for the three main habitats is included later in the document Appendix 3 and is based on the Warwickshire financial cost calculator. This is much more precise than the general estimate figure suggested by government.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB19	8.1	Three funds are proposed in 8.1. These have not been proposed by Government but may be in due course, or confirmed once further guidance is published.	These funds are used by Warwickshire in their system and have been operating 8 years. They are therefore considered tested and justified. The Warwickshire system is a fully functioning and tested system	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB20	9	Section 9 Assessing measurable gain includes provision of bird and bat boxes. These are simple enhancements but important nonetheless if breeding / roosting sites are affected. If considered to be important contributors of net gain, they should be introduced and highlighted within the main text to reflect their contribution. Species considerations are not incorporated within the Metric. Similarly, the role of a biodiversity offset broker is introduced with no previous reference or implication.	Local Plans have separate policies for biodiversity features relating to species. This document can encourage good practise such as this but species measures do not relate directly to the metric	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB21	11	Appendix 2. In respect of the Conditions, who is the owner? Is this the landowner of the development site "which may be different to the developer "or the owner of the offset land? Or should it be the applicant proposing the development? This should be clarified. The sample Conditions imply that unless using a broker, the delivery of BNG will be implemented by the LPA. Who is legally responsible for the implementation of BNG? Whilst the Conditions can refer to NPPF in respect of expectations which should be delivered, it is not the statutory instrument which makes the principle of BNG a mandatory requirement. This is the Environment Bill and should be referenced as such. Furthermore, the implied role of the LPA needs clarification: is it the role of the LPA to directly deliver the net gain as implied?	This is template wording which shall be adapted dependant on the specifics of each scheme. It is derived from the Warwickshire system and Environment Bank literature and is therefore tested and suitable.	No changes necessary.

Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB22	12	Appendix 3 needs a title. It expands the calculation of financial contributions already outlined in Section 8. Does this mean that all payment associated with BNG costs will be made to the LPA? It is not clear how any of the funds relate to the Biodiversity Unit cost which is proposed to be a standard and fixed cost, whatever that BU is expected to provide. Neither is it clear how this relates to the proposed creation/restoration costs which are outlined. It is implied that HERC will be responsible for distributing all three funds associated with BNG. Thus far, HERC may not have been involved with any of the planning process to secure BNG. Support for their subsequent monitoring role is important, but implementation of funding to deliver BNG is not the responsibility of HERC. The average area requirements need further consideration.	Noted. Appendix 3 refers to a biodiversity financial agreement and this should be the title of the appendix. This refers to the developer paying the LPA to provide offset, as set out in the appendix.	Amendments to be made.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB23	13	Appendix 4 The Management Plan Guidance is broadly reasonable. It is exhaustive. If it is consistent with the provision of a Biodiversity Gain Plan as outlined within the Environment Bill, it should say so for clarification. In respect of evaluation, appropriate scrutiny is required not only of the plan but also of the initial metric assumptions of the site affected which will determine BU requirements themselves.	The management plan guidance relates to biodiversity offsets and not onsite BNG. That is why it is referred to as a biodiversity Offset Management Plan Guidance. If this process is not consistent with the Environment Bill (which is unlikely) the SPD can be adapted in the future.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB24	13.4	13.4 Field Assessment Table 2 should include a wider range of grassland communities because different grasslands such as calcareous or acid grasslands Table 3 should state this is based on the Technical Supplement generated in support of the Biodiversity Metric V2.	Noted. Calcareous grassland has been included in the table. Acid grassland could be added in another line.	Amendments to be made.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB25	14	Appendix 5 should be titled: The Natural England Biodiversity Metric V2, with supporting documents. Or preferably V3.	Noted. Change to: The Natural England Biodiversity Metric V2, with supporting documents.	Amendments to be made.

Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB26	15	No reference is made anywhere in the SPD to Appendix 6, which provides useful background information and guidance to inform habitat creation and restoration in respect of producing management plans. This should be addressed in the main text; otherwise there seems little point in including this Appendix.	Noted.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB27	16	Appendix 7 Policy etc. as above; reference to this policy list should be referenced within Section 2 policy context in the main document, given it expands on some of the policies already outlined.	It is referenced within the document.	No changes necessary.
Hertfordshire County Council Growth & Infrastructure Unit	DIDB28	1	The SPD makes no reference to the following: Use of Conservation Covenants, Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The proposed changes to the NERC Act Section 40 Biodiversity Duty as set out in the Environment Bill (Duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Biodiversity Gain Plan (see para 29). These matters should be addressed as they are pertinent to the clarity of the SPD and its implementation, consistent with the Environment Bill.	These points are not pertinent at the moment but adaptations can be made to the SPD should it require it post Environment Bill. The point is this document is needed now. To delay it will result in a process void that is avoidable.	No changes necessary.
Member of the Public	DIDB29	4.3	This metric has been the centre of much opposition, the latest of which is in the current, February 2021, edition of the BBC Wildlife Magazine. The other major problem with the metric is the crudity of the ground assessment. The metric completely discounts the complexity of the hedgerow habitats.	The metric was already advocated by national policy guidance and soon to be made mandatory under the environment bill. It is essentially the most legitimate mechanism for measuring biodiversity net gain. Hedgerows are already protected as priority habitats via NERC and NPPF. We will look to protect each hedge impacted by development with a buffer of complimentary habitat.	No changes necessary.

Appendix 1 - Consultees

Specific Consultee Bodies and Duty to Cooperate Bodies consulted

- *The Coal Authority,*
- *The Environment Agency,*
- *Historic England,*
- *The Marine Management Organisation,*
- *Natural England,*
- *Network Rail,*
- *Highways England,*
- *East And North Herts NHS Trust*
- *East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group*
- *Communications operators/organisations (including; Mobile Operators Association, BT Cellnet*
- *Limited, Telefónica, O2 UK Limited, Telereal Trillium, T-Mobile, Virgin Media, Virgin Mobile,*
- *Vodafone Ltd.,)*
- *The Homes and Communities Agency*
- *North Hertfordshire District Council*
- *East Hertfordshire District Council*
- *Other Hertfordshire authorities (including; Borough of Broxbourne, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City And District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Watford Borough Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)*
- *Hertfordshire County Council (including Growth & Infrastructure Unit, Public Health, Passenger Transport)*
- *Hertfordshire Highways*
- *Hertfordshire LEP*
- *Parish councils (including; Aston Parish Council, Codicote Parish Council, Datchworth Parish Council, Graveley Parish Council, Knebworth Parish Council, St Ippolyts Parish Council, Walkern Parish Council, Weston Parish Council, Woolmer Green Parish Council, Wymondley Parish Council)*
- *Hertfordshire Constabulary*
- *Anglian Water*
- *Thames Water*
- *Veolia Water Central (VWC)*
- *National Grid*

General consultation bodies/organisations

<i>5th Stevenage Air Scout Group</i>	<i>Broadwater Community Association</i>
<i>Aberdeen Asset Management</i>	<i>Broom Barns JMI</i>
<i>Active4Less</i>	<i>Brown And Lee</i>
<i>Adlington Planning Team</i>	<i>Brown And Lee Chartered Surveyors</i>
<i>Age Concern Stevenage</i>	<i>Buddhist Centre</i>
<i>Ahmadiyya Muslim Association</i>	<i>Building Research Establishment</i>
<i>Aldi Stores</i>	<i>Bus Users Group Stevenage</i>
<i>Aldwyck Housing Association</i>	<i>C.D.Bayles</i>
<i>Almond Hill Junior Mixed School</i>	<i>Campaign for Real Ale</i>
<i>Alzheimer's Society</i>	<i>Campaign For Real Ale Ltd</i>
<i>Anglian Water</i>	<i>Camps Hill Community Primary School</i>
<i>Aragon Land And Planning</i>	<i>Canyon Play Association</i>
<i>Archangel Michael And St Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church</i>	<i>Carers in Hertfordshire</i>
<i>Arriva</i>	<i>Catesby Property Group</i>
<i>Arriva The Shires And Essex Buses</i>	<i>CBRE Ltd.</i>
<i>Ashtree Primary School</i>	<i>Central Bedfordshire UA</i>
<i>Asian Women Group</i>	<i>Centrebus</i>
<i>Association of North Thames Amenity Societies</i>	<i>Chair North Herts Ramblers Group</i>
<i>Aston Parish Council</i>	<i>Chambers Coaches Stevenage Ltd</i>
<i>Aston Village Society</i>	<i>Chells Community Association</i>
<i>Aviva Investors</i>	<i>Chells Manor Community Association</i>
<i>BAA Safeguarding Team</i>	<i>Chells Scout Group</i>
<i>Barclay School</i>	<i>Chelton Radomes</i>
<i>Barker Parry Town Planning</i>	<i>Christadelphian Community</i>
<i>Barnwell School</i>	<i>Churches Together</i>
<i>BEAMS Ltd</i>	<i>Churches Together in Stevenage</i>
<i>Bedwell Community Association</i>	<i>Circle Anglia</i>
<i>Bedwell Primary And Nursery School</i>	<i>Citizens Advice Bureau</i>
<i>Bell Cornwell LLP</i>	<i>Clague Ashford</i>
<i>Bellway (Northern Home Counties)</i>	<i>Codicote Parish Council</i>
<i>Bellway Homes</i>	<i>Colinade Associates Ltd</i>
<i>Bellway Homes Miller Homes</i>	<i>Colliers International</i>
<i>Bellway Homes, Miller Homes & Wheatley Plc</i>	<i>Commercial Estates Group</i>
<i>Bidwells</i>	<i>Connexions Stevenage</i>
<i>Bloor Homes</i>	<i>Cortex</i>
<i>Bloor Homes South Midlands</i>	<i>Costco Wholesale UK Ltd</i>
<i>Borough of Broxbourne</i>	<i>Countryside Management Service</i>
<i>Bragbury End Residents Group</i>	<i>Countryside Properties plc, Stevenage Rugby Club and the Homes and Communities Agency (Cambridge)</i>
<i>Bridge Builders Christian Trust</i>	<i>CPRE Hertfordshire</i>
<i>British Horse Society</i>	<i>Crossroads Care (Hertfordshire North)</i>

<i>Croudace Strategic Ltd</i>	<i>Finishing Publications Ltd</i>
<i>CTC The National Cycling Charity</i>	<i>First Plan</i>
<i>Cycling UK Stevenage</i>	<i>Fitness First Plc</i>
<i>Dacorum Borough Council</i>	<i>Friends of Forster Country</i>
<i>Datchworth Parish Council</i>	<i>Friends of the Earth (Luton)</i>
<i>Davies And Co</i>	<i>Friends Religious Society</i>
<i>Defence Infrastructure Organisation</i>	<i>Friends, Families and Travellers and Traveller Law Reform Project Community Base</i>
<i>Deloitte</i>	<i>Fusion</i>
<i>Department For Business, Innovation and Skills</i>	<i>Gabriel Securities Ltd</i>
<i>Department For Culture Media And Sport</i>	<i>Genesis Housing Group</i>
<i>Department For Environment Food And Rural Affairs</i>	<i>GHM Consultancy Group Ltd (Logic Homes)</i>
<i>Department For Transport Rail Group</i>	<i>Giles Junior School</i>
<i>Design Council</i>	<i>Giles School</i>
<i>Dixons Dispatch Ltd</i>	<i>Glanville</i>
<i>Douglas Drive Senior Citizens Association</i>	<i>Glasgow City Council</i>
<i>DPDS Consulting Group</i>	<i>GlaxoSmithKline</i>
<i>EADS Astrium</i>	<i>Government Equalities Office</i>
<i>East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group</i>	<i>Graveley Against SNAP Proposals (GASP)</i>
<i>East and North Herts NHS Trust</i>	<i>Graveley Parish Council</i>
<i>East Coast</i>	<i>Graveley School</i>
<i>East Hertfordshire District Council</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Council</i>
<i>East Herts District Council</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Group</i>
<i>East Herts Footpath Society</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Resource Centre</i>
<i>East of England Ambulance Service</i>	<i>Greene King Plc</i>
<i>East Of England Local Government Association (formerly EERA)</i>	<i>Greenside School</i>
<i>Eastlake Stevenage Limited</i>	<i>Gregory Gray Associates</i>
<i>Ecovril Ltd</i>	<i>Gujarati Hindu Association</i>
<i>Endurance estates</i>	<i>Hanover Housing Association</i>
<i>Environment Agency</i>	<i>HAPAS</i>
<i>Epping Forest District Council</i>	<i>Heaton Planning Ltd</i>
<i>Essex County Council</i>	<i>Hermes Real Estate Investment Ltd</i>
<i>Executive</i>	<i>Hertford Road Community Association</i>
<i>F&C REIT Asset Management</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Action on Disability</i>
<i>Fairlands Primary School And Nursery</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders</i>
<i>Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association Of Parish And Town Councils</i>
<i>Fairview Road Residents Association</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils / Welwyn Hatfield Association of Local Councils</i>
<i>Featherstone Wood Primary School</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association Of Young People</i>
<i>Fields in Trust</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre</i>

<i>Hertfordshire Care Trust</i>	<i>Iceni Projects Ltd</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Chamber Of Commerce And Industry</i>	<i>Independent Custody Visitors Scheme</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Constabulary</i>	<i>Intercounty Properties</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council</i>	<i>J Young Investments Ltd.</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Archaeology)</i>	<i>JB Planning Associates</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Estates)</i>	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Highways)</i>	<i>John Henry Newman RC School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council Public Health</i>	<i>Jones Day</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Fire And Rescue Service</i>	<i>Jones Lang LaSalle</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Gardens Trust</i>	<i>Kirkwells</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service</i>	<i>Knebworth Estates</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Highways</i>	<i>Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust</i>
<i>Hertfordshire LEP</i>	<i>Knebworth Parish Council</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police</i>	<i>Lambert Smith Hampton</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police Authority</i>	<i>Land Registry Head Office</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police Eastern Area</i>	<i>Lanes New Homes</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Property (HCC)</i>	<i>Langley Parish Meeting</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Society for the Blind</i>	<i>Larwood School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service</i>	<i>Lepus Consulting</i>
<i>Hertfordshire University</i>	<i>Letchmore Infants And Nursery School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum</i>	<i>Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation</i>
<i>Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust</i>	<i>Leys Primary And Nursery School</i>
<i>Herts Against the Badger Cull</i>	<i>Lincolns Tyre Service Ltd.</i>
<i>Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust</i>	<i>Living Streets</i>
<i>Herts Gay Community</i>	<i>Lodge Farm Primary School</i>
<i>Hertsmere Borough Council</i>	<i>London and Cambridge Properties Ltd</i>
<i>Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association</i>	<i>London Borough of Barnet</i>
<i>Highways England</i>	<i>London Borough of Enfield</i>
<i>Hill Residential Limited</i>	<i>London Borough of Harrow</i>
<i>HilliersHRW Solicitors LLP</i>	<i>London Gypsies and Travellers Unit</i>
<i>Historic England</i>	<i>Longmeadow Primary School</i>
<i>Hitchin Town Action Group</i>	<i>Lonsdale School</i>
<i>Holiday Inn Express</i>	<i>Luton Borough Council</i>
<i>Holy Trinity Church</i>	<i>Mantle</i>
<i>Home Builders Federation</i>	<i>Marine Management Organisation</i>
<i>Home Group</i>	<i>Marriotts Gymnastics Club</i>
<i>Homes And Communities Agency</i>	<i>Marriotts School</i>
<i>Howard Cottage Housing Association</i>	<i>Martin Ingram Opticians</i>
<i>Howard Property Group</i>	<i>Martins Wood Primary School</i>
<i>HSBC Trust Company (UK) Limited</i>	<i>Mayor of London</i>
<i>Hubert C Leach Ltd</i>	<i>MBDA UK Ltd</i>
<i>Hythe Ltd</i>	<i>Miller Strategic Land</i>

<i>Mind in Herts</i>	<i>Pin Green Community Centre</i>
<i>MKG Motor Group</i>	<i>Pin Green Residents Association</i>
<i>Moss Bury Primary School</i>	<i>Pin Green Residents Group</i>
<i>Moult Walker Chartered Surveyors</i>	<i>Planning Issues Ltd</i>
<i>MS Society Mid Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Planning Potential Ltd</i>
<i>NaCSBA</i>	<i>Planware Ltd</i>
<i>National Express</i>	<i>Planware Ltd.</i>
<i>National Housing Federation</i>	<i>POhWER</i>
<i>Natural England</i>	<i>Princes Trust</i>
<i>Network Rail</i>	<i>Putterills Of Hertfordshire</i>
<i>NFGLG</i>	<i>Rapleys LLP</i>
<i>NHS East and North Hertfordshire CCG</i>	<i>REACT</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Green Party</i>	<i>Redrow Homes (Eastern) Ltd</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire College</i>	<i>Redrow Homes Eastern Division</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire District Council</i>	<i>Regional Land Holdings Ltd.</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire Friends Of The Earth</i>	<i>Relate North Hertfordshire And Stevenage</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire People First</i>	<i>Renshaw UK Limited</i>
<i>North Herts & Stevenage Green Party</i>	<i>rg+p Ltd</i>
<i>North Herts and Stevenage Community Learning Disability Team</i>	<i>Richborough Estates</i>
<i>North Herts Homes</i>	<i>Ridgemonnd Park Training Centre</i>
<i>North Herts People First</i>	<i>River Beane Restoration Association</i>
<i>North Stevenage Consortium</i>	<i>Road Haulage Association</i>
<i>Odyssey Group Holdings</i>	<i>Roebuck and Marymead Residents Association</i>
<i>Office for Rail Regulation</i>	<i>Roebuck Nursery And Primary School</i>
<i>Old Stevenage Community Association</i>	<i>Round Diamond Primary School</i>
<i>On Behalf Of St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>RPF Developments</i>
<i>Origin Housing Group</i>	<i>RPS Planning and Development Ltd</i>
<i>Oval Community Centre</i>	<i>RSPB</i>
<i>PACE</i>	<i>Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd</i>
<i>Paradigm Housing Group</i>	<i>Savils</i>
<i>Passenger Transport Unit, Hertfordshire County Council</i>	<i>Saving North Herts Green Belt</i>
<i>Patient Liaison Group</i>	<i>Secretary of State for Communities</i>
<i>Peacock And Smith</i>	<i>Seebohm Executors</i>
<i>Peartree Spring Junior School</i>	<i>Shephalbury Sports Academy</i>
<i>Pennyroyal Ltd.</i>	<i>Shephall Community Association</i>
<i>Pentangle Design</i>	<i>Shephall Residents Association</i>
<i>Persimmon Homes</i>	<i>Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain</i>
<i>PHD Associates</i>	<i>Simmons And Sons</i>
<i>Physically Hanidcapped And Able Bodied Club</i>	<i>South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership</i>
<i>Picture Ltd</i>	<i>Sport England</i>
<i>Pigeon Investment Management Ltd</i>	<i>Sport Stevenage</i>
<i>Pigeon Land Ltd</i>	<i>Springfield House Community Association</i>

<i>St Albans City And District Council</i>	<i>Thames Water Property</i>
<i>St Ippolyts Parish Council</i>	<i>The Baha'I Community of Stevenage</i>
<i>St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School</i>	<i>The Campaign for Real Ale</i>
<i>St Nicholas Community Centre</i>	<i>The Coal Authority</i>
<i>St Nicholas School</i>	<i>The Greens & Great Wymondley Residents Association</i>
<i>St Vincent De Paul RC Primary School</i>	<i>The Guinness Trust</i>
<i>St. Nicholas and Martins Wood Residents Association</i>	<i>The Guinness Partnership</i>
<i>Stanhope Plc</i>	<i>The Gypsy Council</i>
<i>STARCOURT CONSTRUCTION LTD</i>	<i>The Hitchin Forum</i>
<i>Stevenage And North Hertfordshire Indian Cultural Society</i>	<i>The Living Room</i>
<i>Stevenage and North Herts Women's Resource Centre</i>	<i>The National Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Borough Council</i>	<i>The Nobel School</i>
<i>Stevenage Borough Council Transportation Development</i>	<i>The Salvation Army</i>
<i>Stevenage Business Initiative</i>	<i>The Theatres Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Caribbean and African Association</i>	<i>The Woodland Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Caribbean And African Association (SCARAFa)</i>	<i>Theatres Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Cricket Club</i>	<i>Thomas Alleyne School</i>
<i>Stevenage CVS</i>	<i>T-Mobile</i>
<i>Stevenage Depression Alliance</i>	<i>TRACKS (Autism)</i>
<i>Stevenage Haven</i>	<i>Transport for London</i>
<i>Stevenage Irish Network</i>	<i>Trotts Hill Primary And Nursery School</i>
<i>Stevenage League Of Hospital Friends</i>	<i>Troy Planning</i>
<i>Stevenage Mosque</i>	<i>Turley</i>
<i>Stevenage Polish Association</i>	<i>Universities Superannuation Scheme Ltd</i>
<i>Stevenage Quakers</i>	<i>USF Nominees Ltd.</i>
<i>Stevenage Regeneration Ltd.</i>	<i>Veale Associates</i>
<i>Stevenage Sikh Cultural Association</i>	<i>Veolia Water Central (VWC)</i>
<i>Stevenage Town Rugby Club</i>	<i>VEOLIA WATER CENTRAL LIMITED</i>
<i>Stevenage Women's Refuge</i>	<i>Vincent And Gorbing Planning Associates</i>
<i>Stevenage World Forum For Ethnic Minorities</i>	<i>Virgin Media</i>
<i>Stevenage Youth Council</i>	<i>Visit East Anglia</i>
<i>Stewart Ross Associates</i>	<i>Vodafone Ltd</i>
<i>Strutt and Parker LLP</i>	<i>Waitrose Ltd</i>
<i>Symonds Green Community Association</i>	<i>Walkern Parish Council</i>
<i>Taylor Wimpey</i>	<i>Watford Borough Council</i>
<i>Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon</i>	<i>Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council</i>
<i>Telefónica O2 UK Limited</i>	<i>Welwyn Hatfield Council</i>
<i>Telereal Trillium</i>	<i>West Stevenage Consortium</i>
<i>Terence O'Rourke Ltd</i>	<i>Weston Parish Council</i>
<i>Thames Water</i>	<i>Wheatley Homes</i>

<i>Wheatley Homes Ltd</i>	<i>Woolmer Green Parish Council</i>
<i>Willmott Dixon Housing</i>	<i>WPNPF</i>
<i>Wm Morrisons Supermarket Plc</i>	<i>Wyndley Parish Council</i>
<i>Women's Link</i>	<i>Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd</i>
<i>Woodland Trust</i>	<i>Young Pride in Herts</i>
<i>Woolenwich Infant And Nursery School</i>	<i>Youth Council</i>

Approximately 950 individuals on the Council consultation register were also consulted.

Appendix 2 – Consultation Publicity



[View all news](#)

Stevenage Borough Council launches Biodiversity Consultation

Posted on 30 Nov 2020

Share:     

The promotion of biodiversity and nature has always been a priority of the Council and recently we updated our Biodiversity Action Plan to show how we will maintain biodiversity conservation and improvement.

We also want to make sure that developers meet their requirements to conserve and enhance biodiversity in our town through their proposed schemes.

To this end, we are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers should incorporate biodiversity into their proposed schemes or alternatively provide financial contributions to the Council to implement biodiversity improvements on their behalf

It has been prepared in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and is the first of its kind in Hertfordshire. The Consultation runs from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021

Members of the public may have their say on the Council's planning consultation portal at <https://stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/> or by emailing Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk

John Gardner, Executive Member for the Environment and Regeneration, said: "Stevenage Borough Council has for a number of years been working in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to improve the biodiversity of our town and welcomed the Government's 2018 Environment 25 year Plan calling for a net gain policy of biodiversity in all new developments. Biodiversity is one of the best indicators of a balanced and sustainable community, also helping to address the challenges of climate change. This draft SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) is offered for public consultation and support to help developers meet the objectives of the "10% Net Gain" biodiversity policy for the benefit of future generations."

In addition, with a significant level of growth and development planned in the coming years, the council wants to ensure that developers provide mitigation against the impacts of their proposed schemes.

This will involve developers providing, or contributing funds towards, infrastructure and public services within the town, which could include the construction of roads/cycleways, or the provision of land for additional schools or health facilities.

Other mitigation will also include the use of good design to provide sports facilities, open spaces, community facilities and opportunities for residents to use sustainable transport as part of our attempt to combat climate change.

We are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers will be expected to contribute to Stevenage's infrastructure and services when implementing planning permissions in the future.

This is in addition to the Council's adoption of a Community Infrastructure Levy earlier this year which aims to fund infrastructure more widely across the borough.

Consultation runs from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021. Have your say on the [Council's planning consultation portal](#) or email your thoughts to Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk

Cllr John Gardner, added: "We are pleased to offer this draft SPD for public consultation and support, to both clarify and increase public transparency of the valued financial contributions developers are required to make towards the essential infrastructure required for all developments. A key feature within the document is a requirement for Developers to ensure a portion of the construction jobs and apprenticeships associated with their development are available to local residents for the benefit of Stevenage."



Stevenage Council  @StevenageBC · Jan 21 ...

We have updated our Biodiversity Action Plan to show how we will maintain conservation by working alongside our partners and launched a new consultation in tandem with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. See it here -

stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/



 1

 3



Chronicle

Stevenage Borough Council's quarterly residents' magazine

Winter 2020

Biodiversity Consultation launched Plan to protect wildlife as part of proposed developments

The promotion of biodiversity and nature has always been a priority of the Council and recently we updated our Biodiversity Action Plan to show how we will maintain and improve biodiversity conservation.

We also want to make sure that developers meet their requirements to conserve and enhance biodiversity in our town through their proposed schemes.

To this end, we are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers should incorporate biodiversity into their proposed schemes or alternatively provide financial contributions to the Council to implement biodiversity improvements on their behalf.



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Stevenage Borough Council

Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

The Purpose of this Statement

This screening statement has been prepared to determine whether the proposed SBC Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations).

The purpose of the Biodiversity SPD is to aid the effective implementation of policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, adopted May 2019. Specifically, the SPD is being introduced to support:

- Policy SP12 – Green infrastructure and the natural environment

The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will inform Development Management decisions. The SPD will provide practical advice to all parties seeking to comply with the Local Plan policies and will therefore be of particular use to developers and agents looking to bring forward development.

Strategic Environmental Assessment – Regulatory requirements

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication '[A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive](#)' (ODPM, 2005) and [Paragraph 11- 008 of the Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG), which states that "supplementary planning documents do not require sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the local plan.

Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.

The objective of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The 2001 Directive has been updated a number of times, with the most recent Directive issued in April 2014. While Article numbers cited in the 2005 guidance have been updated/removed, the principle of determining whether a Plan or Programme will have likely significant effects on the environment remain the same. Therefore, this screening statement uses the only Government guidance available.

The Strategic Environmental Appraisal Process

The first stage of the process is for the Council to determine whether or not the SPD is likely to have significant effects on the environment. This screening process includes assessing the SPD against a set of criteria (as set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations). The results of this are set out in [Appendix 1](#) of this statement. The aim of this statement is therefore to provide sufficient information to demonstrate whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The Council also has to consult the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England on this screening statement. A final determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted.

Where the Council determines that a SEA is not required, Regulation 9(3) of the SEA Regulations states that the Council must prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment?

There is no statutory requirement to undertake a SA appraisal of SPDs. The Council has considered whether an SA might be required. The SPD does not create new policies and verifies existing biodiversity requirements to help support policies in the Local Plan. The SPD is therefore unlikely to have significant environmental, social or economic effects beyond those of the Local Plan policies which were subject to a comprehensive SA process, incorporating SEA, as part of the Local Plan production requirements.

The Council is required to consider Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). HRA is the process used to determine whether a plan or project would have significant adverse effects on the integrity of internationally designated site of nature conservation importance, known as European sites. The need for a HRA is set out within the [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](#), which transposed EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC into UK law. A HRA Appropriate Assessment Screening Document was produced during Local Plan preparation and concluded that no policies in the Local Plan would have a likely significant effect of the closest SPA at the Lee Valley, nor its associated SSSI at Rye Meads.

Copies of the SA and HRA documents for the Local Plan are available here:

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90175/>

Conclusion

On the basis of the screening process, the Council believes that the Biodiversity SPD does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (or Sustainability Appraisal or Habitats Regulations Assessment). This is due to the lack of significant environmental, social or economic effects arising from its implementation above and beyond those of the Local Plan policies which have already been appropriately assessed.

Appendix 1

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive, ODPM 2005

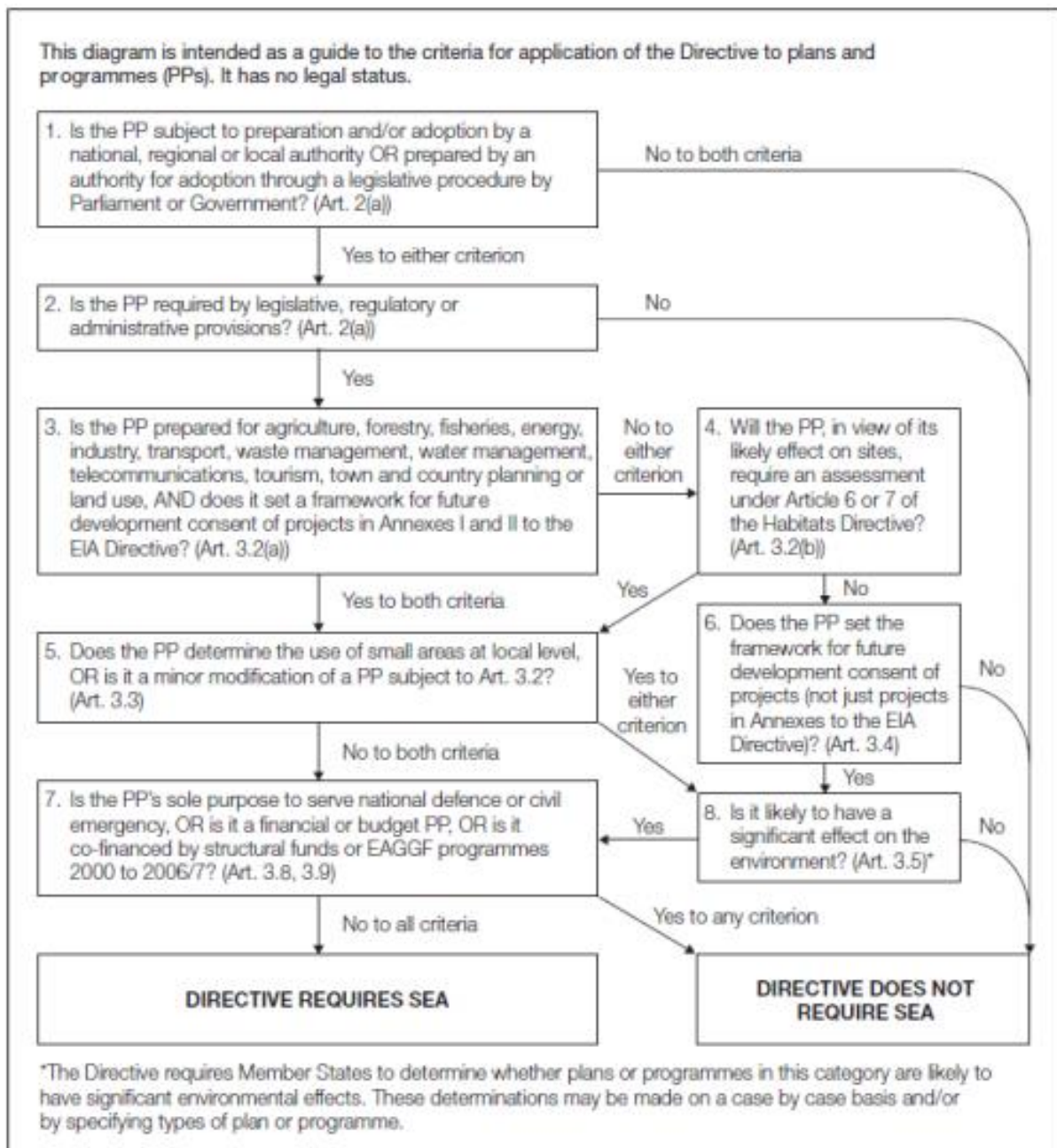


Table 1: Establishing whether these is a need for SEA

Stage	Yes/No	Assessment
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes to either criterion: proceed to question 2	Yes, the SPD has been prepared by SBC to provide additional detail to policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019)
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes: proceed to question 3	Yes, the SPD will become a material consideration upon adoption and is referred to in the adopted Local Plan (2019)
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes to both criterion: proceed to question 5	The SPD is prepared for the purpose of Town and Country Planning, to supplement policies in the adopted Local Plan (2019). Yes, the SPD sets a framework for developments that may require EIA although this SPD does not create new policy.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes to first criterion: proceed to question 8	The SPD supplements Local Plan policies relating to parking provision which can be a form of land use.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	The SPD is not considered to have a significant effect on the environment. DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE THE SPD TO UNDERGO SEA

SEA Directive Criteria (Schedule of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Potential effects of SPD
1. Characteristic of the SPD having particular regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The SPD provides guidance on the requirement for biodiversity net gain calculations for residential and non-residential development.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The SPD sits below the Local Plan (adopted 2019) which was subject to SA incorporating SEA. It will influence plans for individual development sites, ranging in size from 1 dwelling to major strategic sites, including multiple types of setting, but mainly in urban locations due to the underbound nature of Stevenage Borough.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	The SPD provides additional guidance for meeting the biodiversity objectives of the adopted Local Plan (2019) with a push to net gain for biodiversity.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	The SA (inc. SEA) of the Local Plan identified a number of benefits arising from biodiversity policies. The SPD helps support the implementation of these policies.
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The SPD does not influence the implementation of community legislation on the environment but does promote biodiversity net gain.
Characteristics of the effect and area likely to be affected having particular regard to:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The SPD is not expected to give rise to any significant environmental effects. The SPD seeks to promote a shift towards biodiversity net gain.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	By increasing the requirement for developments to provide biodiversity net gain, the SPD will have a cumulative effect of increasing biodiversity amount and value in Stevenage.
(c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects;	The SPD is not expected to give rise to any significant cross-boundary environmental effects.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	There are no anticipated negative effects of the SPD on human health. The promotion of an increase in biodiversity in the Borough could be considered a positive effect for the purposes of health and wellbeing.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely	The SPD is not expected to affect any local

<p>to be affected due to— (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use;</p>	<p>natural characteristics or cultural heritage, and is not expected to lead to the exceedance of environmental standards or promote intensive land-use.</p>
<p>(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>The SPD is not expected to have an effect on landscapes of national, community or international protection status. The requirements of the SPD will be applicable in Conservation Areas as well as areas not in a Conservation Area (ie. areas with national status) but the SPD is likely, if anything, to have positive effects by ensuring a more balanced use of land for biodiversity as part of developments.</p>

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 10 March 2021



THE SBC DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT 2021: ADOPTION

KEY DECISION

Author David Hodbod | 2579
Lead Officer Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257
Contact Officer David Hodbod | 2579

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the consultation responses to the Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) between November 2020 and January 2021.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an overview of the changes made to the Draft Developer Contributions SPD taking account of consultation responses.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval to adopt the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 (Appendix A).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the Draft Developer Contributions SPD consultation be noted.

- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 prior to its adoption.
- 2.3 That the Executive approve the adoption of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 as a material consideration for planning applications.

3 BACKGROUND

SBC Developer Contributions SPD

- 3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are produced to add detail to the policies included in an adopted Local Plan. They are used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues. Whilst SPDs are not part of the Development Plan for an area, and cannot add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development, the contents of a SPD are a material consideration when determining a planning application.
- 3.2 Developer contributions are provided by developers of proposed built developments which have been granted planning permission. They are intended to mitigate against the impacts that the development will cause. They can be provided by direct provision, by financial contribution or by land transfer.
- 3.3 Developer contributions are negotiated and agreed as part of planning applications. They can be a vital part of any planning permission being granted and, where needed, a Decision Notice confirming that planning permission has been granted for a proposal will not be issued by the Council until an agreed legal agreement with the details of the developer contributions, commonly known as a Section 106 agreement (S106), has been signed.
- 3.4 The Council has not previously had a SPD related to developer contributions.
- 3.5 In January 2020, the Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which came into effect on 01 April 2020. CIL is a form of developer contribution which is calculated simply based on the location, size and type of development. It is non-negotiable and isn't subject to the same negotiation, scrutiny and planning considerations as specific contributions through S106 agreements.
- 3.6 CIL replaces the need for S106 agreements in many instances. However, in some cases, as well as paying a CIL charge, the Council may consider that a developer should also enter into a S106 with the Council to provide for site-specific mitigation required by their development. These instances include when a development cannot deliver what is required by Local Plan policy on site, such as open space, or where site-specific impacts of a development have been identified and mitigation is required to make a proposal acceptable in planning terms.

- 3.7 The Council committed to producing a Developer Contributions SPD to provide certainty to developers of what financial obligations they may be expected to provide through S106 contributions in addition to a CIL charge.
- Consultation*
- 3.8 In November 2020, the Executive approved the publication of a Draft Developer Contributions SPD for consultation.
- 3.9 The Draft SPD was published on the Council's webpages and consultation portal. A link to the Draft Developer Contributions SPD was sent to every individual or group on the Council's planning consultee register along with an explanation of the document and how to submit any comments about it.
- 3.10 The planning consultee register contains all statutory consultees and Duty to Cooperate bodies, as required by Regulations, as well as individuals and/or groups who have either signed up to the register or responded to previous Local Plan consultations. This totals over 2,500 consultees.
- 3.11 The majority of consultees were contacted by email and approximately 200 letters were sent to individuals who had not provided an email address.
- 3.12 In addition, the consultation document was advertised on the Council website, on social media and in the Chronicle magazine which is delivered to all houses in the borough. In accordance with Covid-19 restrictions, hard copies were made available at the Council and Customer Service Centre.
- 3.13 The draft SPD was also presented to Planning and Development Committee and the final version will also be presented to Planning and Development Committee to instruct Councillors on the Committee of its contents and how it affects their role in Decision Making.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That the outcomes of the Draft Developer Contributions SPD consultation be noted.

- 4.1 Consultation on the draft Developer Contributions SPD was held between 30 November 2020 and 25 January 2021, meeting the requirements stipulated for SPD consultations in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 A total of 33 representations were received from a number of key consultees. As a consultation document focussed on a very technical aspect of the planning system, a high response rate was never expected.
- 4.3 Responses were received from a number of key infrastructure stakeholders:
- Hertfordshire County Council,
 - North Herts District Council,
 - Sport England,
 - Highways England,
 - Inspired Villages, and
 - Anglian Water.

- 4.4 Comments were also received from several SBC Committees:
- The Executive
 - Planning and Development Committee
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 4.5 In addition, a small number of calls were received from residents on the consultation database following the initial publication. These calls offered general support for the SPD, particularly the requirement for developers to provide much needed infrastructure in the town.
- 4.6 A full summary of responses is provided in Appendix B together with officer responses to each comment as well as a description of any amendments made to the SPD as a result of the submitted comment.
- 4.7 The key responses and amendments to the Draft Developer Contributions SPD are summarised in Table 1 and throughout the rest of this section:

Table 1 – List of Key Amendments

Amendment	Reasons for Amendment
References to cross-boundary infrastructure funding / provision	To ensure that developers are aware they may need to contribute towards infrastructure outside of the borough.
More detail about Viability Studies	To ensure a few key concepts are incorporated into Viability Studies.
State that SBC will seek advice from consultees	To highlight the role of consultees (such as Highways England & HCC) in the process.
More detail about sewerage companies	To differentiate between their need for conditions/contributions and how they usually obtain charges directly from developments
Affordable Housing provision	To ensure consideration is given to the level of contributions required for schemes providing non-standard housing and to ensure socially-rented accommodation meets accessibility criteria
HCC's Guide to Developer Contributions	Updated reference to HCC's emerging guide
Clarity regarding circumstances where HCC will seek S106	Removed potential uncertainty regarding when HCC might seek S106 payments and removed old terminology
Sustainable Transport	Referenced updated guidance and stated the importance of providing solutions for most vulnerable pedestrians

Collaboration for cross-boundary infrastructure provision

- 4.8 North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) commented that there will be instances where developer contributions are required to fund infrastructure across district boundaries. This may be particularly relevant for a number of sites in the emerging North Herts Local Plan which lie close to the Stevenage boundary and would essentially be extensions to the town of Stevenage if developed.
- 4.9 As such, NHDC requested that spending priorities for infrastructure provision, to be funded by developer contributions, are developed collaboratively and that greater mention of the need to collect contributions for cross-boundary infrastructure is included in the final SPD.
- 4.10 The Council is happy to continue to work in partnership with its neighbouring authorities, recognising the fact that infrastructure requirement is not limited to being within authority boundaries and that residents or visitors to a town use infrastructure in numerous locations.
- 4.11 Text was included in the final version of the SPD to make it clear to developers that the Council may request contributions to out-of-borough infrastructure (and vice versa). The Council also commits to engaging with NHDC when determining its spending priorities and governance for the expenditure of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

Include more detail about Viability Assessments and Reviews

- 4.12 In line with current planning practice guidance, the Draft SPD included a need for developers to provide open-book viability assessments if they claim that a development is unable to make policy-compliant contributions to infrastructure. The Draft SPD also stipulated that where a developer demonstrates that scheme unviability prevents them from contributing sought requirements, they agree to undertake a viability review at a later date (to be agreed through the S106 legal agreement) and if an uplift in viability is demonstrated, they subsequently increase the level of contributions.
- 4.13 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) requested that more detail was included in the SPD about the form that Viability Assessments took. The final SPD includes more detail about the use of the Existing Use Values Plus concept when determining land values and gives more detail about the use of Standardised Inputs as the core data of the Assessment.

Wording amendments to tighten the SPD's intentions

- 4.14 HCC also requested wording changes to a number of elements within the document, some related to their own services and responsibilities, and some related to the cross-over between the use of S106 and CIL.
- 4.15 The Council has been content to agree with most of the suggested changes proposed by HCC and has worked with HC officers to strengthen the wording relating to the County Council's right to seek contributions.
- 4.16 The Council was not willing however to amend wording included in the draft SPD which seeks to prioritise the provision of Affordable Housing, ahead of infrastructure funding, in instances where a Viability Review has demonstrated that the viability of the scheme being delivered has been

improved during the course of implementation. This is because the Council's policy on Affordable Housing, as set out in the Local Plan, will take priority over the provision of infrastructure in circumstances when the level of infrastructure provision has already been agreed. Accordingly, and where schemes allow, the SPD will prioritise the provision of additional Affordable Housing.

Include more detail on Stevenage Works involvement

- 4.17 The draft SPD introduced a requirement for major developments¹ to provide a portion of on-site construction jobs for Stevenage residents and apprenticeship opportunities for Stevenage residents or students. Where sufficient opportunities could not be offered, the draft SPD introduced a requirement for a financial obligation towards a fund that the Council or the Stevenage Works partnership could make available for local education or employment opportunities. The draft SPD encouraged developers to engage with the Stevenage Works partnership when arranging employment/apprenticeship opportunities but comments at an internal Councillor Committee suggested that additional wording be included.
- 4.18 Wording has been added to explain that Stevenage Works, a partnership between the Council, Job Centre Plus and North Herts College, has committed to maintain a database of suitable candidates for such opportunities and will field responses to any requests from developers. A requirement for an administrative fee has also been included within the SPD to fund the management of Stevenage Works. In addition, more detail has been included on the awarding of grants for education or employment opportunities from the money collected by the Council.

Use of Unilateral Agreements

- 4.19 Although not mentioned in any formal representations, the Council has added a reference in the SPD to state that where the drafting and agreement of a S106 agreement would likely add an unnecessary cost or delay to a project, the Council will look to secure contributions through the use of a Unilateral Agreement instead of a S106 agreement. This is likely to be in instances where there are only a small number of financial obligations or where the overall amount of financial contributions is relatively small. In practice, for example, this could be for developments which are only providing biodiversity net gain contributions or apprenticeship opportunities.

Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 prior to its adoption.

¹ The threshold for a major development is any application that involves mineral extraction, waste development, the provision of 10+ residential dwellings, a site area over 0.5 Hectares or a floorspace of over 1,000sqm / an area of 1 hectare.

- 4.20 The SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 is included in Appendix A (with changes from the draft version of the SPD highlighted in yellow). It may be necessary to make minor changes prior to its adoption. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.21 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

Recommendation 2.3: That the Executive approve the adoption of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 as a material consideration for planning applications.

- 4.22 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.23 Now that consultation has been completed, the Council must make the SPD document available together with an adoption statement, and send a copy of the adoption statement to each of the bodies who asked to be notified of the adoption of the SPD.
- 4.24 In line with Regulation 12, the Council will also need to provide a statement setting out the persons consulted when preparing the SPD and a summary of the main issues raised by those persons and how those issues have been addressed in the adopted SPD document. This statement is included as Appendix B to this report.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with adopting the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 The aim of the SPD is to gain provision of, financial and/or land contributions towards identified infrastructure or service needs so the adoption of a Developer Contributions SPD should have positive financial implications for infrastructure provision.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 Adoption of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 will be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, specifically Regulations 12, 14 and 15. There are no further direct legal implications associated with adopting the SPD.
- 5.4 The legal ramifications of any developments will need to be considered at the point of planning and delivery.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 There are no significant risks associated with adopting the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021.

Policy Implications

- 5.6 The SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).

Planning Implications

- 5.7 The SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 will supplement the recently adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 5.8 The document will not form part of the Development Plan for Stevenage. However, it will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.9 The SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 has the potential to have a positive impact on climate change, by securing developer contributions, either through direct provision or financial obligations, for infrastructure requirements including but not limited to sustainable transport, open spaces and biodiversity net gain.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.10 The SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. When implementing any of the contents of the SPD, 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

- 5.11 Whilst the SBC Developer Contributions SPD 2021 does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031](#)
BD2 [Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2020](#)

APPENDICES

- A SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, 2021 (changes from Draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, 2020 highlighted in yellow)
B Draft SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, 2020 - Consultation Statement
C SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, 2021 – Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

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Stevenage Borough Council
Developer Contributions SPD
(Adopted March 2021)

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1 Introduction

Purpose of the Document

1.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are documents which add further details to policies contained in a Local Plan. SPDs are a form of Local Development Document produced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)⁽¹⁾. They do not form part of the Development Plan for an area, but become a material consideration in decision making when a Local Planning Authority is determining whether to approve or refuse planning permission for an application.

1.2 The aim of this SPD is to set out the Council's proposed approach to the use of Section 106 (S106) agreements to secure developer contributions from new developments. This will assist planning officers, applicants, service providers, Councillors and members of the public through the planning application process, ensuring that the process is fair and transparent and is applied consistently.

1.3 It is important to note that SPDs should not introduce new policies and should not add significantly to the financial burden on developments.

What are Developer Contributions?

1.4 Developer Contributions, commonly known as planning obligations, are legal obligations entered into to mitigate impacts of a proposed development. They are entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990⁽²⁾ by the developer and/or landowner, the local planning authority, and potentially other service or infrastructure providers linked to a proposal or mitigation scheme. They are legally binding and enforceable.

Community Infrastructure Levy

1.5 The other main form of developer contribution is the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

1.6 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a CIL Charging Schedule in January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020. CIL is a non-negotiable charge on new built development which meets the thresholds identified in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) (as amended)⁽³⁾. CIL replaces the need to secure developer contributions through S106 agreements in many instances, allowing for infrastructure and service provision to be planned and implemented on a more strategic, borough-wide scale rather than in a piecemeal approach as mitigation against the impacts of individual developments.

1.7 The Council must publish its CIL funding priorities each year in an Infrastructure Funding Statement. Like S106 agreements, CIL liabilities are legally binding and enforceable, albeit through different legislative procedures.

1.8 The Council will still require applicants to enter into S106 agreements in some instances. This document sets out the instances where S106 agreements will be sought, what will be included in them, and how contributions will be calculated.

1 [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#)

2 [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)

3 [Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010](#)

Scope

1.9 The contents of this SPD are not to be considered exhaustive. Whilst the majority of future developer contributions are expected to relate to the contents of this SPD, the Council cannot list every instance of site-specific impacts caused by potential developments that need to be mitigated, so there will always be a chance that a S106 will need to contain something not included in this SPD.

1.10 Nor does the SPD contain all the details of how demand, mitigation and monetary figures are to be quantified for developer contributions. Not all of these methodologies are under the control of the Council and even those that are, are subject to changes which would render the SPD out of date. The SPD will outline the principles behind the calculations and will identify where further information can be found.

1.11 In essence, this document should be used to identify where developer contributions may be required in addition to the payment of a CIL charge for a proposed development. We advise that applicants always engage fully with the LPA and other infrastructure/service providers near the time of submitting an application to gain a better understanding of the exact amounts they may be expected to contribute.

1.12 The main topics covered in this SPD are:

- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Hertfordshire County Council contributions
- Housing
- Commuted Sums to mitigate against policy non-compliance
- Site-specific mitigation
- Employment opportunities
- Parking and Sustainable Transport
- Monitoring fees

Production of this SPD

1.13 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012⁽⁴⁾.

1.14 The Council published a draft version of this Developer Contributions SPD for public consultation between 30 November 2020 and 25 January 2021. Respondents' comments were considered and incorporated into this final version. The Council formally adopted the Developer Contributions SPD on 18 March 2021 after a decision made by the Council's Executive.

⁴ [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

2 Policy Context

Local Policy

2.1 This SPD has been produced to provide additional guidance to Policy SP5: Infrastructure from the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, in particular parts a and b:

Policy SP5: Infrastructure

This plan will ensure the infrastructure required to support its targets and proposals is provided. New development will be required to contribute fairly towards the demands it creates. We will:

a. Permit permission where new development

i. Makes reasonable on-site provision, off-site provision or contributions towards (but not limited to) the following where relevant:

affordable housing; biodiversity; childcare and youth facilities; community facilities; community safety and crime prevention; cultural facilities; cycling and walking; education; flood prevention measures; Gypsy and Traveller accommodation; health care facilities; leisure facilities; open spaces; passenger transport; play areas; policing; public realm enhancement; road and rail transport; sheltered housing; skills and lifelong learning; sports; supported housing; travel plans; utilities and waste and recycling.

ii. Includes measures to mitigate against any adverse impact on amenity or the local environment where this is appropriate and necessary; or

iii. Meets any specific requirements relating to individual sites or schemes set out elsewhere in this plan;

b. Use developer contributions, legal agreements, levies or other relevant mechanisms to make sure that the criteria in (a) are met;

2.2 Policy SP5 is the key strategic policy related to developer contributions in the Local Plan. However, the Local Plan places many requirements on proposed developments. Other policies specify these demands throughout the Plan. As such, this SPD is designed to support the Local Plan as a whole and should be read in combination with the entire contents of the Local Plan.

National Policy

2.3 Paragraph 54 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) states that:

NPPF paragraph 54

Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.

2.4 Planning Practice Guidance gives more information on developer contributions and states that:

PPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 23b-003-20190901

Where the Community Infrastructure Levy is in place for an area, charging authorities should work proactively with developers to ensure they are clear about the authorities' infrastructure needs.

2.5 The Council is a CIL Charging Authority and under recent amendments to CIL Regulations⁽⁵⁾, is required to publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement which states what the Council's spending priorities for its CIL receipts are.

2.6 The PPG also states that:

PPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 23b-003-20190901

Authorities can choose to pool funding from different routes to fund the same infrastructure provided that authorities set out in infrastructure funding statements which infrastructure they expect to fund through the levy.

2.7 This means that whilst the Council may already be intending to spend CIL receipts on a particular item of infrastructure, they may also request S106 contributions towards the same project. However, in line with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy 2010 (as amended)⁽⁶⁾, each developer contribution within a S106 agreement must meet the following three tests:

CIL Regulation 2010 (as amended) Regulation 122

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
- (b) directly related to the development; and*
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.*

⁵ [The Community Infrastructure Levy \(Amendment\) \(England\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2019](#)

⁶ [Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010](#)

2.8 Important to the production of this SPD, the PPG states that:

PPG Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 23b-004-20190901

...It is not appropriate for plan-makers to set out new formulaic approaches to planning obligations in supplementary planning documents or supporting evidence base documents, as these would not be subject to examination...

2.9 Whilst there are undoubtedly formulaic methods of calculating developer contributions that are commonly used, the inappropriateness to include formulas in an un-examined SPD document is to enable the local planning authority to ensure that any developer contribution sought through a S106 agreement for any individual planning application meets the tests of Regulation 122 above.

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3 Community Infrastructure Levy

CIL

3.1 Stevenage Borough Council is a CIL authority. Any application granted permission after 01 April 2020 may be liable to pay a CIL charge which is calculated based on the size, type and location of the development. The thresholds for whether a proposed development pays a CIL charge are if a development:

- Involves a new build that creates net additional floorspace (based on gross internal area) of 100m² or more,
- Involves the creation of one or more dwellings, or
- Involves change of use to residential where the existing floorspace has not been in continuous use for at least 6 months in the previous 3 years.

3.2 Details of the Council's CIL Charging Schedule can be found on the Council webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL

Table 1 SBC CIL Charging Schedule (rates set 01 April 2020)

Development Type	CIL Rate (per sqm)	
	Zone 1 (Stevenage Central, Stevenage West Urban Extension, North of Stevenage Extension)	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential		
Market Housing	£40	£100
Sheltered Housing	£100	
Extracare Housing	£40	
Retail Development	£60	
All other development	£0	

3.3 The webpages contain the Stevenage CIL Charging Schedule and associated policies including the Instalments Policy. The webpages also contain a SBC CIL Guidance document which has a detailed explanation of liability, calculations, exemptions and relief, the CIL process, CIL Forms, CIL payment, enforcement and appeals.

3.4 The Council's annually updated Infrastructure Funding Statement will be published on this page. This will contain a list of the Council's CIL funding priorities.

3.5 It is expected that the majority of applications for built development, with the exception of the majority of householder applications, will be liable to pay a CIL charge. Some householder applications will be required to pay, but only if they propose 100 sqm or more built development and don't seek a residential extension exemption.

4 Hertfordshire County Council Contributions

County Council Services

4.1 Local Government in Hertfordshire operates under a two-tier system. As such, Stevenage Borough Council has the legal responsibility to provide some but not all local services. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) is the upper tier authority and is responsible for delivering and maintaining much of the large scale infrastructure that its residents and businesses require, such as roads, schools, waste disposal services and libraries.

4.2 When planning applications are submitted to Stevenage Borough Council, HCC is consulted and will provide appropriate advice and comments regarding the needs of infrastructure for which is it responsible. In planning authorities without a CIL Charging Schedule, HCC would seek to secure developer contributions via a S106 agreement to mitigate against the impacts on HCC service provision. This would most commonly include services such as:

- Sustainable Transport,
- Passenger Transport,
- Education,
- Early Years Education,
- Libraries,
- Youth Services,
- Fire and Rescue Services,
- Waste Disposal, and
- Adult Care Services.

HCC Household Waste Recycling Centre



4.3 For further information and an explanation of the current position of HCC S106 requirements and developer contributions please contact them on the following email Growth@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

4.4 Now that Stevenage Borough Council has adopted a CIL Charging Schedule, many of these service provisions are no longer considered suitable for collection via a S106 agreement. CIL allows for the borough-wide planning of infrastructure and service provision so CIL receipts can be used to improve service provision on a borough-wide scale rather than as mitigation on a proposal-by-proposal basis.

4.5 Bids will need to be submitted by HCC to SBC for a portion of the Council's collected CIL receipts to help fund new/improved services arising as a result of combined increased demand from proposed developments in Stevenage. This is a process outside of the decision-making process for individual planning applications.

4.6 For individual planning proposals, a decision will need to be made by the planning authority, with input from HCC, whether a proposed development causes an impact that requires direct mitigation. Where the need for mitigation is demonstrated, developer contributions will be sought. Whilst it is less likely that the Council will seek developer contributions for these services as standard, contributions will be sought where a proposed development can be shown to have an impact that requires specific mitigation to make a proposal acceptable in planning terms. This is in line with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

4.7 For minor developments, again, it is less likely that developer contributions will be sought through S106s for many of the HCC services in addition to the CIL charge associated with the proposal. However, the County Council reserves the right to seek financial contributions if it can demonstrate that contributions are required to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms.

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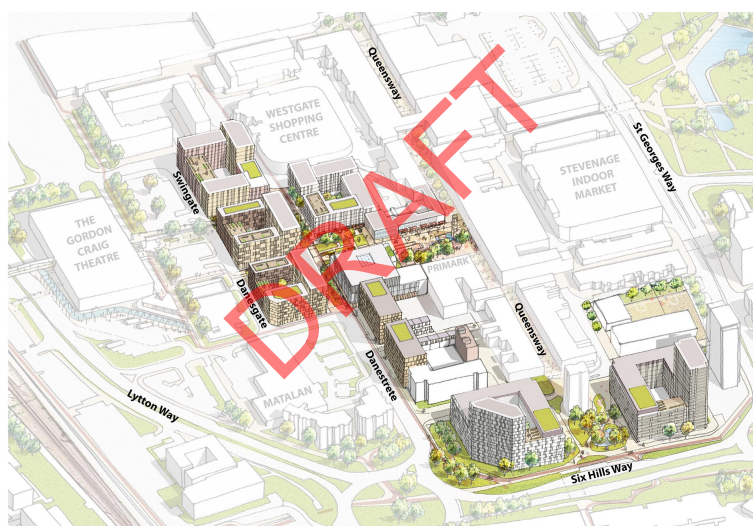
5 Strategic Sites

Strategic Sites

5.1 Strategic sites allocated in the Local Plan have a large number of policy requirements as identified through by stakeholders during Local Plan production and agreed through the Local Plan Examination process. The vast majority of these requirements should be provided on-site as part of the development so their delivery will be contained in submitted plans and conditioned by the planning permission.

5.2 Some of the requirements will need to be secured as a developer contribution by S106 due to the nature of how they are provided for. This includes, for example, primary education contributions. HCC, the local education authority, requires land to be provided and financial contributions to be made towards the build costs and this would be inappropriate through a planning condition so must be included in a S106. **Statutory consultees, such as the County Council or Highways England, are able to secure developer contributions where necessary to mitigate an impact of a proposed development to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms.**

SG1 Masterplan



5.3 As a starting point for strategic sites, and likely for large windfall sites, it is expected that the Council will seek to secure developer contributions towards the following, **non-exhaustive**, list of infrastructure/services in addition to collecting a CIL charge:

- Affordable Housing
- Primary Education
- NHS GP provision
- Passenger transport
- Travel plans
- Fire hydrants

5.4 More detail can be found on these items in the Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of this document.

5.5 **It is also important to note that the demand for infrastructure is not restricted by local authority boundaries. Stevenage is a constricted authority and our neighbouring planning authorities may promote and/or approve sites within their administrative boundaries which are essentially**

extensions to the town of Stevenage. In these instances, developers outside of the borough may be required to fund infrastructure within the borough, and this could also occur vice versa where developments within Stevenage would use infrastructure outside of the borough.

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6 Viability

Assessments

6.1 National policy states that where up-to-date local policies set out the contributions required of development, policy-compliant planning applications should be assumed to be viable⁽⁷⁾. This puts the onus on developers to demonstrate any change in circumstances since the Local Plan was adopted that justifies the need for a viability assessment.

6.2 Where viability issues are used to demonstrate that schemes should provide below policy-compliant levels of developer contributions, the application must be supported by an 'open book' viability assessment and the applicant must fund the Council to appoint third party consultants to appraise the assessment to ensure its findings are appropriate and in line with Planning Practice Guidance and best practice. This should include establishing a benchmark land value for a site on the basis of the existing use value of the land, plus a premium for the landowner to reflect the minimum return at which it is considered a reasonable landowner would be willing to sell their land. Viability assessments should use standardised inputs as the core data for the assessment.

6.3 Overpayment of land will not be considered a reason for a scheme being considered unviable to reduce developer contributions.

Review Mechanisms

6.4 When the Council agrees with an applicant's demonstration that a scheme is unviable and developer contributions are reduced on viability grounds as a result, the Council will seek the inclusion of a viability review mechanism and overage clause in the S106 agreement.

6.5 This will ensure that viability can be reassessed at a later date, with more up to date evidence, that may show that the scheme ended up being more profitable than was originally predicted at the planning application stage, based on the evidence used at the time of the original assessment.

6.6 If a viability review concludes that there has been an uplift in viability and that there will be a larger surplus that could be used to provide developer contributions in line with the latest guidance and best practice, the overage clause will ensure the Council can request greater contributions than stated in the original S106 agreement and will be able to ensure their payment prior to occupation of an agreed number of units (to be agreed and specified in the S106 covenant). If there is an uplift in viability, the Council's preference will first be to increase the supply of affordable housing and will first seek to ensure policy-compliant levels of affordable housing for the remainder of the scheme, and if possible based on the findings of the viability review, seek above policy-compliant levels of affordable housing on the remainder of the scheme to try and achieve policy compliant provision of affordable housing for the overall scheme.

6.7 The Council will consider how many reviews might be appropriate and will consider the timing/s for a review/s on a case-by-case basis. This will be dependent on the size of the scheme and expected rate of build-out. If a development has multiple phases, it may be appropriate to review the viability at a point during each phase for example, or at the submission of any subsequent Reserved Matters applications. All viability reviews will be undertaken at a cost to the applicant.

7 NPPF Paragraph 57

7 Housing

Affordable Housing

7.1 The requirements for affordable housing provision are set out in Policies HO7 and HO8 of the Local Plan. Applicants are encouraged to submit demonstration of how they meet the requirements of those policies within one of the following: Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, or Environmental Statement.

7.2 When calculating the number of affordable units required, the appropriate percentage of the total number of units being delivered should be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

7.3 The Council's overriding preference is for the provision of affordable housing on-site. However it is accepted that this is not appropriate or possible for all schemes. In these instances, the Council will prefer off-site provision of affordable units if it can be arranged, and a financial contribution in lieu of policy non-compliance if not.

Affordable Housing as part of Kenilworth Road Scheme



7.4 Whilst Policies HO8 and HO9 give an indication of the type and tenure of affordable housing units being provided, the Council's Housing Team should be consulted to ensure the affordable housing being provided contains an acceptable range of types and size of unit that suits up to date demand.

7.5 As far as practicably possible, all affordable housing should be indistinguishable from market housing and should be distributed evenly around development sites **and in line with national guidance, 100% of socially rented housing should be built to M4(2) Category 2 accessible and adaptable standards.**

7.6 The S106 should, at a minimum, include the following details related to the affordable housing provision:

- The number of affordable housing units being provided,
- The number of each type and tenure of affordable housing units being provided,

- The trigger points for delivery and/or transfer of affordable housing units,
- Any restrictions on the progress of other development/sale/occupation related to the delivery/transfer of affordable housing

7.7 If housing is being delivered in phases, affordable housing should be delivered evenly throughout the duration of delivery and not back-loaded onto later phases. In some instances, the viability of a scheme may require that affordable housing is back-loaded, but the Council will resist granting permission to proposals with the provision of no or very low levels of affordable housing in earlier phases where viability is not a consideration.

7.8 If Vacant Building Credit is sought to reduce the level of affordable housing required, the applicant should provide compelling evidence to demonstrate that the site has been marketed sufficiently and with terms (price and length of lease for example) that are comparable to similar properties on the local market.

7.9 In some instances, such as proposals for a retirement village where accommodation is not all classed as a C3 land-use, it might be appropriate to take a proportionate approach to the provision of Affordable Housing. In these instances, much of the proposed floorspace would be required to support the residential units and would not be saleable floorspace so the viability of affordable housing would like be less than for proposals entirely made up of C3 units.

Affordable Housing at Archer Road scheme



7.10 If providing units off-site, the percentage required by Policy HO7 should be applied to the total number of units on- and off-site, not just to the number of units being provided on-site as that would result in a non-compliant provision of affordable housing.

7.11 If providing financial contributions, the amount should be calculated based on policy-compliant provision for the proposed development, using a cost-per-unit for the type of affordable housing that would likely have been provided on the development site. For example, in a flatted scheme, it would be appropriate to use a cost to provide an appropriate range of 1-, 2- and 3-bed flats whereas for a housing scheme, it would be more appropriate to use a cost to provide a range of houses. What constitutes an appropriate range of houses to base the payment on should be agreed with the Council's Housing Team.

7.12 Developer contributions are often subject to expenditure deadlines which state, within the S106 legal agreement, when the contribution must be spent by. After that deadline, developers can request repayment of any unspent funds. Financial contributions related to affordable housing projects are at a particular risk of repayment because schemes can take a significant amount of time to be delivered. Each scheme contains a number of complex stages, including: identification and procurement/disposal of suitable plots of land; design and determination through the planning system; and completing the actual project. To maximise the potential for the Council to deliver affordable housing units, all financial contributions in-lieu of on-site provision should be subject to long-term expenditure deadlines of at least 10 years.

Aspirational Housing

7.13 Strategic Housing policies HO2-HO4 and HO9 require developments to provide at least 5% of units to be aspirational housing. This is in order to address long-standing issues with the town's housing offer, namely the prevalence of small-medium, terraced dwellings and a lack of large family homes.

7.14 Aspirational housing should be secured by condition of appropriate plans and drawings but may be included in the S106 agreement in multi-phase developments to ensure the delivery of aspirational homes is spread as evenly as possible throughout the duration of the scheme and not back-loaded to later phases.

Self-Build or Custom-Build Housing

7.15 Policy SP7 and HO2-HO4 require 1% of units to be self-build plots. These require outline planning permission prior to them being marketed, firstly to the Council's Self-Build Register and subsequently, if the Self Build Register did not result in a sale, to the open market.

7.16 Self-Build plots must have permission that permits the purchaser and developer of the site to implement innovative design and methods of construction. However, as the plots are likely to form part of a wider community, it would be appropriate for the permission to set out: the highway layout, the provision of services, intended communal and/or open space, the extent of individual plots and the unit type expected for individual plots, and general design parameters related to sizing, massing, positioning, and facades of material palettes.

7.17 It would also be appropriate to include a time limit to commence or complete self-build developments which the Council could subsequently enforce to ensure delivery of units.

7.18 The S106 should include details regarding: the number of plots being delivered, the trigger points for their delivery and marketing and/or transfer, the transfer and cost associated with the transfer (if applicable), and a reversion clause giving a minimum 2 year period for marketing of the plots before any unsold plots revert to other forms of housing.

7.19 It is the Council's preference that on multi-phase developments, Self-Build plots are completed, marketed and/or transferred evenly throughout the duration of the development and not backloaded to later phases. It would be preferable for Self-Build plots to be grouped together. This can be in small groups if it enables delivery of Self-Build units in each phase of a scheme rather than all at one time.

7.20 It is the Council's preference that the developer markets and arranges sale of the freehold to each of the plots. The Council will assist the developer in their efforts by contacting those on the Self Build Register to confirm that they are happy to be contacted by a third party with marketing communication.

7.21 If the developer does not wish to market the plots themselves, they should transfer the freehold of the plots to the Council for a nominal fee which could cover the costs of associated with providing services to the plots, but not including the value of the land.

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8 Commuted Sums In-Lieu of On-Site Provision

Policy Compliance

8.1 Local Plan policies set out the thresholds and requirements for developers to provide items such as open space or community facilities on-site in addition to the residential or non-residential development being proposed. Ideally, all developments will provide all policy requirements on-site to achieve policy-compliance, however either because of constraints on-site or viability reasons, this is not always possible.

8.2 In such instances, the Council will seek financial contributions through a S106 agreement in order to provide the requirement elsewhere.

Open Space

8.3 Open spaces provide a valuable resource, particularly in an urban environment such as Stevenage which has historically been designed to give residents excellent access to open space. The Local Plan set out the Council's open space standards for various kinds of open space that should be provided by new developments.

8.4 The open space standards are set by expected population of a new development and instructions are given for how to calculate the population. This enables developers to know exactly how much open space they should be providing if they have met the minimum threshold for it to be a requirement.

Stevenage Open Space



8.5 Where a development cannot meet the open space standards, they will be expected to agree to provide a developer contribution through a S106 agreement to offset the under-provision on-site. The contribution will be used to provide the equivalent space elsewhere in the borough, or to fund improvements to existing open space to ensure it meets the additional burden on it from the new resident population.

8.6 The Council's internal officers will be able to identify the project for developer contributions to go towards and a cost will be calculated based on the project and level of under-provision on-site.

8.7 Long-term management of new open spaces must be provided for, either by the developer appointing a management company for a suitable period of time, or where sites are transferred to and adopted by the Council, a sum sufficient to ensure maintenance for a period of at least 10 years will be required.

Sports Provision

8.8 The Local Plan specifies the requirements for Strategic Sites to provide elements of sport provision identified through the Local Plan Examination process. Where these cannot be met, off-site provision or a financial contribution should be secured through the S106 to ensure that any under-provision on-site is accounted for elsewhere. Negotiations with the Council's internal officers will be necessary to identify appropriate projects and to calculate a sufficient financial contribution. **The Council will seek advice from Sports England on these matters to help inform and justify the Council's position.**

8.9 On non-strategic sites, it is likely that the Council's CIL receipts will be used to fund sports provision on a borough-wide scale, amongst other forms of funding available, unless Sport England can demonstrate that a development causes a specific impact which requires mitigation. Where this is the case, they will use the latest Sport England facility cost data and will use the latest Council sports strategies to identify appropriate projects.

Canterbury Playing Fields



8.10 For sports facilities on school sites, there will be a need to agree to a Community Use Agreement to ensure that local communities can benefit from the facility and have access to it in evening and at weekends. Often this will be secured by S106 agreement, **but for minor schemes where there are no other requirements for a S106 this should be secured via planning conditions.**

8.11 As with open spaces, long term-management of sports facilities must be provided for, particularly for outdoor facilities, either by the developer appointing a management company for a suitable period of time, or where sites are transferred to and adopted by the Council, a sum sufficient to ensure maintenance for a period of at least 10 years.

Biodiversity Net Gain

8.12 The Government's release of the Environment Bill foretold of a future legal requirement which will be placed on developers to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity as part of any development.

8.13 Due to this being a relatively new concept, and a potentially complex item to quantify, monitor and enforce, the Council has decided to produce a separate Biodiversity SPD, a draft copy of which is being published for consultation at the same time as this Developer Contributions SPD and likely to be adopted at a similar time.

8.14 The SPD contains details of the engagement with the Council, how to measure existing levels of biodiversity on-site, how to quantify the additional net gain, how to deliver the net gain, and how to monitor it.

8.15 It also explains how to calculate a financial contribution in lieu of under-provision and how the Council would seek, firstly, for the net gain to be provided off-site but in a nearby location, and secondly, what the Council will fund with any financial contributions.

Sustainable Drainage

8.16 The Local Plan requires that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are in place, having been agreed with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) with engagement with the Environment Agency and Internal Drainage Boards as appropriate.

8.17 SuDS solution should be provided either on- or off-site, with a preference for on-site but an acceptance that this is not always possible. Financial contributions should not be sought in lieu of under-provision. The applicant must provide the SuDS to make the development acceptable in planning terms or the Council will have a reason to refuse the application.

8.18 SuDS schemes should be detailed and secured by planning condition or S106 to ensure their delivery and enforcement if not.

8.19 Where developers propose SuDS schemes that need to be adopted by the relevant sewerage company (Anglian Water or Thames Water being the two sewerage companies for the Stevenage area), the relevant sewerage company should be consulted. It should be noted that under the Water Industry Act, sewerage companies obtain charges directly from developers to ensure sites drain effectively where a connection to the public sewerage network is required so won't seek developer contributions for this purpose. However, they may require planning conditions to address the risk of downstream flooding when a foul and/or surface water connection is required

9 Site-Specific Mitigation

CIL Regs 2010 - Regulation 122

9.1 There will be instances where developments will have to provide S106 contributions in addition to paying a CIL charge in order to mitigate the impacts of their development and make the proposal acceptable in planning terms. Where the Council or infrastructure/service provider (such as HCC as Education Authority) identify a site-specific impact of a development that requires mitigation through a S106 agreement, they will have to justify how the requirement meets the three tests of Regulation 122 from the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) as discussed in paragraph 2.0.7.

9.2 The rest of this Section sets out what we expect to be some of the most commonly required contributions to mitigate site-specific impacts.

NHS GP Surgeries

9.3 The NHS runs GP surgeries throughout the borough, with facilities often a key aspect of the local area. Additional residential development puts specific demand on existing facilities because residents, generally, tend to want to join a GP practice that is close to their home.

9.4 As such, although other NHS requirements, such as acute care, would be dealt with by CIL due to their nature of being planned on a wider catchment area, the Council will continue to seek NHS contributions where there is a clear demand placed on existing GP surgeries from proposed developments.

9.5 For strategic sites identified in the Local Plan, provision of new GP surgeries is a policy requirement which will be confirmed through engagement with the NHS at the time of an application being submitted. If the NHS confirms they are no longer seeking a GP surgery on site, a payment in-lieu of provision will be sought to increase/improve capacity elsewhere. For non-strategic sites, the NHS will be consulted as part of the application process and will be able to demonstrate if a proposed development causes an increase in demand for facilities that requires mitigation.

9.6 If so, a financial contribution to the expansion, renovation or replacement of a GP surgery will be calculated based on the population of the new development, the likely demand for places at the surgery, the cost of providing GP facilities as demonstrated by the NHS's most up to date data, and the specific project required.

Primary Education

9.7 Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Education Authority, has a legal obligation to ensure there are **sufficient** education places for the resident population. As such, they often seek developer contributions towards education projects to provide additional spaces.

9.8 As discussed earlier, many of the HCC obligations sought are now covered by the Council's CIL Charging Schedule and HCC will be able to bid for CIL funding where they identify projects to increase capacity for the borough.

9.9 However, in instances **where a development creates an impact and mitigation must be implemented to ensure a proposed scheme is acceptable in planning terms**, HCC will request financial contributions to fund that scheme.

9.10 This is most likely to occur for developments in and around the Town Centre where primary education capacity is low due to the historic low levels of residential development and the subsequent lack of need for primary schools there.

9.11 With the Town Centre regeneration and many private schemes being proposed and brought forward in the area, a new demand for education is being created. Land for a 2-Form Entry primary school is being provided within the Town Centre. This facility will be used to meet the needs of the majority of new developments in the surrounding area, not just the Town Centre (as defined in the Local Plan). This is because of the lack of alternative schools nearby, the lack of future capacity within these schools and in the wider area, and also the lack of ability for those schools to expand due to constraints on-site as identified by HCC.

9.12 As such, it is likely that HCC will seek financial contributions towards build costs and purchasing land for the Town Centre school from nearby developments where they can demonstrate that pupils arising from those developments will place demand on Town Centre education.

9.13 The contributions will be sought in line with the aforementioned HCC Guide to Developer Contributions, or replacement/updated versions.

Sustainable Transport and Passenger Transport

9.14 Sustainable Transport is a key priority for the Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The Local Plan identifies development in sustainable locations but there may still be requirements to ensure that developments have sufficient sustainable transport links to be considered acceptable in planning terms.

Proposed Town Centre Bus Station



9.15 Sustainable transport links include creating appropriate access for residents or other users to use active modes of transport, such as cycling and walking, as well as public transport such as, buses and trains. Ideally, developments will be designed to ensure that these forms of transport are attractive enough to persuade their use instead of the use of privately-owned cars. This is to match the Policy 1 of HCC's Local Transport Plan to promote a modal shift in transportation. It should be noted that the top of the Hierarchy is to prevent the need to travel in the first place which will be considered in the first instance, and active and sustainable forms of transport should be considered thereafter.

9.16 Developments will therefore be expected to provide excellent links for cycling and walking. In particular, vulnerable pedestrians such as those with disabilities, with sight impairments, the elderly and children should be actively accommodated. This may require the provision of cycle routes on- and off-site to ensure high quality access to local facilities or to link to Stevenage's existing extensive cycle and walkways. These may be provided directly by the developer and secured through a Section 278 agreement, or by way of a financial contribution secured by a S106 agreement for HCC or a third party to deliver.

9.17 Developments should meet the requirements of Local Plan policy for access to bus services. Often, this will involve the provision of new bus stops for existing bus services to use and therefore provide the development's population the public transport service. Where bus stops already exist in suitable locations, upgrades in the form of raised Kassel kerbing, shelters, and RTI displays may be considered necessary.

9.18 In some instances, likely to be edge-of-town extensions, new bus services or extensions to existing routes will be required. These will be sought through financial contributions in the S106. The level of provision will need to be discussed with the HCC Passenger Transport Unit and this will focus on the number of vehicles and frequency of services on the route. Once these are agreed to ensure that a development meets its sustainable transport needs, the Passenger Transport Unit will demonstrate the financial provision required to implement the new services.

Travel Plans

9.19 All major developments will require a travel plan. For the latest good practice, see HCC's Travel plan Guidance 2020⁽⁸⁾ A financial contribution will be required through the S106 towards the cost of evaluating, administering and monitoring the objectives of the Travel Plan and engaging in a Travel Plan Annual Review. The Annual Review will be undertaken by HCC Highways.

9.20 Potential mitigation measures should also be set out, costed and indexed within the S106 agreement so that a developer can be obligated to fund mitigation work if HCC's annual monitoring shows that the objectives of the Travel Plan are not being met by the agreed timescales.

Management of Public Realm

9.21 Contributions towards public realm maintenance and enhancements of town centre or neighbourhood centres will be sought from developments which are likely to cause a significant increase in footfall at these locations. This is likely in town centre developments and strategic sites which provide new neighbourhood facilities at the heart of their development but could also be required from neighbourhood centre regeneration schemes and large sites near to existing neighbourhood centres.

9.22 Where new, or significant changes to the public realm are proposed through a development, management will be secured through the S106 agreement either by the developer appointing a management company on a sufficient long-term agreement, or where land is to be transferred to the Council, by providing financial contributions that suffice to expand the Councils existing maintenance regime to the proposed new areas of public realm.

8 <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/development-management/travel-plan-guidance.pdf>

9.23 Where new developments are likely to put increased demand on the existing public realm, contributions may be sought to enable the public realm to meet the additional demand. This could be through the provision of public bicycle parking, signage, improvements to public facilities such as toilets, and/or improvements to the design and state of public areas.

9.24 In such circumstances, it is considered that the contributions to improving the public realm would create a direct benefit to the development itself, creating a better local environment for users/residents of the proposed development and adding to the vitality of the area as a whole.

Fire Hydrants

9.25 Hertfordshire County Council, in its capacity as the Fire and Rescue Authority, has a statutory duty to ensure that all development is provided with adequate water supplies for firefighting. The provision of public fire hydrants is not covered by Building Regulations 2010 and developers are expected to make provision for fire hydrants to adequately protect a development site for firefighting purposes.

9.26 The need for hydrants will be determined through consultation with HCC at the time of application although the exact location and delivery of hydrants is frequently determined at the time the water services for the development are planned which is often after permission has been granted. Historically, fire hydrants have been secured by S106 agreement **but where possible they will be secured through the planning system.**

Remediation of Contaminated Land

9.27 The Local Plan states that proposals on brownfield sites will be granted where a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) demonstrates that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment and groundwater bodies.

9.28 Where the PRA states that remediation is necessary, schemes should be detailed and secured by condition or in a S106 agreement to ensure their delivery and enforcement.

Miscellaneous

9.29 As previously mentioned, it is not possible for the Council to list every potential example of site-specific mitigation that may be required to enable a proposal for development to be considered acceptable in planning terms.

9.30 As such, the Council reserves the right to seek developer contributions either through on- or off-site provision or by financial contribution to items not mentioned in this SPD. However, the Council or any other body requesting S106 contributions meets the three tests included in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

10 Construction Employment Opportunities for Stevenage Residents

Local Employment and Apprenticeships

10.1 The Council has always maintained that it is a pro-development authority, acknowledging that the benefits of development contribute to the economic growth of the town and subsequently benefit the town's residents and workforce. The continued expansion of the town since its first designation as a Mark 1 New Town is testament to this and the planned continuation of this growth through high quality, planned development identified in the Local Plan and recent planning decisions seeks to continue this trend.

10.2 However, the Council would like to ensure that a key direct benefit of promoting future growth is safeguarded for its residents. This SPD therefore introduces a new requirement that developers of major development⁽⁹⁾ will sign a S106 agreement with the Council to:

- attempt to fill 5% to 10% of construction jobs on-site associated with their development with Stevenage residents,
- attempt to fill one apprenticeship position per 10 construction jobs on-site with a Stevenage resident or student (with a cap for requirement of 10 apprenticeships),
- report whether or not they met these requirements, and
- provide a financial contribution in lieu of not achieving either or both targets.

10.3 To do this, the developer must provide a Local Employment Strategy at the application stage which shows:

- an estimate of how many construction jobs their scheme will create,
- how many jobs should therefore be filled with Stevenage residents,
- how many apprenticeships positions should therefore be filled with Stevenage residents or students,
- how they will target local residents/students for these positions,
- how they will record and report the employment, and
- the potential in-lieu payments required to be paid to the Council for non-compliance with the targets.

10.4 The Local Employment Strategy might include targeting recognised local initiatives or partnerships, or the use of in-house schemes. It is advised that the developer engages with Stevenage Works when producing their Local Employment Strategy. **Stevenage Works is a partnership between the Council, Stevenage Job Centre Plus and North Hertfordshire College to provide training and job opportunities including apprenticeships for young and unemployed people.** The North Hertfordshire College campus within Stevenage provides training and seeks to provide apprenticeship opportunities for construction industries amongst many others and Job Centre Plus looks to help unemployed people find employment opportunities. **Stevenage Works has committed to maintaining a database of suitable candidates for apprenticeship or employment roles and will field responses to any requests from developers looking for local candidates for such opportunities.**

⁹ The threshold for a major development is any application that involves mineral extraction, waste development, the provision of 10+ residential dwellings / a site area over 0.5 Hectares or a floorspace of over 1,000sqm / an area of 1 hectare. For Stevenage, it is most likely that the relevant major developments will be those that provide 10+ dwellings or over 1,000 sqm of non-residential floorspace.

10.5 The monitoring report, to be submitted at an agreed time after construction has commenced, should be submitted to the Council showing how the developer/contractor has met or failed to meet the targets.

10.6 If the report shows that local recruitment targets have not been met by the developer or contractor, payments in lieu should be made to the Council in line with the following:

- £4,000 per number of targeted jobs not filled by Stevenage residents,
- £2,000 per number of targeted apprenticeships not filled by Stevenage residents or students, and
- £250 per apprenticeship position as an administrative fee towards the brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions.
- If a major development could not provide suitable apprenticeship opportunities due to the quick construction of the development project, and the resultant lack of suitable opportunity to provide apprenticeships, they should pay a lesser fee of £1,000 per number of targeted apprenticeships not created rather than the £2,000 fee.

10.7 This money will go towards a new Local Training Fund, managed by the Council, to allow for the promotion of employment opportunities elsewhere in the borough. The Fund would be open to an annual round of applications to fund:

- Stevenage residents to help fund training opportunities, and/or
- Local micro-businesses⁽¹⁰⁾ to fund short term employment opportunities for Stevenage residents.

10.8 The fees are considered appropriate so as not to affect the viability of a scheme, but to provide potentially significant funds to those wanting to undertake training or provide jobs for local residents. See below for a worked example:

¹⁰ As defined by the European Union and UK Government, a micro business is one with 0-9 employees (or Full time equivalent) and an annual turnover under £2million

Worked Example

The Local Employment Strategy of a major development estimates it will create 30 on-site construction jobs.

5% Local Employment Target:

5% of 30 = 1.5

Round up 1.5 = a target of 2 Stevenage residents to be employed in construction jobs on-site

The subsequent monitoring report shows 1 Stevenage resident was employed

This is a shortfall of 1 local employee

1 x £4,000 = **£4,000** in lieu contribution.

1 apprenticeship per 10 construction workers target:

30 / 10 = 3

3 = a target of 3 apprenticeships on-site to be filled by Stevenage residents or students

The subsequent monitoring report shows that 2 of the apprenticeships were filled with Stevenage residents or students

This is a shortfall of 1 local apprentice

1 x £2,000 = **£2,000** in lieu payment.

Administrative Fee

3 = a target of 3 apprenticeships on-site

3 x £250 = £750 administrative fee towards brokerage system to fill apprenticeship positions.

Overall:

£4,000 + £2,000 + £750 = £6,750 in lieu payment towards the Local Training Fund and brokerage system

10.9 The targets do not add a requirement for additional jobs that add financial burden to the developer or contractor. The targets merely add a requirement that a portion of the jobs will be targeted for local residents.

10.10 The in lieu payments do not add a significant financial burden to the developer or contractor. The in-lieu payment will only be required if the developer or contractor does not meet the employment targets.

11 Parking and Sustainable Transport

Parking Controls

11.1 Sustainable transport remains a significant priority of the Council and the issue of car parking is closely related. The Council recently adopted a new Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD which sets lower parking requirements than previous requirements to promote the use of other forms of transport in the most accessible locations in Stevenage.

11.2 Parking continues to be an emotive and important aspect of development and it is important that reduced levels of parking provision within new developments do not lead to overspill parking, and other parking issues in nearby locations.

11.3 As such, the Council will seek developer contributions towards the management of parking in nearby locations, particularly for developments which have provided parking at a level lower than stated within the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD. Historically, the Council has requested payments for parking monitoring and parking studies but with the quantity of development coming forward in the coming years, it is considered important to seek contributions towards the prevention of such parking which affects residents other than those at the development causing the issue.

11.4 Depending on the projected or recorded issues, the Council may request contributions towards increased parking controls by wardens or towards funding the pursuit of formal Restrictive Parking Zones. The most appropriate solution and the sought contributions towards the solution will be determined on a case-by-case basis through engagement with the Council's internal Parking Team, and will be based on the size of the development, the findings of any relevant parking studies and the size of the affected area.

Car Pooling Clubs and Other Sustainable Schemes

11.5 Another way of reducing overspill parking in developments with low levels of parking provision, is the provision of alternative forms of transport that reduce the perceived need of its residents for their own car.

11.6 The Council will support the provision and ongoing management of car pooling clubs through S106 agreements, particularly those that use electric vehicles. Communal car schemes can offer residents or employees the confidence that on the odd occurrence they need a car, one will be available to them at a fraction of the cost of owning and running their own vehicle.

11.7 Car pooling has the additional benefit of offering the ability to reduce private car parking provision, enabling a better and more attractive design and a more financially viable scheme. A sufficient car-club could be used to reduce the overall parking provision of a development.

11.8 Alternatively, developers could improve the sustainability of their development by contributing to projects such as bike hire schemes, electric charging points and lift-share clubs.

12 Processes and Procedures

Pre-Application

12.1 It is not always possible for the Council to give details regarding the likely S106 agreement at this early stage of a development due to the level of detail needed to calculate some financial contributions. However, pre-application discussions enable the Council to clarify policy requirements and key considerations which will be prudent to the negotiations and inclusions of any future S106 agreement.

12.2 It is likely to be possible to outline draft heads of terms at the stage, at the very least to give an indication of the type of contributions that may be requested, and to aid viability studies to be submitted with the planning application if the applicant raises viability as a potential issue. However, where details are not known, particularly if an outline application is to be submitted, the Council may have to generate estimates of any expected developer contributions by scaling up or down similar historic, policy-compliant schemes which were considered, at this early stage, to have a similar level of impact.

12.3 Where the Council identifies that contributions may be sought by other bodies, such as Hertfordshire County Council or the NHS for example, the applicants should consult those bodies themselves and be aware that this may incur further pre-application fees. Alternatively, the Council can provide estimates but these would be heavily caveated and could not be used by the applicant in later viability assessments to argue that a scheme is unviable and that contributions should be reduced accordingly.

Application

12.4 Once an application has been submitted to the Council, it will be the Council's obligation to coordinate and compile all information related to requests for developer contributions between the applicant and those seeking the contribution, and how they meet three tests of Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010.

12.5 This approach, rather than the applicant contacting infrastructure/service providers themselves, ensures that the Council and applicant both have a full picture of all the contributions being sought and can progress discussions with a holistic approach.

12.6 If the applicant does not agree with the need or the calculation of developer contributions, they will feed their arguments to the relevant infrastructure/service provider via the Council's appointed case officer.

12.7 Where applicants and infrastructure/service providers cannot agree developer contributions and cannot agree to the heads of terms in order to sign a S106 agreement, the Council may consider that a reason to refuse the application based on Policy SP5: Infrastructure of the Local Plan.

12.8 If the contents of a S106 can be agreed, the costs for drafting and checking legal agreements will be met by the applicant and the Council will work diligently to ensure the S106 can be signed without undue delay.

12.9 Where it is considered that the drafting and agreement of a S106 agreement would put an unnecessary cost or delay to a development, the Council will look to use a Unilateral Agreement to secure the financial contributions instead of a S106 agreement. This could be in instances where there are only a small number of contributions or where the overall level of contribution is low. For example, this could be for a development which is only due to provide a payment towards biodiversity net gain and/or apprenticeship opportunities. The Council will publish a template Unilateral Agreement for use in such circumstances.

Planning and Development Committee

12.10 Where proposals are to be presented to Committee for Councillors to determine whether or not to approve the scheme following a recommendation by the case officer, S106 Heads of Terms should be agreed prior to the Committee meeting to ensure that Councillors involved in decision making have sufficient information to make a decision of whether the scheme is mitigating its impacts sufficiently.

Monitoring

12.11 The Council will monitor and seek collection of developer contributions on behalf of all bodies who contributions were secured for in the S106. This might include requesting payments for Hertfordshire County Council, the NHS or Sport England for example.

12.12 If the Council has collected money for other bodies, it will transfer the money expediently and demonstrate to the applicant that it has transferred the money.

Deeds of Variation

12.13 If a Deed of Variation is required by the applicant, the Deed of Variation must be agreed by the Council and any other bodies affected by the amendment. The cost of implementing the Deed of Variation will lie with the applicant.

13 Monitoring Fees

Monitoring Fees

13.1 The Council will request fees to cover monitoring S106 agreements. This includes requesting payments, ensuring transfer and/or expenditure of money, and keeping/publishing records of developer contributions in line with the regulations. Monitoring of S106 is a time-consuming task that can remain ongoing for the best part of a decade in many instances.

13.2 The Council will seek 2.5% of the value of the contributions being monitored with a minimum of £750 and a cap of £25,000. This is considered a fair cost that will reflect the value of the S106 agreement and will not affect the viability of a scheme.

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Stevenage Borough Council

**The Draft Developer Contributions
Supplementary Planning Document (2020)**

Consultation Statement

30 November 2020 – 25 January 2021



Introduction

This document has been prepared to show how the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 were adhered to during the production and adoption of the Stevenage Borough Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2021).

The SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions and the purpose of the SPD is to give further guidance and clarity regarding numerous policies within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (adopted May 2019), particularly SP5: Infrastructure.

Town and Country Planning Regulations

The SPD has been produced in accordance with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The most relevant regulations relating to the process are as follows:

- Regulation 12: Regulation 12(a) requires the Council to produce a consultation statement before adoption of the SPD, this must set out who was consulted, a summary of the issues raised, and how these issues were incorporated in to the SPD.
- Regulation 12(b) requires the Council to publish the documents for a minimum 4 week consultation, specify the date when responses should be received and identify the address to which responses should be sent.
- Regulation 35: Regulation 12 states that when seeking representations on an SPD, documents must be available in accordance with Regulation 35. This requires the Council to make documents available by taking the following steps;
 - Make the document available at the principal office and other places within the area that the Council considers appropriate;
 - Publish the document on the Council's website

Details of consultation

Following approval at a meeting of the SBC Executive, consultation was undertaken on the Draft Developer Contributions SPD for a period of over eight weeks, from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021. Consultation was undertaken in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Consultees who had previously signed up to the planning consultation list were contacted by email, or by post where no email address had been provided.

The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website home page and Planning Policy pages. It also appeared on the Stevenage Borough Council Twitter page and in a copy of the Chronicle which is delivered to every residence in Stevenage. A hard copy of the consultation document was available at the Council offices and in the Customer Service Centre.

Representations were submitted on the Council's planning consultation portal, Objective (<https://stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/>), or were sent via email to Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk.

Who was consulted?

A list of consultees is provided in Appendix 1.

What were the main issues raised during the consultation?

The main topics raised during the consultation were:

- *The need for cross-boundary infrastructure provision and funding*
- *The Council consulting Sport England*
- *The role of sewerage companies in decision-making procedures*
- *The need for more detail related to viability assessments*
- *The priorities when viability reviews identify a rise in viability*
- *The need to clarify and avoid misinterpretation when determining what requires a financial contribution*
- *The provision of apprenticeship positions*
- *The requirement for contributions towards Stevenage Works*
- *The requirements for sustainable transport*

How has the Council responded to these issues and what changes has the Council made to the SPD document as a result?

The main concepts and principles of the Draft Developer Contributions SPD have been maintained and brought forward into the adopted version of the SPD. However, a number of minor amendments have been made to take account of respondents' comments.

A complete schedule of consultation responses, the Council's response to the comments and any changes made to the SPD as a result are provided overleaf. In addition, the Council added a reference to state that in instances where the drafting and agreement of a S106 agreement would add an unreasonable delay and/or cost to a scheme, the Council will secure financial contributions using a Unilateral Agreement instead of a S106 agreement. This was not stated by any consultees but is considered a prudent inclusion to prevent undue expectations on developers.

<i>Name/Organisation</i>	<i>Comment ID</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>	<i>Summarised comment:</i>	<i>SBC Response</i>	<i>SPD Amendment</i>
Sport England	DDC1	8.0.8	Support the general principle to secure sports facility provision using S106s for Strategic Sites and CIL for non-strategic sites	SBC note the comment	N/A
Sport England	DDC2	8.0.8	Add wording to refer to the Council seeking advice from Sports England on these matters to help inform and justify the Council's position.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced Sport England involvement.
Sport England	DDC3	8.0.10	Add wording to promote the use of Planning Conditions rather than S106 agreements for some instances when seeking a Community Use Agreement (on HCC's own developments) or for relatively minor development with no other requirements for a S106	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced the use of planning conditions instead of S106 agreements where appropriate.
Highways England	DDC4	5.0.2	Add wording to mention how statutory consultees such as HE are able to secure developer contributions	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced statutory consultees securing developer contributions.
Highways England	DDC5	9.0.14	Support this Sustainable Transport section to reduce traffic on the Strategic Road Network	SBC note the comment	N/A
Anglian Water	DDC6	8.0.16	Add reference to consult Anglian Water and Thames Water (as the sewerage companies for the Stevenage Area) where they will be asked to adopt a SuDs feature by a developer.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced sewerage companies being consulted.

Anglian Water	DDC7	8.0.18	Add wording to explain that, under the Water Industry Act, sewerage companies obtain charges directly from developers to ensure sites drain effectively where a connection to the public sewerage network is required.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced sewerage companies acquiring money directly from developments rather than developer contributions.
Anglian Water	DDC8	8.0.18	Add wording to explain that financial conditions may be sought to address the risk of downstream flooding when a foul and/or surface water connection is required.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced planning conditions to address downstream flooding.
North Herts DC	DDC9	General	There is a need to jointly consider the cumulative impacts of growth adjacent to, or in close proximity to, Stevenage yet outside the administrative boundary and to identify and deliver the cross-boundary and strategic site-specific infrastructure required.	SBC note the comment	N/A
North Herts DC	DDC10	General	NHDC would welcome working in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council to agree and co-ordinate strategic infrastructure requirements to support the housing growth areas especially around secondary school provision (where the physical location could be within North Hertfordshire and CIL receipts are to fund secondary school provision in Stevenage), public transport provision, health and green infrastructure, when both councils have finalised the current updates to their Infrastructure Delivery Plans	The Council welcomes these comments and commits to engaging with NHDC and other organisations when determining its spending priorities and governance for the expenditure of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.	N/A

North Herts DC	DDC11	General	North Hertfordshire District Council would welcome a Memorandum of Understanding with Stevenage Borough Council to formalise the governance and working arrangements to support this cross-boundary infrastructure delivery planning.	The Council welcomes these comments and commits to engaging with NHDC and other organisations when determining its spending priorities and governance for the expenditure of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.	N/A
North Herts DC	DDC12	5.0.1	Add wording regarding the need to formalise cross-boundary working to support infrastructure delivery	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced cross-boundary infrastructure provision.
Inspired Villages	DDC13	3.0.2	Retirement communities falls within the C2 Use Class and should therefore be designated as Extracare Housing with regards to SBC's CIL Charging Schedule.	SBC note the comment. The CIL Charging schedule cannot be amended now that it is adopted and it isn't considered appropriate to make this definition within an SPD. However the Council welcomes the representations and will take these considerations into account if receiving a planning application for a retirement village.	N/A
Inspired Villages	DDC14	3.0.2 / 7.0.1	<p>We would encourage the Council to take a proportionate approach to the requirement of affordable housing contributions from specialist operators of retirement communities. Where retirement housing / age-restricted housing is proposed, and which falls within the C3 use class (i.e. it provides housing with little, if any, facilities) then it is understood affordable housing may be sought – however, this is not the case with retirement communities where communal and care facilities are integrally linked.</p> <p>The freehold owner of the land keeps a long term interest in the operation of the community and a service provider will be responsible for the long term operation, management and ownership of the site. It is not possible to subdivide a village to provide on-site affordable housing given the single planning unit and residents' obligations to pay service charge to contribute towards the provision of the facilities,</p>	Wording included to ensure that the issue of affordable housing provision is considered in a proportionate manner for non-C3 units such as those provided as part of a retirement village.	Referenced future consideration of affordable housing provision for proposals for non-C3 units.

			staffing, etc.		
Hertfordshire CC	DDC15	3.0.4	HCC look forward to engaging with the Council on developing CIL governance. It will be useful to have clarification on how the Council intends to prioritise its CIL bids and decision-making processes for deciding infrastructure priorities.	SBC note the comment	N/A
Hertfordshire CC	DDC16	4.0.3	Replace [The latest explanation of how HCC intend to quantify developer contributions can be found in the consultation draft version of the HCC Guide to Developer Contributions (2019)(7) although this document is not yet finalised following consultation.] with [For further information and an explanation of the current position of HCC S106 requirements and developer contributions please contact them on the following email Growth@hertfordshire.gov.uk.]	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced contact details for emerging HCC Guide to Developer Contributions.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC17	4.0.5	Reword more in line with paragraph 9.0.9 and to ensure that the intention of this section cannot be mis-interpreted	Wording amended to remove potential mis-interpretation.	Referenced HCC's role determining where developer contributions could be required.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC18	4.0.7	Reword more in line with paragraph 9.0.9.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced HCC's role determining where developer contributions could be required.

Hertfordshire CC	DDC19	5.0.3	Add wording to ensure the list is not considered exhaustive	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced list of potential contributions not being exhaustive.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC20	6.0.1	Add reference to the 2018 NPPF changes regarding the requirement for an existing use value plus approach and the standardisation of inputs into assessments.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced EUV+ and standardised inputs being included in viability assessments.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC21	6.0.3	Agree that overpayment for land should not be seen as a justification that a development is deemed unviable	SBC note the comment	N/A
Hertfordshire CC	DDC22	6.0.6	Query the fact that Affordable Housing would be prioritised ahead of infrastructure payments in instances where a viability review identified an uplift in viability of a development.	The Council does not agree with this suggestion. If the Council has previously agreed to a reduced contribution towards infrastructure based on the findings of a Viability Assessment, it has agreed that the amount offered by the developer is acceptable. However, if the Council has agreed to a lower provision of Affordable Housing based on the findings of a Viability Assessment, the aim to have 25% or 30% Affordable Housing, as per Local Plan Policy, will still remain at a later date. As such, the SPD will prioritise the provision of additional Affordable Housing units in instances where a Viability Review has demonstrated an increased surplus.	N/A
Hertfordshire CC	DDC23	7.0.4	Add wording that 100% of socially rented housing be built to M4(2) Category 2 accessible and adaptable standards and 10% of all new homes built as M4(3) Category 3 wheelchair user dwellings	Wording amended to incorporate requirement for all socially rented accommodation to meet M4(2) accessibility criteria. The Local Plan contains requirements for provision of accessibility overall and on a site-by-site basis for non-socially rented accommodation.	Referenced requirement for all socially-rented units to meet accessibility criteria.

Hertfordshire CC	DDC24	9.0.9	Remove reference to it only being appropriate to request financial contributions where there would only be one potential mitigation.	Wording amended as suggested.	Removed reference to "one potential mitigation"
Hertfordshire CC	DDC25	9.0.11	See comments on 4.0.5-4.0.7 regarding potential contradiction	Wording in paragraphs 4.05-4.07 amended to remove potential contradiction.	Referenced HCC's role determining where developer contributions could be required.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC26	9.0.11	Remove reference to "school catchment area"	Wording amended as suggested.	Removed reference to education catchment areas.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC27	9.0.13	Paragraph may need amending if suggested changes to section on HCC Guide to Developer Contributions are implemented	SBC note the comment	N/A
Hertfordshire CC	DDC28	9.0.15	Add mention that the need to reduce travel is top of the Hierarchy	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced priority to prevent need to travel.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC29	9.0.16	Add [In particular, vulnerable pedestrians such as those with disabilities, with sight impairments, the elderly, children, etc, should be actively accommodated.]	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced vulnerable pedestrians.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC30	9.0.17	Add [Where bus stops already exist in suitable locations, upgrades in the form of raised Kassel kerbing, shelters, and RTI displays may be considered necessary]	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced improvements to existing bus stops.

Hertfordshire CC	DDC31	9.0.19	Add reference to HCC's Travel plan Guidance 2020 for the latest good practice https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/highways/development-management/travel-plan-guidance.pdf	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced HCC Travel Plan guidance document.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC32	9.0.20	Reword to state that potential mitigation measures should be costed and the money should be index linked and set aside in the original S106 to be made available if monitoring confirms whether or not targets are being met.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced potential mitigation measures being included and costed in S106 agreements.
Hertfordshire CC	DDC33	9.0.26	Amend wording to state that Fire Hydrants will be secured through the planning process.	Wording amended as suggested.	Referenced fire hydrants being secured by planning condition.

Appendix 1 - Consultees

Specific Consultee Bodies and Duty to Cooperate Bodies consulted

- *The Coal Authority,*
- *The Environment Agency,*
- *Historic England,*
- *The Marine Management Organisation,*
- *Natural England,*
- *Network Rail,*
- *Highways England,*
- *East And North Herts NHS Trust*
- *East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group*
- *Communications operators/organisations (including; Mobile Operators Association, BT Cellnet*
- *Limited, Telefónica, O2 UK Limited, Telereal Trillium, T-Mobile, Virgin Media, Virgin Mobile,*
- *Vodafone Ltd.,)*
- *The Homes and Communities Agency*
- *North Hertfordshire District Council*
- *East Hertfordshire District Council*
- *Other Hertfordshire authorities (including; Borough of Broxbourne, Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City And District Council, Three Rivers District Council, Watford Borough Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)*
- *Hertfordshire County Council (including Growth & Infrastructure Unit, Public Health, Passenger Transport)*
- *Hertfordshire Highways*
- *Hertfordshire LEP*
- *Parish councils (including; Aston Parish Council, Codicote Parish Council, Datchworth Parish Council, Graveley Parish Council, Knebworth Parish Council, St Ippolyts Parish Council, Walkern Parish Council, Weston Parish Council, Woolmer Green Parish Council, Wymondley Parish Council)*
- *Hertfordshire Constabulary*
- *Anglian Water*
- *Thames Water*
- *Veolia Water Central (VWC)*
- *National Grid*

General consultation bodies/organisations

<i>5th Stevenage Air Scout Group</i>	<i>Broadwater Community Association</i>
<i>Aberdeen Asset Management</i>	<i>Broom Barns JMI</i>
<i>Active4Less</i>	<i>Brown And Lee</i>
<i>Adlington Planning Team</i>	<i>Brown And Lee Chartered Surveyors</i>
<i>Age Concern Stevenage</i>	<i>Buddhist Centre</i>
<i>Ahmadiyya Muslim Association</i>	<i>Building Research Establishment</i>
<i>Aldi Stores</i>	<i>Bus Users Group Stevenage</i>
<i>Aldwyck Housing Association</i>	<i>C.D.Bayles</i>
<i>Almond Hill Junior Mixed School</i>	<i>Campaign for Real Ale</i>
<i>Alzheimer's Society</i>	<i>Campaign For Real Ale Ltd</i>
<i>Anglian Water</i>	<i>Camps Hill Community Primary School</i>
<i>Aragon Land And Planning</i>	<i>Canyon Play Association</i>
<i>Archangel Michael And St Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church</i>	<i>Carers in Hertfordshire</i>
<i>Arriva</i>	<i>Catesby Property Group</i>
<i>Arriva The Shires And Essex Buses</i>	<i>CBRE Ltd.</i>
<i>Ashtree Primary School</i>	<i>Central Bedfordshire UA</i>
<i>Asian Women Group</i>	<i>Centrebus</i>
<i>Association of North Thames Amenity Societies</i>	<i>Chair North Herts Ramblers Group</i>
<i>Aston Parish Council</i>	<i>Chambers Coaches Stevenage Ltd</i>
<i>Aston Village Society</i>	<i>Chells Community Association</i>
<i>Aviva Investors</i>	<i>Chells Manor Community Association</i>
<i>BAA Safeguarding Team</i>	<i>Chells Scout Group</i>
<i>Barclay School</i>	<i>Chelton Radomes</i>
<i>Barker Parry Town Planning</i>	<i>Christadelphian Community</i>
<i>Barnwell School</i>	<i>Churches Together</i>
<i>BEAMS Ltd</i>	<i>Churches Together in Stevenage</i>
<i>Bedwell Community Association</i>	<i>Circle Anglia</i>
<i>Bedwell Primary And Nursery School</i>	<i>Citizens Advice Bureau</i>
<i>Bell Cornwell LLP</i>	<i>Clague Ashford</i>
<i>Bellway (Northern Home Counties)</i>	<i>Codicote Parish Council</i>
<i>Bellway Homes</i>	<i>Colinade Associates Ltd</i>
<i>Bellway Homes Miller Homes</i>	<i>Colliers International</i>
<i>Bellway Homes, Miller Homes & Wheatley Plc</i>	<i>Commercial Estates Group</i>
<i>Bidwells</i>	<i>Connexions Stevenage</i>
<i>Bloor Homes</i>	<i>Cortex</i>
<i>Bloor Homes South Midlands</i>	<i>Costco Wholesale UK Ltd</i>
<i>Borough of Broxbourne</i>	<i>Countryside Management Service</i>
<i>Bragbury End Residents Group</i>	<i>Countryside Properties plc, Stevenage Rugby Club and the Homes and Communities Agency (Cambridge)</i>
<i>Bridge Builders Christian Trust</i>	<i>CPRE Hertfordshire</i>
<i>British Horse Society</i>	<i>Crossroads Care (Hertfordshire North)</i>

<i>Croudace Strategic Ltd</i>	<i>Finishing Publications Ltd</i>
<i>CTC The National Cycling Charity</i>	<i>First Plan</i>
<i>Cycling UK Stevenage</i>	<i>Fitness First Plc</i>
<i>Dacorum Borough Council</i>	<i>Friends of Forster Country</i>
<i>Datchworth Parish Council</i>	<i>Friends of the Earth (Luton)</i>
<i>Davies And Co</i>	<i>Friends Religious Society</i>
<i>Defence Infrastructure Organisation</i>	<i>Friends, Families and Travellers and Traveller Law Reform Project Community Base</i>
<i>Deloitte</i>	<i>Fusion</i>
<i>Department For Business, Innovation and Skills</i>	<i>Gabriel Securities Ltd</i>
<i>Department For Culture Media And Sport</i>	<i>Genesis Housing Group</i>
<i>Department For Environment Food And Rural Affairs</i>	<i>GHM Consultancy Group Ltd (Logic Homes)</i>
<i>Department For Transport Rail Group</i>	<i>Giles Junior School</i>
<i>Design Council</i>	<i>Giles School</i>
<i>Dixons Dispatch Ltd</i>	<i>Glanville</i>
<i>Douglas Drive Senior Citizens Association</i>	<i>Glasgow City Council</i>
<i>DPDS Consulting Group</i>	<i>GlaxoSmithKline</i>
<i>EADS Astrium</i>	<i>Government Equalities Office</i>
<i>East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group</i>	<i>Graveley Against SNAP Proposals (GASP)</i>
<i>East and North Herts NHS Trust</i>	<i>Graveley Parish Council</i>
<i>East Coast</i>	<i>Graveley School</i>
<i>East Hertfordshire District Council</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Council</i>
<i>East Herts District Council</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Group</i>
<i>East Herts Footpath Society</i>	<i>Great Ashby Community Resource Centre</i>
<i>East of England Ambulance Service</i>	<i>Greene King Plc</i>
<i>East Of England Local Government Association (formerly EERA)</i>	<i>Greenside School</i>
<i>Eastlake Stevenage Limited</i>	<i>Gregory Gray Associates</i>
<i>Ecovril Ltd</i>	<i>Gujarati Hindu Association</i>
<i>Endurance estates</i>	<i>Hanover Housing Association</i>
<i>Environment Agency</i>	<i>HAPAS</i>
<i>Epping Forest District Council</i>	<i>Heaton Planning Ltd</i>
<i>Essex County Council</i>	<i>Hermes Real Estate Investment Ltd</i>
<i>Executive</i>	<i>Hertford Road Community Association</i>
<i>F&C REIT Asset Management</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Action on Disability</i>
<i>Fairlands Primary School And Nursery</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders</i>
<i>Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association Of Parish And Town Councils</i>
<i>Fairview Road Residents Association</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils / Welwyn Hatfield Association of Local Councils</i>
<i>Featherstone Wood Primary School</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Association Of Young People</i>
<i>Fields in Trust</i>	<i>Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre</i>

<i>Hertfordshire Care Trust</i>	<i>Iceni Projects Ltd</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Chamber Of Commerce And Industry</i>	<i>Independent Custody Visitors Scheme</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Constabulary</i>	<i>Intercounty Properties</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council</i>	<i>J Young Investments Ltd.</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Archaeology)</i>	<i>JB Planning Associates</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Estates)</i>	<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council (Highways)</i>	<i>John Henry Newman RC School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire County Council Public Health</i>	<i>Jones Day</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Fire And Rescue Service</i>	<i>Jones Lang LaSalle</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Gardens Trust</i>	<i>Kirkwells</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Hearing Advisory Service</i>	<i>Knebworth Estates</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Highways</i>	<i>Knebworth House Education and Preservation Trust</i>
<i>Hertfordshire LEP</i>	<i>Knebworth Parish Council</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police</i>	<i>Lambert Smith Hampton</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police Authority</i>	<i>Land Registry Head Office</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Police Eastern Area</i>	<i>Lanes New Homes</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Property (HCC)</i>	<i>Langley Parish Meeting</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Society for the Blind</i>	<i>Larwood School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service</i>	<i>Lepus Consulting</i>
<i>Hertfordshire University</i>	<i>Letchmore Infants And Nursery School</i>
<i>Hertfordshire Visual Arts Forum</i>	<i>Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation</i>
<i>Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust</i>	<i>Leys Primary And Nursery School</i>
<i>Herts Against the Badger Cull</i>	<i>Lincolns Tyre Service Ltd.</i>
<i>Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust</i>	<i>Living Streets</i>
<i>Herts Gay Community</i>	<i>Lodge Farm Primary School</i>
<i>Hertsmere Borough Council</i>	<i>London and Cambridge Properties Ltd</i>
<i>Hightown Praetorian Churches Housing Association</i>	<i>London Borough of Barnet</i>
<i>Highways England</i>	<i>London Borough of Enfield</i>
<i>Hill Residential Limited</i>	<i>London Borough of Harrow</i>
<i>HilliersHRW Solicitors LLP</i>	<i>London Gypsies and Travellers Unit</i>
<i>Historic England</i>	<i>Longmeadow Primary School</i>
<i>Hitchin Town Action Group</i>	<i>Lonsdale School</i>
<i>Holiday Inn Express</i>	<i>Luton Borough Council</i>
<i>Holy Trinity Church</i>	<i>Mantle</i>
<i>Home Builders Federation</i>	<i>Marine Management Organisation</i>
<i>Home Group</i>	<i>Marriotts Gymnastics Club</i>
<i>Homes And Communities Agency</i>	<i>Marriotts School</i>
<i>Howard Cottage Housing Association</i>	<i>Martin Ingram Opticians</i>
<i>Howard Property Group</i>	<i>Martins Wood Primary School</i>
<i>HSBC Trust Company (UK) Limited</i>	<i>Mayor of London</i>
<i>Hubert C Leach Ltd</i>	<i>MBDA UK Ltd</i>
<i>Hythe Ltd</i>	<i>Miller Strategic Land</i>


<i>Mind in Herts</i>	<i>Pin Green Community Centre</i>
<i>MKG Motor Group</i>	<i>Pin Green Residents Association</i>
<i>Moss Bury Primary School</i>	<i>Pin Green Residents Group</i>
<i>Moult Walker Chartered Surveyors</i>	<i>Planning Issues Ltd</i>
<i>MS Society Mid Hertfordshire</i>	<i>Planning Potential Ltd</i>
<i>NaCSBA</i>	<i>Planware Ltd</i>
<i>National Express</i>	<i>Planware Ltd.</i>
<i>National Housing Federation</i>	<i>POhWER</i>
<i>Natural England</i>	<i>Princes Trust</i>
<i>Network Rail</i>	<i>Putterills Of Hertfordshire</i>
<i>NFGLG</i>	<i>Rapleys LLP</i>
<i>NHS East and North Hertfordshire CCG</i>	<i>REACT</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Green Party</i>	<i>Redrow Homes (Eastern) Ltd</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire College</i>	<i>Redrow Homes Eastern Division</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire District Council</i>	<i>Regional Land Holdings Ltd.</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire Friends Of The Earth</i>	<i>Relate North Hertfordshire And Stevenage</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire People First</i>	<i>Renshaw UK Limited</i>
<i>North Herts & Stevenage Green Party</i>	<i>rg+p Ltd</i>
<i>North Herts and Stevenage Community Learning Disability Team</i>	<i>Richborough Estates</i>
<i>North Herts Homes</i>	<i>Ridgemonnd Park Training Centre</i>
<i>North Herts People First</i>	<i>River Beane Restoration Association</i>
<i>North Stevenage Consortium</i>	<i>Road Haulage Association</i>
<i>Odyssey Group Holdings</i>	<i>Roebuck and Marymead Residents Association</i>
<i>Office for Rail Regulation</i>	<i>Roebuck Nursery And Primary School</i>
<i>Old Stevenage Community Association</i>	<i>Round Diamond Primary School</i>
<i>On Behalf Of St. Peter's Church</i>	<i>RPF Developments</i>
<i>Origin Housing Group</i>	<i>RPS Planning and Development Ltd</i>
<i>Oval Community Centre</i>	<i>RSPB</i>
<i>PACE</i>	<i>Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd</i>
<i>Paradigm Housing Group</i>	<i>Savils</i>
<i>Passenger Transport Unit, Hertfordshire County Council</i>	<i>Saving North Herts Green Belt</i>
<i>Patient Liaison Group</i>	<i>Secretary of State for Communities</i>
<i>Peacock And Smith</i>	<i>Seebohm Executors</i>
<i>Peartree Spring Junior School</i>	<i>Shephalbury Sports Academy</i>
<i>Pennyroyal Ltd.</i>	<i>Shephall Community Association</i>
<i>Pentangle Design</i>	<i>Shephall Residents Association</i>
<i>Persimmon Homes</i>	<i>Showmen's Guild Of Great Britain</i>
<i>PHD Associates</i>	<i>Simmons And Sons</i>
<i>Physically Hanidcapped And Able Bodied Club</i>	<i>South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership</i>
<i>Picture Ltd</i>	<i>Sport England</i>
<i>Pigeon Investment Management Ltd</i>	<i>Sport Stevenage</i>
<i>Pigeon Land Ltd</i>	<i>Springfield House Community Association</i>


<i>St Albans City And District Council</i>	<i>Thames Water Property</i>
<i>St Ippolyts Parish Council</i>	<i>The Baha'I Community of Stevenage</i>
<i>St Margaret Clitherow RC Primary School</i>	<i>The Campaign for Real Ale</i>
<i>St Nicholas Community Centre</i>	<i>The Coal Authority</i>
<i>St Nicholas School</i>	<i>The Greens & Great Wymondley Residents Association</i>
<i>St Vincent De Paul RC Primary School</i>	<i>The Guinness Trust</i>
<i>St. Nicholas and Martins Wood Residents Association</i>	<i>The Guinness Partnership</i>
<i>Stanhope Plc</i>	<i>The Gypsy Council</i>
<i>STARCOURT CONSTRUCTION LTD</i>	<i>The Hitchin Forum</i>
<i>Stevenage And North Hertfordshire Indian Cultural Society</i>	<i>The Living Room</i>
<i>Stevenage and North Herts Women's Resource Centre</i>	<i>The National Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Borough Council</i>	<i>The Nobel School</i>
<i>Stevenage Borough Council Transportation Development</i>	<i>The Salvation Army</i>
<i>Stevenage Business Initiative</i>	<i>The Theatres Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Caribbean and African Association</i>	<i>The Woodland Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Caribbean And African Association (SCARAFa)</i>	<i>Theatres Trust</i>
<i>Stevenage Cricket Club</i>	<i>Thomas Alleyne School</i>
<i>Stevenage CVS</i>	<i>T-Mobile</i>
<i>Stevenage Depression Alliance</i>	<i>TRACKS (Autism)</i>
<i>Stevenage Haven</i>	<i>Transport for London</i>
<i>Stevenage Irish Network</i>	<i>Trotts Hill Primary And Nursery School</i>
<i>Stevenage League Of Hospital Friends</i>	<i>Troy Planning</i>
<i>Stevenage Mosque</i>	<i>Turley</i>
<i>Stevenage Polish Association</i>	<i>Universities Superannuation Scheme Ltd</i>
<i>Stevenage Quakers</i>	<i>USF Nominees Ltd.</i>
<i>Stevenage Regeneration Ltd.</i>	<i>Veale Associates</i>
<i>Stevenage Sikh Cultural Association</i>	<i>Veolia Water Central (VWC)</i>
<i>Stevenage Town Rugby Club</i>	<i>VEOLIA WATER CENTRAL LIMITED</i>
<i>Stevenage Women's Refuge</i>	<i>Vincent And Gorbing Planning Associates</i>
<i>Stevenage World Forum For Ethnic Minorities</i>	<i>Virgin Media</i>
<i>Stevenage Youth Council</i>	<i>Visit East Anglia</i>
<i>Stewart Ross Associates</i>	<i>Vodafone Ltd</i>
<i>Strutt and Parker LLP</i>	<i>Waitrose Ltd</i>
<i>Symonds Green Community Association</i>	<i>Walkern Parish Council</i>
<i>Taylor Wimpey</i>	<i>Watford Borough Council</i>
<i>Taylor Wimpey / Persimmon</i>	<i>Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council</i>
<i>Telefónica O2 UK Limited</i>	<i>Welwyn Hatfield Council</i>
<i>Telereal Trillium</i>	<i>West Stevenage Consortium</i>
<i>Terence O'Rourke Ltd</i>	<i>Weston Parish Council</i>
<i>Thames Water</i>	<i>Wheatley Homes</i>

<i>Wheatley Homes Ltd</i>	<i>Woolmer Green Parish Council</i>
<i>Willmott Dixon Housing</i>	<i>WPNPF</i>
<i>Wm Morrisons Supermarket Plc</i>	<i>Wyndley Parish Council</i>
<i>Women's Link</i>	<i>Wyvale Garden Centres Ltd</i>
<i>Woodland Trust</i>	<i>Young Pride in Herts</i>
<i>Woolenwich Infant And Nursery School</i>	<i>Youth Council</i>

Approximately 950 individuals on the Council consultation register were also consulted.

Appendix 2 – Examples of Consultation Publicity









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Stevenage Borough Council launches Biodiversity Consultation

Posted on 30 Nov 2020 Share:      

The promotion of biodiversity and nature has always been a priority of the Council and recently we updated our Biodiversity Action Plan to show how we will maintain biodiversity conservation and improvement.

We also want to make sure that developers meet their requirements to conserve and enhance biodiversity in our town through their proposed schemes.

To this end, we are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers should incorporate biodiversity into their proposed schemes or alternatively provide financial contributions to the Council to implement biodiversity improvements on their behalf

It has been prepared in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and is the first of its kind in Hertfordshire. The Consultation runs from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021

Members of the public may have their say on the Council's planning consultation portal at <https://stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/> or by emailing Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk

John Gardner, Executive Member for the Environment and Regeneration, said: "Stevenage Borough Council has for a number of years been working in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to improve the biodiversity of our town and welcomed the Government's 2018 Environment 25 year Plan calling for a net gain policy of biodiversity in all new developments. Biodiversity is one of the best indicators of a balanced and sustainable community, also helping to address the challenges of climate change. This draft SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) is offered for public consultation and support to help developers meet the objectives of the "10% Net Gain" biodiversity policy for the benefit of future generations."

In addition, with a significant level of growth and development planned in the coming years, the council wants to ensure that developers provide mitigation against the impacts of their proposed schemes.

This will involve developers providing, or contributing funds towards, infrastructure and public services within the town, which could include the construction of roads/cycleways, or the provision of land for additional schools or health facilities.

Other mitigation will also include the use of good design to provide sports facilities, open spaces, community facilities and opportunities for residents to use sustainable transport as part of our attempt to combat climate change.

We are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers will be expected to contribute to Stevenage's infrastructure and services when implementing planning permissions in the future.

This is in addition to the Council's adoption of a Community Infrastructure Levy earlier this year which aims to fund infrastructure more widely across the borough.

Consultation runs from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021. Have your say on the [Council's planning consultation portal](#) or email your thoughts to Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk

Cllr John Gardner, added: "We are pleased to offer this draft SPD for public consultation and support, to both clarify and increase public transparency of the valued financial contributions developers are required to make towards the essential infrastructure required for all developments. A key feature within the document is a requirement for Developers to ensure a portion of the construction jobs and apprenticeships associated with their development are available to local residents for the benefit of Stevenage."



Stevenage Council ✓
@StevenageBC



Executive agrees to public consultation on a new Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document. This means we will ensure there is a consistent approach used in all applications to increase the provision of affordable housing and developer contributions in Stevenage.

4:21 pm · 18 Nov 2020 · Twitter Web App



Biodiversity Consultation launched

Plan to protect wildlife as part of proposed developments

The promotion of biodiversity and nature has always been a priority of the Council and recently we updated our Biodiversity Action Plan to show how we will maintain and improve biodiversity conservation.

We also want to make sure that developers meet their requirements to conserve and enhance biodiversity in our town through their proposed schemes.

To this end, we are consulting on a new planning document which sets out how developers should incorporate biodiversity into their proposed schemes or alternatively provide financial contributions to the Council to implement biodiversity improvements on their behalf.



It has been prepared in partnership with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and is the first of its kind in Hertfordshire. The Consultation runs from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021.

Members of the public may have their say on the Council's planning consultation portal at <https://stevenage-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/> or by emailing Planning.Policy@Stevenage.gov.uk

In addition, with a significant level of growth and development planned in the coming years, the council wants to ensure that developers provide mitigation against the impacts of their proposed schemes.

This will involve developers providing, or contributing funds towards, infrastructure and public services within the town, which could include the construction of roads/cycleways, or the provision of land for additional schools or health facilities.

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Stevenage Borough Council

Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement

1. The Purpose of this Statement

This screening statement has been prepared to determine whether the proposed SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations).

The purpose of the Developer Contributions SPD is to aid the effective implementation of policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, adopted May 2019. Specifically, the SPD is being introduced to support:

- Policy SP5 – Infrastructure

The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will inform Development Management decisions. The SPD will provide practical advice to all parties seeking to comply with the Local Plan policies and will therefore be of particular use to developers and agents looking to bring forward development. Specifically, the SPD will identify where the Council will seek financial and/or land contributions through a Section 106 legal agreement in addition to a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment – Regulatory requirements

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC. This was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance of these regulations can be found in the Government publication ‘A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’ (ODPM, 2005) and Paragraph 11- 008 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which states that “supplementary planning documents do not require sustainability appraisal but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the local plan.

Under the requirements of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004), certain types of plans that set the framework for the consent of future development projects, must be subject to an environmental assessment.

The objective of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.

The 2001 Directive has been updated a number of times, with the most recent Directive issued in April 2014. While Article numbers cited in the 2005 guidance have been updated/removed, the

principle of determining whether a Plan or Programme will have likely significant effects on the environment remain the same. Therefore, this screening statement uses the only Government guidance available.

3. The Strategic Environmental Appraisal Process

The first stage of the process is for the Council to determine whether or not the SPD is likely to have significant effects on the environment. This screening process includes assessing the SPD against a set of criteria (as set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations). The results of this are set out in Appendix 1 of this statement. The aim of this statement is therefore to provide sufficient information to demonstrate whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The Council also has to consult the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England on this screening statement. A final determination cannot be made until the three statutory consultation bodies have been consulted.

Where the Council determines that a SEA is not required, Regulation 9(3) of the SEA Regulations states that the Council must prepare a statement setting out the reasons for this determination.

4. Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment?

There is no statutory requirement to undertake a SA appraisal of SPDs. The Council has considered whether an SA might be required. The SPD does not create new policies. It explains the instances in which developers will be asked to provide Section 106 contributions to conform with policies in the Local Plan and regulations from national legislation. The SPD is therefore unlikely to have significant environmental, social or economic effects beyond those of the Local Plan policies which were subject to a comprehensive SA process, incorporating SEA, as part of the Local Plan production requirements.

The Council is required to consider Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). HRA is the process used to determine whether a plan or project would have significant adverse effects on the integrity of internationally designated site of nature conservation importance, known as European sites. The need for a HRA is set out within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which transposed EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC into UK law. A HRA Appropriate Assessment Screening Document was produced during Local Plan preparation and concluded that no policies in the Local Plan would have a likely significant effect of the closest SPA at the Lee Valley, nor it's associated SSSI at Rye Meads.

Copies of the SA and HRA documents for the Local Plan are available here:

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/149690/planning-policy/90175/>

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the screening process, the Council believes that the Developer Contributions SPD does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (or Sustainability Appraisal or Habitats Regulations Assessment). This is due to the lack of significant environmental, social or economic effects arising from its implementation above and beyond those of the Local Plan policies which have already been appropriately assessed.

Appendix 1

A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive, ODPM 2005

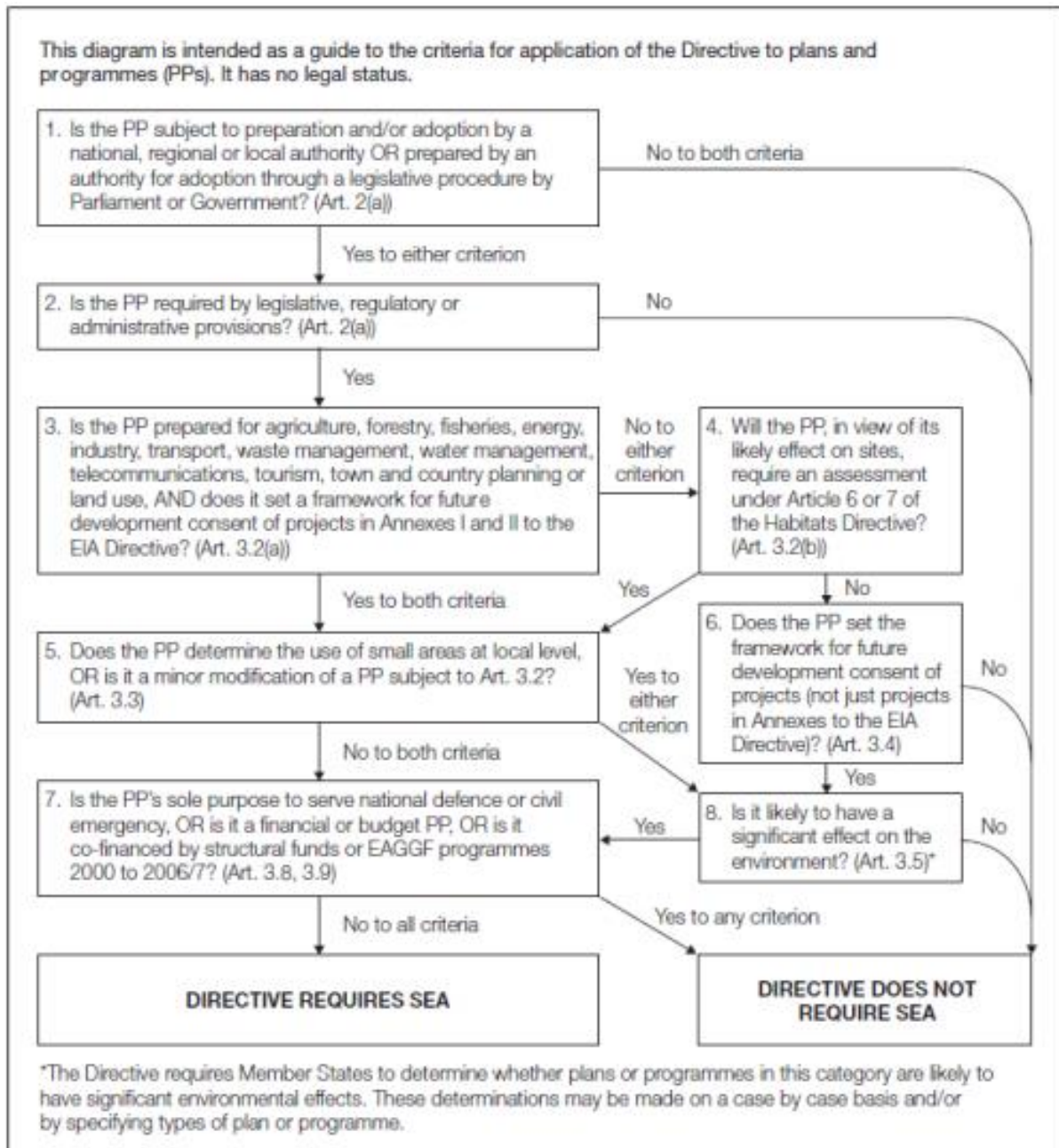


Table 1: Establishing whether these is a need for SEA

Stage	Yes/No	Assessment
1. Is the PP (plan or programme) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Yes to either criterion: proceed to question 2	Yes, the SPD has been prepared by SBC to provide additional detail to polices contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019)
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Yes: proceed to question 3	Yes, the SPD will become a material consideration upon adoption
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	Yes to both criterion: proceed to question 5	Yes, the SPD is prepared for the purpose of Town and Country Planning, to supplement policies in the adopted Local Plan (2019). And Yes, the SPD sets a framework for developments that may require EIA although this SPD does not create new policy.
5. Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP subject to Art. 3.2? (Art. 3.3)	Yes to first criterion: proceed to question 8	Yes, the SPD supplements Local Plan policies relating to infrastructure via the provision of financial and/or land contributions so could determine the use of small areas of land at a local level.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	No	No, the SPD is not considered to have a significant effect on the environment. DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE THE SPD TO UNDERGO SEA

SEA Directive Criteria (Schedule of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Potential effects of SPD
1. Characteristic of the SPD having particular regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	The SPD provides guidance on the instances where financial and/or land contributions will be sought to mitigate against the impacts of proposed developments.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	The SPD sits below the Local Plan (adopted 2019) which was subject to SA incorporating SEA. It will influence plans for individual development sites, ranging in size from 1 dwelling to major strategic sites, including multiple types of setting, but mainly in urban locations due to the under-bound nature of Stevenage Borough.
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;	The SPD provides additional guidance for meeting the infrastructure requirements of the adopted Local Plan (2019) and explains when and why obligations will be sought to ensure policy compliancy. This includes aspects of sustainable transport, biodiversity and open space amongst other aspects.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and	The SA (inc. SEA) of the Local Plan identified a number of benefits arising from the Infrastructure policies. The SPD helps support the implementation of these policies.
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	The SPD does not influence the implementation of community legislation on the environment but does promote the use of financial and/or land contributions to help provide required infrastructure.
Characteristics of the effect and area likely to be affected having particular regard to:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	The SPD is not expected to give rise to any significant environmental effects. Infrastructure itself can cause effects, but the SPD seeks to ensure infrastructure is provided to mitigate against the potential impacts of individual proposals.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	By ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided, the SPD will ensure developments have reduced impact so the cumulative effect of the SPD will be to prevent unmitigated impacts from development.
(c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects;	The SPD is not expected to give rise to any significant cross-boundary environmental effects.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	There are no anticipated effects of the SPD that risk human health. The provision of necessary infrastructure will have a positive effect on the overall health and environment by ensuring

	there is sufficient health care and education infrastructure as well as capacity for sustainable transport and outdoor activities.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The SPD will cover developments coming forward within the borough of Stevenage.
(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to— (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use;	The SPD is not expected to affect any local natural characteristics or cultural heritage, and is not expected to lead to the exceedance of environmental standards or promote intensive land-use.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	The SPD is not expected to have an effect on landscapes of national, community or international protection status. The requirements of the SPD will be applicable in Conservation Areas as well as areas not in a Conservation Area (ie. areas with national status) but the SPD likely, if anything, to have positive effects by ensuring sufficient infrastructure is provided to mitigate against the impacts of future development.

Part I



Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing, Health & Older People / Resources
Date 10 March 2021



HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Housing First Approach has been outlined in reports to Executive in July 2020 and in December 2020, as a response to impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on rough sleepers in the Borough.
- 1.2 These reports outlined the increased demand for services and the evolving resource challenges facing the Council's Homelessness Services following the "Everyone In" and "protect" directives.
- 1.3 This report updates Members on the Housing First approach (in response to those directives) to accommodate rough sleepers.
- 1.4 This report further updates Members on the options for implementing the Housing First approach for the financial year 2021/2022, for the purposes of

assessing its viability, beyond the current “protect directive” for the medium to long term.

- 1.5 This report has several appendices to give an overview of the pressures on the Homelessness services which detail the fixed term funding that has been allocated to the Council to meet homelessness demands in this financial year and for 2021/2022

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive note:
 - 2.1.1 the support provided to homeless households during the Covid-19 restrictions, March – July 2020, November to December 2020 & the most recent national restrictions from January 2021;
 - 2.1.2 the additional bid submission to the Government “Rough Sleeper Initiative 4” of £341,381.49 to mitigate the cost of the Housing First model relating to the period 2021/2022;
 - 2.1.3 that Officers will continue to seek funding from Hertfordshire County Council and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to support the unfunded cost of the prevent directive;
 - 2.1.4 the on-going work to implement a Housing First model that mitigates the cost to the General Fund.
- 2.2 That the Executive approve:
 - 2.2.1 the allocation of the Government funding of £500,831 as set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 to support the homeless functions during 2020/21 and 2021/22;
 - 2.2.2 the Housing First Approach for rough sleepers, for up to the next 12 months as set out in Appendix 4;
 - 2.2.3 the use of up to £248,381.49, from the 2021/22 Covid finance settlement funding to fund the net cost to the General Fund (subject to the level of grant funding received as set out in paragraph 5.1.12) for 12 months.

3 BACKGROUND: CONTEXT OF THE HOMELESSNESS LANDSCAPE DURING COVID-19

- 3.1 The Housing First papers have been brought before Executive in response to the demands and challenges we face for our requirement to accommodate single homeless cases, which includes those who have been sleeping rough who prior to the Everyone In and Protect directives would not have been likely to have been owed a duty to accommodate.
- 3.2 The directives issued during the COVID-19 pandemic to Local Authorities has introduced the requirement to accommodate all applicants regardless of their priority need and therefore ensure that steps are taken to ensure “Everyone In”.

3.3 It is important to note that even prior to COVID-19 the Executive approved the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 (H&RSS 2019-2024) which confirms our commitment to introduce a Housing First Approach. 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 Council recognised that delivering the priorities detailed in the H&RSS would be challenging and that the partnership approach (as identified in the H&RSS) 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.

4 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Housing First Approach

4.1 The Housing First Approach is a model that provides housing with a wrap-around support package from the outset to street homeless vulnerable clients.

4.2 Crucially, however, the approach ensures that accommodation is provided without any other precondition – recognising housing as a basic need around which other services can be provided to address the multi-dimensional needs associated with homelessness. Officers consider that the Council will have the best possible opportunity of ensuring that the street homeless will secure and maintain long term settled housing using this approach.

4.3 Providing accommodation with a Housing First Approach has proven to be, on both nationally and internationally, a successful approach to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping.

4.4 Housing First is an approach to providing accommodation but not, in and of itself, a statutory requirement.

Homelessness in Stevenage

4.5 The homelessness 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.

4.6 An update on demands of the homeless services, the steps that have been taken to address those demands and a forward plan for the Council's Housing First Approach is set out in Appendix 1.

4.7 The reports to Executive in July and December 2020 set out the global scale and national impact of Covid-19. The impact of the pandemic on rough sleepers is particularly acute, as this client group tend to have significant presenting mental and physical health needs and require support with substance misuse.

4.8 The Council are required to provide temporary accommodation for eligible applicants under sections 188 and 193 of the Housing Act 1985. In addition,

the Council is currently required to accommodate rough sleepers in accordance with the “Everyone In” and “Protect” directives (which require the Council to exercise not only its statutory duty to accommodate but also extend the exercise of its statutory powers).

- 4.9 The Homelessness Code of Guidance was updated in July 2020 to clarify priority need in relation to rough sleeper cases and the risk of COVID-19. Officers have assessed cases in accordance with legislation and the updated guidance, having due consideration to the available supply and resources in providing accommodation.
- 4.10 There were 48 rough sleeper cases reported to the Executive in July 2020, by December 2020 this figure had reduced to 26. As at 24 February 2021 there are 38 cases; this clearly indicates that the number of cases reported at any given time is not static and that placement numbers have fluctuated.
- 4.11 During autumn 2020 the Council successfully applied for funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Next Steps Accommodation Programme “NSAP” for short term revenue funding and long-term capital funding to support those who are (or are at risk of) street homelessness (as set out in para 4.32 of the December 2020 Executive report).
- 4.12 The revenue funding obtained has allowed the Council to fund support workers who focus on the drug and alcohol, mental health and offending behaviour support needs for the rough sleeper applicants. This funding is available until the end of the current financial year – March 2021.
- 4.13 The NSAP revenue funding can also be used for deposits and incentives, for those with low to medium support needs, who can be housed using the Housing First Approach within the private rented sector, with ongoing floating support.
- 4.14 The NSAP funding will also assist current and future single homeless cases. There are currently 2070 households on the waiting list and 974 of these cases (47%) are for single (1 bed-room) accommodation.

Moving forward with a Housing First Approach

- 4.15 The need for flexible accommodation, that helps to support an individual and allow professional practitioners to efficiently deliver services, plays a huge part in ensuring successful housing and personal outcomes for clients. Officers note that a Housing First Approach service would be most effective if provided through purpose-built hostel accommodation (similar to the service successfully operated by the Stevenage Haven). In the medium to long term the Council’s Housing teams will investigate whether the opportunity (in terms of land, multi-agency support and funding) exists to deliver such a service.
- 4.16 The Council’s existing HRSS sets out an ambition to justify and resource a Housing First Approach service, allowing the Council to offer stable accommodation to those who would otherwise struggle to gain access to it. Housing First sees accommodation as the first ‘stepping stone’ to recovery. The long-term sustainment of accommodation is then achieved through support and engagement. Housing First can be a powerful catalyst in

changing clients' lives and has been shown to substantially reduce rough sleeping in the long term. Trialled in over 75 schemes in the UK, it is a model that has huge success.

- 4.17 The success of these schemes will depend on the level of wrap around support provided to clients with highly complex needs and will require a level of commitment from a range of agencies in the planning, delivery and continued operation of such a scheme.
- 4.18 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 including Haven First.

Funding Housing First

- 4.19 The Council has been awarded £981,009.96 in funding for financial year 2020/2021 to provide short term interventions in accommodation and support as well as the prevention of homelessness. Funding of £1,899,291 has been obtained for the period 2021/2022 the detail of what is covered by this funding is set out at Appendix 2.
- 4.20 It is important to note that the fixed term funding which has been obtained funds several members of staff who provide the Council's statutory Homelessness function. The year to year nature of the funding regime means that the Council are only able to offer fixed-term employment contracts for these posts (give the reliance on bidding for these funds). This creates an unstable workforce and poses challenges on staff retention. As detailed within Appendix 3 there is 38% of the staff within Providing Homes reliant on fixed term funding.

Housing First Approach – the next 12 months

- 4.21 In order for the Council to be able to adopt the Housing First Approach in the medium to long term, Officers recommend that the Executive approve a 12-month pilot program to assess its financial viability.
- 4.22 The proposed business case (for the next 12 months) is set out in Appendix 4, which outlines costs of delivery and identified funding gaps for the next 12 months and identifies a potential cost to the General Fund of £65,710 if the identified scheme is at 80% occupancy (see paragraph 5.1.7 below).
- 4.23 The alternative to the Housing First Approach for the next 12 months would be to provide rough sleepers with nightly let (bed and breakfast) accommodation at an estimated cost of £604,200 (see paragraph 5.1.14 below).

Accommodation opportunities

- 4.24 There have been a range of development opportunities identified (through the close working between the Development and Providing Homes teams) which will provide the proposed temporary accommodation and Housing First units. Some of these opportunities have been funded through the 2020/21 NSAP capital grant and some have been funded through the Council's Open Market Acquisitions programme.

- 4.25 The only accommodation currently available for single homeless applicants (who are not owed a statutory housing duty) within Stevenage is through Haven First hostel on Ditchmore Lane. The Haven First hostel is able to accommodate 40 (38 singles and 1 couple). At the time of writing, and even though the Council is able to access this accommodation we still have 38 rough sleepers separately accommodated (in accordance with the pandemic directives) in bed and breakfast and 5 applicants known to be rough sleeping; all of which evidences the need for additional appropriate accommodation.
- 4.26 The Housing First provision will seek to provide 32 units/rooms to be managed by the Council; these units (as set out in Appendix 4) are owed by the Council and can be utilised to make best use of stock.
- 4.27 There is an additional site, based within the grounds of a potential Council Housing First site, where we will seek to provide up to 16 modular units which will be managed with the expertise commissioned from the Haven First project.
- 4.28 In total, therefore, the Council will seek to provide 40- 48 additional units for single homeless applicants who have been rough sleeping or are at imminent risk of rough sleeping. These units were set out in detail in the December 2020 report approved by Executive.
- 4.29 We will require planning permission for sites where any units to be occupied by more than 2 separate households. This will apply to the majority of the identified sites and until such time as planning permission is granted occupation for those sites will be limited to a maximum of 8. The Council will therefore be reliant on nightly let (bed and breakfast) accommodation for a longer period.

Engagement with Members

- 4.30 An all Member briefing took place on 23rd February 2021 to discuss the importance of responding to the homelessness pressures facing the service and to raise awareness.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The homelessness functions undertaken by the Council are defined as General Fund services. However, in order to maintain a flexible response to housing need, all dwelling properties are managed and maintained within the Council's Housing Revenue Account. This allows the Council to reassign properties between temporary and permanent tenancies and has helped reduce the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation during the pandemic. The HRA only contains the running costs, rent and service charges related to the property. It does not incur any of the wider costs of the homelessness service and it does not contain the cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.

- 5.1.2 Before the pandemic the Government had been issuing targeted, annually awarded grants to tackle homelessness. The table below shows the current projections for the split between the HRA and the General Fund and how much reliance is being placed on annual grant funding to provide the Council's homelessness services.

Current Projection 2020/21	Staff FTEs	Units Provided	Expenditure £	Income £	Total £
HRA	10.5	112	916,959	(1,357,730)	(440,771)
General Fund	10.2	76	1,934,934	(440,145)	1,494,790
Total	20.7	188	2,851,893	(1,797,875)	1,054,019
Grant Funding					
NSAP Revenue Grant	1		332,240		332,240
Flexible Homeless Support Grant	11		627,580		627,580
Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant	4		181,500		181,500
Cold Weather Fund			20,000		20,000
Protect Plus Funding			20,000		20,000
DEFRA Grant via HCC			116,630		116,630
Total	16		1,297,950		1,297,950

- 5.1.3 The first line of the table summarises the cost centres within the HRA that include expenditure and income related to temporary accommodation. There are 10.5 full time equivalent staff (FTE) in this area, although some of their time is recharged to other functions. This line does include the rental stream from the 112 properties currently being used for temporary accommodation and shows a net positive contribution to the HRA of £440,771. This contribution meets the cost of general stock management, repairs and contributions to capital investment that are not separated between temporary and general dwelling stock in the accounts.
- 5.1.4 The second line of the table shows the costs held in the General Fund for homelessness services. There are currently 10.2 FTEs in this area and 76 spaces are being funded from the General Fund, although grant funds are being used to reduce the financial pressure. This currently shows a net cost of £1.5M and this includes a £312,000 additional COVID loss.
- 5.1.5 The final part of the table details the current use of grant funding in the year. Some of the grants listed do not match the figures in Appendix 2, as the appendix shows the annual award and the figures above include some carry forward grant from prior years. Overall, grant is supporting 16 posts within the Council and, at £1.3M, almost doubles current General Fund spending in this area.
- 5.1.6 The Council is due to receive a further £860,000 of revenue grant in 2021/22 and £1M in capital grant. However, many of these grants are annually awarded making service planning and recruitment difficult.
- 5.1.7 The implementation of the Housing First Scheme will create new expenditure and income streams in the General Fund and the HRA, the weekly breakdown of expected costs and charges and this has been summarised in the table below.

Housing First Scheme Costs 2021/22	Unit Cost pw £	Total 32 Units pa Full Occp. £	Total 32 Units pa 95% Occp. £	Total 32 Units pa 90% Occp. £	Total 32 Units pa 80% Occp. £
Rental Contribution to HRA Property Costs	66.08	109,960	104,460	98,960	87,970
Specific Scheme Costs					
Enhanced Management	84.13	139,990	139,990	139,990	139,990
HF Concierge/Security/ASB management	234.27	389,820	389,820	389,820	389,820
Eligible Charges	16.48	27,420	27,420	27,420	27,420
Ineligible Charges	11.83	19,690	19,690	19,690	19,690
Total Expenditure	412.79	686,880	681,380	675,880	664,890
Funded by					
Housing Benefit	(251.69)	(418,810)	(397,870)	(376,930)	(335,050)
Tenant Payments	(11.83)	(19,690)	(18,700)	(17,720)	(15,750)
Grant	(149.27)	(248,380)	(248,380)	(248,380)	(248,380)
Total Income	(412.79)	(686,880)	(664,950)	(643,030)	(599,180)
Net Cost	0.00	0	16,430	32,850	65,710

5.1.8 The first line of the table shows the annual rental contribution from the scheme to the HRA. This covers the cost of general property management, repairs and capital investment in the stock. The next section deals with scheme specific costs, not relating to general property management and not covered by normal rents. Lastly, the table shows how these costs would be met.

5.1.9 The first column shows that the unit cost for the scheme is £412.79 per week. If the 32 units were fully occupied the scheme will require income of £687,000 pa to break even. However, it is unlikely that the units will be fully occupied so the model shows the impact of 95%, 90% and 80% occupancy. As this is a demand led service occupancy levels will be difficult to predict in the medium to long term, even if current demand is very strong. Also there will be some operational void periods between customers, as this is temporary accommodation with relatively high turnover.

5.1.10 The modelling shows that rent drops from £110,000 to £88,000 and that income to fund the scheme would fall from £687,000 to £599,000. Even at 80% occupancy it would be difficult to reduce costs in line with income, due to the specialist nature of the accommodation. At the lowest occupancy rate the model indicates a shortfall, budget pressure, of £66,000 that would fall on the General Fund, as well as the rental loss to the HRA.

5.1.11 There is also a small amount of service charge that is not eligible for benefit support and tenants would need to meet these costs directly. This may prove difficult to recover with the targeted client group.

5.1.12 As the scheme currently stands it will be necessary to secure grant funding of £248,000 pa and to agree benefit charges of £252 per week, per unit, in order to cover running costs. If the benefit recovery is lower and / or grant funding is not made available the Council would need to allocate significant General Fund resources in order to operate the Housing First Model. Officers will approach the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local

Government, as well as Hertfordshire County Council, to secure the necessary grant funding. If grant funding is not forthcoming then Officers recommend the use of up to £248,381.49, from the 2021/22 Covid finance settlement funding - to fund the net cost to the General Fund.

- 5.1.13 However, whilst the Protect Directive is in place we have a requirement to accommodate those rough sleeping regardless of priority need and the alternative will be to continue placing into B&B accommodation at a high cost to the general fund. The table below shows projected costs for this, but these could vary significantly as commercial activity returns to normal and hotel spaces may not be readily available.

Projected B&B Cost for 32 Rough Sleeper Places	
	£
Costs	
Accommodation	992,800
Food	175,200
Damage	20,000
Security	240,000
	1,428,000
Funding	
HCC Grant	175,200
Housing Benefit (60% Recovery)	648,600
	823,800
Potential Pressure	604,200

- 5.1.14 The table shows that total costs are estimated at £1.4M and that only £824,000 is likely to be recovered. This would leave a net pressure to the general fund of £604,000, which is higher than the potential pressure generated by running the Housing First model shown at 5.1.7.

5.2 Legal Implications:

- 5.2.1 The legal requirements in relation to the General Fund and the HRA are detailed within this report.
- 5.2.2 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:
- 5.2.2.1 whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status); and
- 5.2.2.2 if so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”).
- 5.2.3 Under Section 189A of the HA 1996 where the Council is satisfied that an applicant is both homeless (or 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.

- 5.2.4 If an applicant is deemed to be homeless, eligible and in priority need then an “interim duty” is owed to accommodate the applicant under s188 HA 1996
- 5.2.5 Further the Council owes the “full housing duty” under S193 HA 1996 to applicants who are:
 - 5.2.5.1 eligible for assistance and
 - 5.2.5.2 homeless, and not intentionally homeless and
 - 5.2.5.3 in priority need.
- 5.2.6 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.
- 5.2.7 It is 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.
- 5.2.8 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).
- 5.2.9 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. These costs will have to be resourced through the General Fund.
- 5.2.10 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 applicants are open to the Housing Options team is over a much more substantial period of time – with a decision relating to the s193 HA 1996 not reached until the 56 day prevention and 56 day relief duties have expired.
- 5.2.11 The Housing Options service have caseloads for those who are homeless and threatened with homelessness including those who are seeking housing advice. The demand for the service has grown significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and is detailed at point 2.3 in Appendix 1.

5.3 Equality Implications:

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 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.

- 5.3.3 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.
- 5.3.4 Officers consider that, given the specific needs of those who are, or are at risk of, street homelessness, the Housing First approach is likely to have a positive impact on protected characteristics within the client group of sex and disability.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 [Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024](#) Stevenage Borough Council.
- 6.2 [COVID 19- Provision of Night Shelters](#)
- 6.3 [Housing First Executive Paper July 2020](#)
- 6.4 Housing First approach
- 6.5 [Housing First Executive Paper December 2020](#)
- 6.6 [Protect Directive](#);

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - February Position Statement
- Appendix 2 - Homelessness Fixed Term Funding
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Appendix 1

Position Statement

This appendix details the demands on the homeless services, the steps that have been taken to address those demands and the work plan to take forward a Housing First Approach.

1.0 Demands on the Homeless Services

1.1 The Council's temporary accommodation placement rates have continued to increase with each period of national restrictions and the table below shows that the number of cases placed reduced when national restrictions were not in place and the team were able to move more cases on.

Period	Number of cases placed into Temporary Accommodation	Number of cases placed into B+B	Total number of cases placed	Rate of increase or decrease	Number of Rough Sleepers placed
16 th March 2020 (week prior to 1 st national restrictions)	102	19	140	N/A	0
June 2020 (at end of 1 st national restrictions)	112	69	181	29% increase from March 2020	48
September 2020 (No national restrictions or tier in place)	106	47	153	15% decrease from June 2020	10
13 th November 2020 (during 2 nd national restrictions)	108	47	155	1% increase from September 2020	26
1 February 2021 (during 3 rd national restrictions)	114	73	187	17% increase from November 2020	42

1.2 These above figures demonstrate that at, the end of the first national restrictions, our cases placed in bed and breakfast exceeded all historical placement rates. However due to the hard work from the Teams the figures were substantially reduced and bids were made for short term and long term

funding to rehouse the additional rough sleepers accommodated since the start of the pandemic. Unfortunately, these figures have now risen again exceeding those in June.

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Since the “Everyone In” Directive of 26 March 2020, the Council has made 156 placements for those who were rough sleeping, or at imminent risk of rough sleeping, into accommodation.
- 1.5 There are 38 cases currently accommodated and of these 27 clients are in nightly let accommodation with a further 15 in the Council’s own Temporary Accommodation stock. The applicants who were accommodated during the first and second national restrictions are not necessarily the same cases that have been accommodated during this third period of national restrictions.
- 1.6 There will always be a constant and steady flow of homelessness approaches that we will need to have resource to meet. Expanding our single homelessness provision such as the Council’s Housing First approach will assist us to manage the ongoing demand.
- 1.7 The information, for each applicant the Council placed, is 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 subsequently 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.
- 1.8 Following the third national lockdown introduced in early January 2021 Local Authorities have been directed to follow the “Protect programme” to ensure that rough sleepers have the opportunity to isolate in the same way they did during the first and second national restrictions.
- 1.9 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. Rough Sleeper Initiative Funding has been confirmed meaning that we can recruit to the 4th vacant Rough Sleeper outreach worker offering more resilience to the Team.
- 1.10 The Council’s No More service also offered support to cases placed and worked with those clients willing to engage. Both the Rough Sleeping team and the No More service continue to work with the clients placed under COVID provision in addition to *Emerging Futures* who are a commissioned provider within Hertfordshire.
- 1.11 The Council’s housing supply team have continued to source accommodation at pace in the privately rented sector (PRS) with 88 new tenancies sourced for cases open to the Council’s housing options team

since April 2020 despite a substantial period of resistance to non-essential moves within the sector for a number of months.

- 1.12 Whilst these figures are comparable to those achieved in the financial year before the pandemic, there is a substantial increase in the number of new units the housing supply team have procured directly from landlords. Since April 2020, 30 new units directly from landlords are being used to assist residents who were homeless or faced with homelessness in comparison to 24 in the whole of the previous financial year. This growth reflects the positive relationship the council's housing supply team have with private landlords in the borough and the development of the next steps let brand.
- 1.13 Our Housing Supply Co-Ordinators support both tenants and landlords throughout the tenancies. This avoids a cycle of homelessness and promotes longer, successful tenancies in the private rented sector. The Team are currently supporting 365 tenancies that were assisted by our tenancy deposit scheme. 158 of these tenancies began before 2019 demonstrating the effectiveness of the support.
- 1.14 The Team continue to have security in place to monitor the high support need placements to ensure safety for applicants, members of the public and council staff

2 The demands on the service continues to show year on year growth.

- 2.1 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%.
- 2.2 Our records show that there has also been an increase in approaches during this financial year compared to last:

Approaches to Housing Options		
Period	Number	Percentage Increase from last financial year
Jan-March 2020 (pre COVID-19 restrictions)	471	36% increase on same quarter last year
April- June 2020 (during national restrictions 1.0)	381	Static on last year
July-Sep 2020	369	Static on last year
Oct 2020	149	81% increase on October 2019
November 2020 (during national restrictions 2.0)	116	68% increase on November 2019

December 2020	99	15% increase on December 2019
January 2021 national restrictions 3.0	124	Decrease of 20% on January 2021

2.3 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.

2.4 In March 2020 the average caseload per full time Housing Options Officer stood at 60 case per officer. At 7 February 2021 the average case load stands at 86 cases per full time officer.

2.5 The Housing options team currently have a caseload of 584 cases allocated between 7 officers totalling 83 cases per officer. Due to staff sickness and vacancies the team are operating at a 70% capacity and reliant on 3 temporary members of staff to accommodate this.

2.6 There are 6 established Housing Options Caseworkers in the budget and 4 of these are funded through the Homeless Prevention Grant which means that these posts are reliant on this fixed term funding. Without at least 10 Housing Options Caseworkers the caseload will be unmanageable and therefore the team will not be able to meet our statutory functions.

2.7 It is important to note that the team are under immense pressures currently due to staff shortages. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in presentations once the law on evictions is no longer in place as it is anticipated that there will be an increase in landlords serving notice in the private rented sector.

2.8 For the last financial year 525 preventions were achieved which is approximately 10 preventions per week - which would not have been possible without the funding from the Flexible Homeless Support Grant (FHSG) for these posts - given the sheer volume of cases approaching the service. The FHSG funds a substantial number of staff within the service. The council is yet to hear about the next financial year's allocations.

2.9 Preventions financial year 2020-21 are detailed below:

	Preventions achieved in Period	Cumulative total for the year to date
April – June 2020	67	67
July – September 2020	84	151

October –December 2020	68	219
January 2021	4	223

- 2.10 The target for the year is 320 and these figures evidence the pressure in the Housing Options team who have achieved only 4 preventions in the first month of Q4. The team are currently focusing on the initial triage of cases meaning there is no capacity to focus on preventions.
- 2.11 In order to address this there will be two Housing Options Caseworkers who will specialise in single homelessness and relationship breakdown. In addition to this the Housing Supply team are focusing on access to the private rented sector to discharge our statutory duty.
- 2.12 The fund from the FHSG now renamed Homeless Prevention Grant has been allocated for spends in financial year 2021/2022 and the extension of the posts required for statutory provision were agreed with Strategic Directors on 3 February 2021.

3 ROUGH SLEEPER RE HOUSING PATHWAYS

- 3.1 As set out in the December Housing First Executive report there are 3 re-housing pathways identified for rough sleeper applicants. Below is an update on number of applicants identified for each pathway.

SUPPORT NEED	Housing Options	Estimated Numbers
<p>Pathway one: 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 5 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>Pathway Two: 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</p>	<p>There are currently 7 clients whose needs are classed as suitable for 'pathway two'</p>

SUPPORT NEED	Housing Options	Estimated Numbers
	support before finding alternative private sector or Council/Registered Social Landlord accommodation subject to eligibility	
Pathway Three: 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 30 clients in this category
Reconnected (No longer in TA)	Through support, and professional agency referrals it is possible on occasions to secure reconciliation between family networks.	2 reconnected with their children due to being accommodated in Stevenage
Unsuccessful and showing signs of disengaging (No longer in TA)	Sadly, due to violent anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity some clients disengaged, have been evicted or were taken into custody by the Police	15 evicted since November national restrictions.

- 3.2 The above table highlights that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the applicants accommodated require assistance through pathway 3 due to high level support needs. 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.
- 3.3 Increased accommodation resources are 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 applicants 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.
- 3.4 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 (if approved and subject to funding being available) would not be available for 2-3years until the development process is complete.

- 3.5 In the short term, since 3 January 2021, choice based lettings has been suspended taking into account the guidance issued around lettings in the previous national restrictions in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Since this time only urgent moves for those who are homeless or at immediate risk of harm are being completed. The Housing Options team have 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 applicants to move into and out of hotel accommodation.
- 3.6 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 25 cases of rough sleepers since March 2020 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.
- 3.7 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 Work programme

- 4.1 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 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 July 2020	Commenced- Support plans have been completed on all clients which are currently housed and are completed within 24 hours of a presentation.

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
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	Commenced- 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	Commenced- 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	Aug 2020	Commenced- Work is on-going 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

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
	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.		support providers in these areas. NSAP revenue project in place with 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	Commenced- 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 approach to tackling single homelessness and rough sleeping	March 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

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
			for support costs.
Allocate the 32 units of SBC Housing First accommodation and monitor provision	To provide supported accommodation to single homeless clients	April 2021	Planning permission must be obtained for all units of shared occupancy, member briefing and resident engagement taking place for all sites
Monitor arrangements with short term provision through local providers and partnerships with Haven First and Emerging Futures	Increase our single Homeless offer within SBC	June 2021	Haven first are due to manage the modular units and work is starting on this for Q2/Q3 Emerging Futures are providing ongoing support for our RS cases and we will explore the provision of an EF site within SBC
Investigate SBC in-house concierge/security provision and cost neutral Housing First offer	To identify an effective and cost neutral security/ concierge offer for our Haven First sites	Sep 2021	Housing Viability meetings to be introduced
Review provision over the financial year in order to make long term recommendations	Officers to identify a long term and sustainable offer	March 2022	

5 Case studies

5.1 In reviewing progress of the above work plan in appendix 2 the Housing First report in December 2020 provided some evidence of successful casework and below are some further successful outcomes detailed below:

Case Study 1

- 5.2 The Council's Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators were aware of client A during the third national lockdown which began on 4th January 2021. He has a history of mild criminality and substance issues but he been successful in engaging with services so was accommodated at The Lodge Hotel in Stansted. During this time he managed to find employment working at one of the Covid-19 testing sites in Stevenage and was successful. This helped the client maintain engagement and a positive attitude since he was seeing observable results. The client has now been housed in a newly converted Temporary Accommodation units located in Stevenage due to his motivation and willingness. This way client A is going to have the best possible chance of succeeding, he will be regularly spoken to and checked on within the new accommodation and provided with any support he may need. The teams will then get a good idea of what move on accommodation is best, with the Housing Supply team also liaising regularly to ensure once client A is ready that we can source suitable settled accommodation within the private rented sector.

Case Study 2

- 5.3 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 required to leave 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.
- 5.4 The work that has been completed by the Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators since the start of the pandemic has been and continues to be invaluable and making a real difference to the lives of those who had been sleeping rough in Stevenage.

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Appendix 2

The below table sets out the different fixed term funding allocations that have been obtained for the work related to the prevention and relief of homelessness for Financial Year 2020/2021 and for 2021/2022.

This funding sits within the Providing Homes services of Housing and Investment (excluding the capital funds obtained for development).

Fixed Term funding obtained in Financial Year 2020/2021			
Grant/Funding Name	Allocation Amount	Breakdown of allocation in Grant	Bid or Allocation
Flexible Homeless Support Grant	£313,089	Ring Fenced to Homelessness- Staffing costs relating to the Prevention of Homeless, PRS incentives and insurance scheme	Allocation
Cold Weather Fund “CWF”	£20,000	For Security costs of SWEP	Bid (payment on receipt)
Protect Plus Funding	£20,000	For Accommodation costs	Bid (payment on receipt)
DEFRA Grant HCC	£116,631	No More Service support cost during first national restrictions, food and equipment for those without access to cooking facilities and set up costs	Bid
NSAP Revenue 2020/2021	£333,740	£80,115 For Emergency Provision £96,325 Security and CCTV £13500 for NMS £13500 for EF £35,000 Support workers funded in full £93,800 for deposits, incentives and work related to accessing the PRS	Bid
RSI 3	£177,550	£137,550 4x RSC £40,000 for assisting RS applicants	Bid
Total Funding obtained for 2020/2021	£981,010		

Fixed Term funding obtained in Financial Year 2021/2022			
Grant/Funding Name	Allocation Amount	Breakdown of allocation in Grant	Bid or Allocation
Homelessness Prevention Grant (the replacement for FHSG and yearly HPG)	£500,831	Ring Fenced to Homelessness- Staffing costs relating to the Prevention of Homeless, PRS incentives and insurance scheme	Allocation
NSAP Capital	£1,038,910	Development costs for one Housing First site offering 16x modular and 5 in property- 21 units in total	Bid
NSAP Revenue	£182,000	3x support workers to support across the Housing First sites	Bid
RSI 4	£177,550	£137,550 4x RSC £40,000 for assisting RS applicants (NB: we will be applying for additional funds from this grant to assistance in meeting security costs)	Bid
Total Funding obtained for Financial year 2021/2022	£1,899,291		

The above table provides oversight on the various funding grants that have been made available and what they are allocated for.

Appendix 3 sets out all roles within the Providing Homes teams and the breakdown of the roles and functions of the work funded from the Flexible Homeless Support Grant now referred to as the Homeless Prevention grant.

Appendix 3

1. This appendix details the roles within the Providing Homes service providing statutory services required on behalf of SBC under Part 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the work completed.
 - 1.1 Local Authorities are bound by statute. Their functions are set out in numerous acts of parliament with associated legal duties and Homelessness legislation which can be found at; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities>
 - 1.2 These are the teams currently within the Providing Homes service area:
 - **Housing Options-** all work related to part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in the prevention of homelessness.
 - **Housing Supply-** all work related to part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and the prevention of homelessness.
 - **Temporary Accommodation and Lettings-** work related to part 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
 - **Housing Business Support-** administrative and processing support to all teams within Providing and Managing Homes dealing with requirements under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
 - 1.3 The below table details the job roles, the team they are in and the job function, how these roles are funded the caseload and context. The number of cases quoted is a snapshot in time and the number vary from week to week.
 - 1.4 Where posts are grant funded and because the grant is awarded by government year by year basis the Council can only offer Fixed term contracts making the jobs less attractive. Should these jobs be funded for more than 2 years any redundancy costs would also need to be covered by this funding.

Job Role	Team	Role Function	Funding and number of roles	Caseload and context
Housing Options Caseworker	Housing Options	The initial point of contact for all applicants seeking Housing advice and homelessness assistance. Ongoing casework in prevention and relief of	6 FTE in the base establishment from General Fund 4 FTE fixed term from the Homeless Prevention Grant	These caseworkers are managing the current caseload of 584 open Housing Options Cases d issuing all statutory decisions. Without 10 staff or more

		Homelessness until discharge of duties Statutory function		caseloads will be unmanageable compared to industry norm of 30-40 cases per officer.
Senior Housing Options Caseworker	Housing Options	Managing the HOC and RSC, completing s202 reviews of suitability and decisions, Operational oversight Statutory function	2 FTE fixed term posts from the HPG	These roles are senior to the officers issuing
Housing Options Manager	Housing Options	Managing the SHOC and HOC, completing s202 reviews of suitability and decisions, Strategic oversight Statutory function	1 FTE funded from General Fund establishment	
Rough Sleeper Outreach workers	Housing Options	Working with all cases sleeping rough or an imminent risk of in order to engage with cases and bring them into accommodation and access support to prevent homeless for an entrenched group. Attending all homelessness reports of rough sleeping Statutory function	4 FTE fixed term posts from the RSI grant	These roles are responsible for the engagement and outreach work for the 38 rough sleeper accommodated plus any additional case sleeping rough which at present stands at 5 and those that have been moved on into PRS which stands at 25 . Total case load of 68 cases which have complex needs
Total staff numbers			17 staff Providing statutory functions (10 of which funded from fixed term	If the funding was not available the service could not continue with 7 staff – already

Job Role	Team	Role Function	Funding and number of roles	Caseload and context
Housing Supply Co-Ordinator	Housing Supply	Increasing our access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS) increasing new business in order to discharge our homeless duties into PRS accommodation. Completing tenancy sustainment for those we place into the PRS to prevent any future homelessness. Managing the refugee resettlement work Statutory and non-statutory work	2 FTE established post in General fund 2 FTE fixed term contracts funded out of the HPG 1 FTE fixed term contract funded out the Next Steps Accommodation Pathways revenue grant	These roles are responsible for sourcing the accommodation for those out of the 584 cases that can be moved into the PRS, the ongoing sustainment work with these cases. They manage the 5 refugee resettlement cases within SBC and any additional placements. Without this level of staffing service there would not be the ability to source and sustain accommodation in the private rented sector to prevent and discharge homelessness
Housing Apprentice	Housing Supply	To work across Housing and Investment completing and a qualification. Reporting into the Housing Supply Manager with a focus on Homelessness work Non- Statutory work however	2 FTE fixed term contracts funded out of the HRA	Only 1 post filled at the moment as the other has successfully been promoted. This is our offer to the national apprenticeship scheme and the service benefits without cost when a post is placed in the

		working across statutory and non-statutory services.		teams.
Housing Supply Manager	Housing Supply	Managing the HSC and HA with responsibility for the refugee resettlement programme and our services to access PRS in the prevention of homelessness Statutory and non-statutory work	1 FTE established in General fund	
Total Number of Staff			8 staff members with 6 delivering statutory services and 5 funded from fixed term funding from the General Fund and 2 FTE from the HRA	If grant was not received to fund posts we would be reliant on 3 posts
Job Role	Team	Role Function	Funding and number of roles	Caseload and context
Temporary Accommodation Officer	Lettings and Temporary Accommodation	The provision and management of emergency and temporary accommodation Statutory function	3 FTE funded from HRA establishment 2 FTE FTC funded from HRA establishment (COVID posts) 2 FTE FTC funded from HPG	These roles are responsible to manage the 189 placements within Emergency and Temporary Accommodation and Bed and Breakfast Without this level of staffing caseloads will be unmanageable
Temporary Accommodation Assistant	Lettings and Temporary Accommodation	The management of emergency and temporary accommodation Statutory function	2 FTE funded from service charges in HRA establishment –	These roles are responsible to manage the 189 placements within Emergency and Temporary Accommodation and Bed and Breakfast Without this level

				of staffing caseloads will be unmanageable 189 = average of 21 cases per officer
Lettings Advisor	Lettings and Temporary Accommodation	The management of the Allocations Policy and housing register and lettings of all SBC GN units Statutory function	2.5 FTE funded from HRA establishment 1 FTC funded from HRA establishment	FTC is due to end in Sep 2021 due to the implementation of the Housing Online product. There are 2070 applicants on our housing register.
Lettings and Temporary Accommodation Manager	Lettings and Temporary Accommodation	Responsible for the Strategic oversight of temporary accommodation provision, the allocations policy, lettings and housing register. Further to ensure that lettings are in line with void works Statutory function	1 FTE funded from HRA establishment	
Senior lettings and Temporary Accommodation Officer	Lettings and Temporary Accommodation	Responsible for the Operational oversight of temporary accommodation provision, the allocations policy, lettings and housing register. Further to ensure that lettings are in line with void works Statutory function	1 FTE funded from HRA establishment	This officer is responsible to authorise the service of notices and authorising works.
Total Number of Staff			14.5 staff members delivering statutory functions in	

			relation to Part 6 and 7 5 roles are from fixed term funding	
Job Role	Team	Role Function	Funding and number of roles	Caseload and context
Housing First Project Manager	Providing Homes reporting into Operations Manager- Providing Homes	Leading on our approach to providing single homelessness accommodation and support solutions Contributing to Statutory work	1 FTE FTC from HPG	This role is focusing on the Housing First approach as an approach to manage single homelessness
Strategic Complaints Manager- Providing Homes	Providing Homes reporting into Operations Manager- Providing Homes	Leading on all complaints, feedback and insight relating to the homeless services, providing learning and training Contributing to Statutory work	1 FTE FTC from HPG –	This role providing Homeless feedback is recommended as good practise by the MCHLG
Continuous Improvement Manager- Providing Homes	Providing Homes reporting into Operations Manager- Providing Homes	Working across all services within Providing Homes to focus on process, procedure, continuous improvement of all services and feeding into the wider Housing and corporate teams leading on updates required from legislation Contributing to Statutory work	1 FTE funded from HRA establishment	

1.4 As detailed above there are currently 42.5 posts for providing the front-line services under parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996

1.5 There are 8 Staff members within the Business Support team providing administrative and processing support for these teams but also for approximately. 30 staff in the Managing Homes teams.

1.6 The Business Support team predominantly provide support to providing homes in the processing and payment of invoices, claims to the Refugee resettlement system, Bed and Breakfast placement audit trail and all work associated in the payment for external services. The Business Support team also provide support in the process chain for voids, mutual exchanges, and other workflows.

1.7 There are 7 posts reporting into the Operations Manager- Providing Homes.

1.8 Out of the **51.5** staff within the Providing Homes services there are **20** roles which are funded from fixed term funding specifically:

- The Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant is issued on a financial yearly basis

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-initiative-2020-to-2021-funding-allocations>

It has been confirmed that we will receive the same grant amount that was allocated for 2020/2021 however any additional funds must be requested by 24th February 2021.

- The Homelessness Prevention grant issued on a financial yearly basis

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-grant-2021-to-2022>

Funding has been confirmed and our allocated was £500,831

1.9 The information provided within this appendix highlights that the services providing our front-line statutory services for Housing Advice, Homelessness and access to accommodation have 38% of service reliant on fixed term funding

1.10 As detailed in the above information I can confirm that there are 584 cases with Housing Options (average of 58 per HO officer)

1.11 Of which 189 are in the Temporary Accommodation “TA” and open to the TA team. This is an average 21 per TA Officer

1.12 68 rough sleepers are open to the Housing Options team (38 in temporary accommodation, 5 sleeping rough and 25 housed in the private rented sector) This is an average caseload of 27 cases per RSC.

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Appendix 4

1.0 SBC Housing First Business Case 2021/2022

1.1 This appendix details the expected operational and development costs for the 32 units that will be available for the Council to utilise as a Housing First approach for up to the next 12-month period.

1.2 The 32 units that are included within the Housing First programme are supported accommodation and separate from the Council's Emergency and Temporary Accommodation units. The management of these units is intensive and requires a focused approach.

1.3 The charge modelling includes costs for 2x Officers to manage these units along with other associated costs as detailed below in the Housing First specific sites compared to our standard EA/TA charging structure:

Housing Benefit / Rent Costings (Per Week)

Type	Normal EA/TA Shared Unit Costs	Housing First Specific
Rent		
Net Rent	£66.08	£66.08
Enhanced Housing Management:		
Housing Management	£	£46.75
Responsive and day to day repairs/maintenance	£3.01	£34.26
Planned Maintenance	£3.12	£3.12
HF Concierge/Security/ASB management		£85.00
Eligible service charges		
Provision of White goods	£	£2.29
Provision of furniture/equipment for tenants own areas	£	£7.05
CCTV systems	£2.03	£4.06
Refuse disposal and pest control	£	£
Window cleaning	£0.14	£0.14
Communal utilities	£	£2.94
	Total:	£251.69
Ineligible service charges		
Water		£3.01
Non-Communal gas and electricity	£8.82	£8.82

- 1.4 The housing related support element is covered through fixed term revenue funding allocated alongside the NSAP capital funds which will fund 3x support workers to work across the sites over the next 3 financial years. If this funding were to be stopped these complex needs support services would be factored into Hertfordshire County Council Housing related support contract requirements.
- 1.5 The costs associated with introducing these Housing First schemes are at a higher rate due to the intensive work required at the accommodation sites.
- 1.6 The above costs will not recoup the full costs of security and there will therefore be a deficit for the next financial year as evidenced below:

	Quote 1	Quote 2
Total cost of security	£482,821.49	£389,821.49
Number of Units with security on site	16	16
Number of Units with security providing patrols	16	16
Total recoverable amount from charges/HB	£141,440	£141,440
Annual Funding gap*	£341,381.49	£248,381.49

* to be bid for through RSI funding/ or growth needed

- 1.7 In order to fund this deficit the Council will be applying for assistance from the RSI4 grant to cover the cost of security however there is no guarantee on an award. Therefore there is the potential that this would be a funding pressure for providing a security service.
- 1.8 The risks associated with not having security provided could lead to an increase in crime and disorder, increased time spent dealing with resident complaints and offer potential risk to staff.
- 1.9 During the placements made in the first lockdown there were a number of incidents in which caused concern around security and the Holiday Inn Express were only willing to continue with the provision with security on site. Incidents of concern have also been observed at the out of area hotel used during the second and current lockdowns where a number of clients have been warned or evicted due to anti-social or criminal behaviour.
- 1.10 Is it worth adding that the weekly charges proposed (excluding the deficit for security) will be covered by Housing Benefit and 100% of clients are expected to be in receipt of this.
- 1.11 This is an initial intensive accommodation solution and once an applicant is working and/or self-sufficient and able to sustain accommodation we would look to move the cases into alternative accommodation.

2.0 Proposals to mitigate costs

- 2.1 There is currently a deficit in funds to cover the security/ concierge service; as detailed at point 1.8 an application will be made to the RSI fund for the next financial year to cover the deficit of £248,381.49 for financial year 2021/2022.

The teams will also be exploring another security/ concierge offers, during the year, as we will have been able to monitor demands on the accommodation and requirements.

2.2 Therefore this business case proposes that for the initial first year of this scheme the Council will source external security/ concierge provision. For 2022/2023 we will investigate if providing this service in house is feasible. This security/ concierge provision could also offer opportunity a future commercial opportunity for the Council.

2.3 Executive are being asked to agree this approach in order to ensure that the Council are able to proceed with the Housing First proposals.

3.0 Development Costs

3.1 The proposed schemes have been subject to the Council’s standard viability assessments carried out by the Housing Development Service and supported by external cost consultants Beacon Partnerships. The table in paragraph 3.2 (immediately below) outlines the Net Present Value (NPV) and Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of each of the sites being developed as suitable accommodation. The NPV is calculated by utilising the anticipated rental income over the life of the scheme and subtracting the anticipated costs from repairs and investment. Assumptions are made in relation to the level of voids and bad debt that will occur at the properties. The table demonstrates that each of the sites will make a positive contribution.

3.2 The IRR outlines the level of return this contribution represents in comparison to the level of initial investment.

Housing First Scheme	Net Present Value (NPV)	Internal Rate of Return (IRR)
Site 1	£19,833	3.16%
Site 4	£123,716	6.59%
Site 3	£316,074	19.10%
Site 2	£258,264	17.47%
Site 2 Modular	£67,681	3.26%
Total	£785,569	4.03%

3.3 By comparison, the annual cost of housing 25 residents in bed and breakfast cost would be approximately £550,000. This therefore reiterates the benefit of

utilising Council owned accommodation as suitable accommodation for this client group.

4.0 Identified Housing First Sites

Project	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Funding
Site 1– 8 units.	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.	Works due for completion in late February/early March 2021	Property funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020 and ongoing cost through rent charge
Site 2 – 5 rooms in property and up to 16 modular units proposed in the grounds of the property.	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	Works underway on the main property, with an expected handover December 2020	Funding through NSAP capital grant HRA cost of 2x 18 month fixed term ta officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020 and ongoing cost through rent charge
Site 3 – 6 rooms in property.	Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the temporary accommodation team- 2 additional ta officers will manage these units	Works completed and property occupied as of 21/12/2020	Funded through open market acquisition. HRA cost of 2x 18 month fixed term ta officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020 and ongoing cost through rent charge
Site 4 – 5 rooms in property	Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the Temporary Accommodation	Being worked on and scheduled for handover from 12/02/2021.	Funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term

	team- 2 additional TA Officers will manage these units		TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020 and ongoing cost through rent charge
Site 5- 8 rooms	Shared Facility accommodation with en-suite, use changed from EA	Property currently in use with 24/7 security and staffing and on site office	SBC owned property and change of use HRA cost of 2x 18 month fixed term ta officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020 and ongoing cost through rent charge

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Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area: Community Safety
Date: 10 March 2021

COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK

Author – Sarah Pateman Ext. 2458
Lead Officers – Rob Gregory Ext. 2568
Contact Officer – Sarah Pateman Ext. 2458



1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the proposed final strategy which outlines the emerging priorities of the SoSafe partnership for the next three years; The Strategy was reviewed by The SoSafe Community Safety Partnership (RAG) at its meeting on 26th October 2020 and a presentation was given to the Portfolio Holders Advisory Group on the 12 January 2021 where Members supported the objectives set out in the Strategy.
- 1.2 The Council's Constitution includes the Community Safety Strategy as a Budget and Policy Framework item and as such the draft document, post consideration by the Executive, will be reviewed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This initial stage happened at the February 2021 meetings of the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Budget and Policy Framework requires the final report/strategy, incorporating comments made by that Committee, to be re-considered by the Executive and reviewed again by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (which will happen at their March 2021 meetings) and prior to recommendation to Council which will be heard and considered at its meeting to be held in July 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the proposed final Community Safety Strategy (the Strategy) accompanying this report as Appendix A be approved, noting its focus on the work of the SoSafe partnership.
- 2.2 That the decision taken in Resolution 2.1 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.
- 2.3 That, once the proposed Final Strategy has been recommended for adoption by the Executive and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it be

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referred to Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.

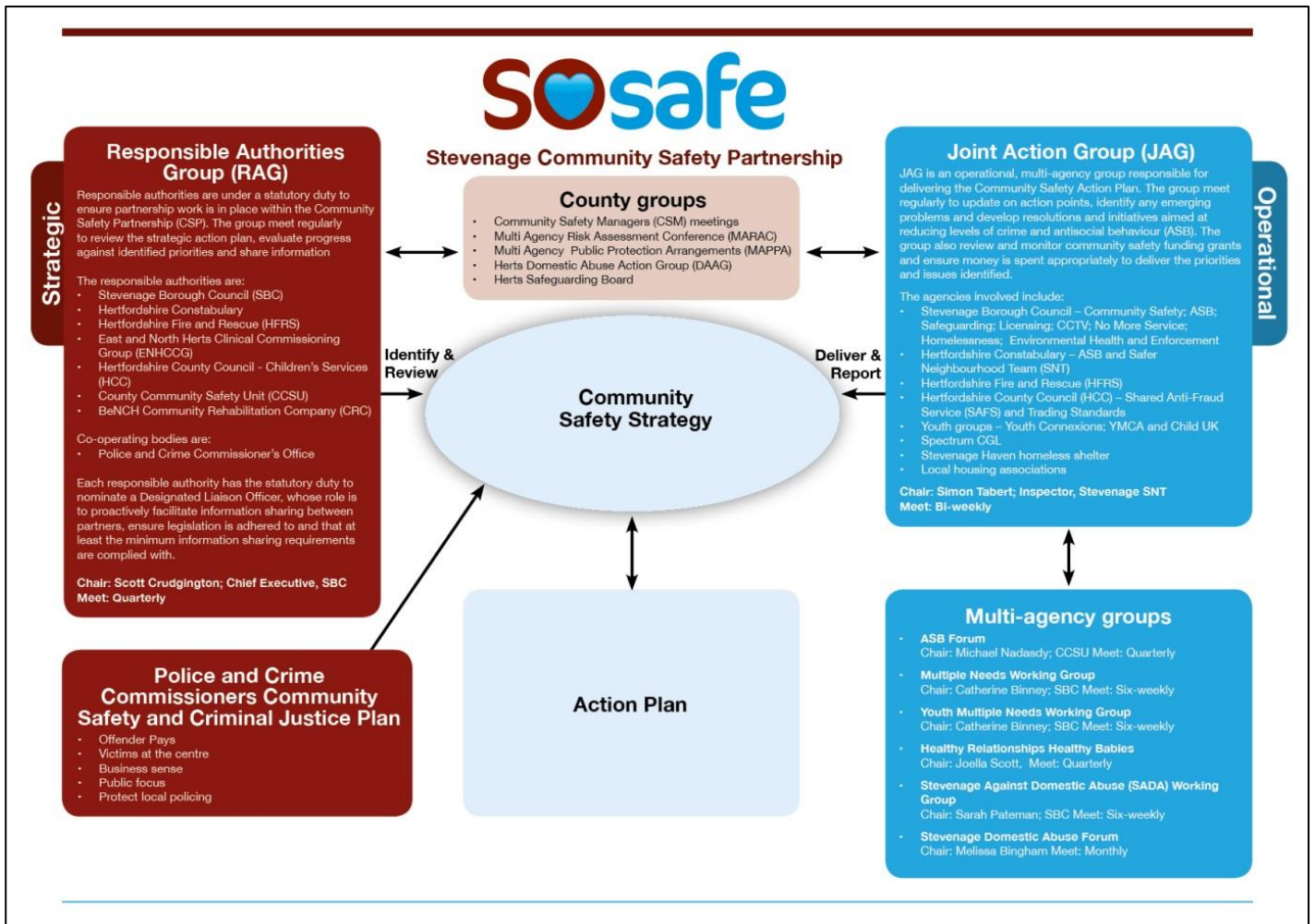
- 2.4 That the Chief Executive, in his capacity as Chair of the SoSafe Partnership, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities, be authorised to make changes to the Strategy post consideration by the Executive.
- 2.5 That Executive notes that implementation of the Strategy (once approved in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules) will be achieved through co-operative working with communities and key partners through the activities of the Joint Action Group and overseen by the Responsible Authorities Group.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Stevenage is rapidly changing, with work having already commenced on the major town centre regeneration programme and new homes being built over the last three years as more people choose to the town to live and work along with new businesses that will help to grow our local economy. Stevenage is a safe place but like most towns there will always on occasions be peaks in crime and anti-social behaviour sometimes due to, a spate of connected incidents. The Council is aware through the engagement that has taken place as part of the review so the SoSafe Strategy that some residents remain concerned regarding the use of drugs and how, in particular this affects our young people. The Community Safety Partnership – SoSafe will continue to address these and other crimes/ASB related issues as and when they occur by working co-operatively with local communities.

The development of a strategy is central to the overall purpose of the Community Safety Partnership – SoSafe and is summarised in the diagram below.

3.2



This Strategy will ensure that SoSafe utilises its' resources in the most effective manner possible to deliver meaningful crime reduction outcomes. SoSafe is committed to building on progress achieved in recent years, and will strive to continue to drive down crime and disorder in Stevenage. During the Covid-19 pandemic Partners have continued to work to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime. SoSafe has introduced initiatives that have supported the most vulnerable and those with complex needs by making best use of the partner's resources and targeting them effectively.

3.3 Between 2018/21 SoSafe secured over £450,000 of external funding to help it deliver on priorities and initiatives. This funding resulted in the delivery of some innovative projects including the SOS (Morse code: Save our Souls) Youth worker with joint funding through the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse) Move on Accommodation, the recruitment of Specialist Domestic Abuse Workers and the recruitment of a Complex Needs Advocate for the No More Service. Funding was also secured for the introduction of Operation Urban which tackles homelessness and aggressive street begging. Funding is time limited with concerns for continuing the SADA and No More Services post March 2022. We will continue to apply for external funding and internally applying for a growth bid, but will also have to consider reducing the level of services that are offered.

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- 3.4 SoSafe has worked collaboratively on a number of complex cases which have resulted in successful enforcement action being taken. This has included: re-possession of a property on the Absolute Ground for Possession, as well as a Property Closure on an address where drugs were being dealt which resulted in a high level of ASB for the residents. Further to this SoSafe secured, an injunction concerning an individual following an arson threat and the two year Injunction with a Power of Arrest banning car cruising and meeting in Stevenage following a serious accident in the town in July 2019.
- 3.5 Numerous partnership operations with the Police were undertaken such as: regular residents' surgeries in those tower blocks where there had been reports of anti-social behaviour and crime, the quarterly Police Priority Setting meetings with Ward Councillors - which have helped to reassure residents and encourage them to report nuisance behaviour.
- 3.6 During the last three years the Partnership has engaged with residents on a number of occasions including the Domestic Abuse 16 Days of Action and Operation Night Owl (which targeted anti-social drinking and the night time economy) has been instrumental in arranging training for front line staff, partners and volunteers; including tackling extremism, Domestic Abuse Awareness, Hate Crime Awareness Training, Safeguarding and Modern Slavery Training.
- 3.7 SoSafe actively engages with the local community and involves them in the design of the future service offer. SoSafe has increased the profile of the Partnership and highlighted the benefits of co-operative working through the work of volunteers and partners and through mechanisms such as the SADA forum. It has also been possible to highlight what can be achieved when resources are co-ordinated and strategically aligned in particular the outcomes achieved through SOS youth project, SADA and No More Service.
- 3.8 During September and October 2020, the SoSafe Partnership worked with local partners to shape the draft strategy. The themes for the strategy were further developed through engagement with residents and visitors to the town through a number of social media consultations, surveys with clients and data collected from the police Echo platform. Data from annual strategic assessments and information shared at both Partnership and client led meetings have been analysed and used in the development of the 2021/24 SoSafe Community Safety Strategy.
- 3.9 There are a number of differences between the 2018/21 and 2021/24 Community Safety Strategies. The 2021/24 Strategy focuses on our work as a co-operative Council and the importance of working closely with the Community. This begins by asking members of our communities how they would like to be consulted with and what their priorities are. The SoSafe Partners are aware that priorities do change over time. This happened significantly in 2020 during the pandemic, where our priorities changed to reflect what our communities were telling us. This included the nature and

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level of support for our most vulnerable residents; specifically, those suffering with their mental health and complex needs. Also additional support was provided for those who needed to flee their homes and had no-where to go. The underlying principle of the strategy is co-operation, empowering residents and other stakeholders to engage with the SoSafe partnership by getting involved in whatever way they can. The 2021/24 strategy aims to continue the work of the flagship SADA service, which now runs across 5 other district council areas as well as Stevenage. The service will also continue to expand its remit to supporting others experiencing abuse and those affected by Modern Slavery who needs advice and support. Our Safeguarding team will work co-operatively with partners to talk to our communities about the effects of Hate Crime and how to get help, support and also how to report a crime.

- 3.10 The police have introduced a prevention model as part of their partnership working, the “Prevention First” model has been rolled out across the force and in being adopted by partners. SoSafe is already prevention focused and will continue to work in this way.
- 3.11 The proposed strategy accompanies this report. It is suggested that, subject to Members approving the strategy for implementation, it should be adopted by SoSafe on 26 July 2021.
- 3.12 Members of the Executive were consulted on the 10 February recommendations were made that in view of the frequency of the matter being raised by the public and at Police Priorities meetings, a reference to the concerns about traffic speeding throughout the Borough; and the work on hate crime referred to in the Strategy should link in with the work of the SBC Equalities Commission.
- 3.13 Members of the Community Select Committee, in their Policy Development role, were consulted on the 17 February, a reference was made regarding the work on hate crime, it was agreed that this piece of work would be reviewed by SoSafe partners. The Strategy will be considered at the Council meeting diarised for 14 July 2021.
- 3.12 There are a number of key points that require consideration. These are set out in the following sections of the report which set out the rationale upon which the recommendations are presented.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Local priorities for Stevenage

- 4.1.1 The draft Community Safety Strategy has been compiled based on evidence obtained from Police Performance Reports including strategic assessments, engagement with members of the public, partners and customers, surveys completed by service users and those affected any nuisance. The priorities

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identified are those that ranked highest, following the consultation and engagement.

For the period 2018-21 the identified priorities were:

1. Helping to make People feel Safe
2. Reduce crime and Disorder
3. Protect and Safeguard Vulnerable People
4. Tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) Co-operatively with partners
5. Break the cycle of substance misuse and offending

These priorities are underpinned by two overarching objectives to:

- Build Resilient Communities
- Work co-operatively with communities to help reduce fear of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

The five key priorities identified for 2021-2024 are:

1. Divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB
2. Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery
3. Promote reporting of hate crime and equality in the community
4. Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol
5. Work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime

These priorities are underpinned by two overarching objectives to:

- Consult with the community and work co-operatively with partners and residents
- Promote reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

4.2 Rationale for priorities

- 4.2.1 This Strategy provides a framework for the activities and initiatives that the Partnership delivers to improve community safety and community confidence in the town. Following consultation with members of the public and partners, this strategy identifies the priorities that SoSafe will focus on over the next three years. Whilst some of the priorities remain the same as in previous years there is a broadening focus on tackling concerns around the misuse of drugs, supporting and diverting young people away from crime and encouraging the reporting of Hate Crime. The Council also remains committed to maintaining and developing a cooperative approach towards tackling of domestic abuse, modern slavery and safeguarding our most vulnerable. Working co-operatively with partners and our communities across the town remains the overarching theme across all objectives.

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- 4.2.2 Alongside the Strategy, a detailed action plan is produced each year, which shows how SoSafe will achieve its aims and objectives. The action plan contains specific targets and is monitored, updated and reviewed regularly ahead of the SoSafe meeting.
- 4.2.3 As the Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme progresses, there will be further opportunities to develop localised approaches to support delivery of the Community Safety Strategy at a neighbourhood level. For example it may be possible to deliver more targeted intervention in neighbourhood hot-spots, and/or to work with residents, businesses and partners to design-out crime in planned neighbourhood improvement works. There will also be further opportunities to develop interventions with local neighbourhood-based community and voluntary organisations.
- 4.2.4 The Community Safety Strategy has been developed with due regard to the following:
- Public engagement and consultation
 - National Developments and Changes to Legislation
 - Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plan *Everybody's Business*
 - Annual Strategic Assessment for Stevenage 2016/17
 - County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) domestic abuse strategy and the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Strategy
 - CCSU drugs and alcohol strategy
 - National Probation Service Reducing Offending Strategy
 - Historical and Current Crime Data.
 - Residents Survey.

4.3 Strategic fit and context

- 4.3.1 The profile of the SoSafe partnership is of growing importance and it is increasingly being called upon to share best practice and co-operative ways of working. The responsibility to make Stevenage a safe place to live, work and visit is paramount to all SoSafe partners. The strategy is a core component of the council's Place of Choice, Future Town, Future Council Programme and is also fundamental to the Town's Covid-19 Recovery Plan and emerging Co-operative Neighbourhood arrangements.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The Council will utilise existing resources to support implementation of the strategy. This includes communications functions, continued investment in CCTV and the work of the SBC community safety team. There is also recognition that a number of existing activities that are having a positive impact are reliant on time-limited funding which includes external funding resources, given the financial position of the council some of these functions will be unable to continue without joint investment from others responsible for

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ensuring community safety and wellbeing in the town. The Community Safety Strategy remains a partnership strategy for the town and the council will continue to work with other commissioners and funders such as Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Government Departments and other funders to help lever in investment wherever possible.

- 5.1.2 There may be some match-funding or pump priming requirements related to progressing certain initiatives and projects. The SoSafe partnership Action Plan is developed annually as part of the final strategy and will highlight where resources will be required to support delivery of specific projects, with a fundraising plan attached to each action.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Production of the strategy is a legal requirement of the community safety partnership. The Crime and Disorder Act 1988 (as amended by the Police and Justice Act 1996) requires the responsible authorities for an area to formulate and implement a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances and for the education of re-offending in the area.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The Council is committed to providing high quality services that are relevant to the needs and responsive to the views of all sections of the local community, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status. The General Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of its functions.
- 5.3.2 There is recognition that crime and anti-social behaviour can disproportionately impact upon those with protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act. The emphasis on Hate Crime as part of the Strategy highlights the potential for this to happen at a local level, the partnership will be working with the community to encourage reporting of Hate Crime and further promote equalities across our communities. SoSafe will strive to involve the community in the design and delivery of the interventions which tackle crime and drive down disorder and anti-social behaviour. Relationships will continue to be built with groups around the town, including those from different faiths, BAME groups and the traveller community, LGBT communities, women, girls and older people. It will be essential to ensure interventions meet specific needs for different parts of the community and are delivered in a meaningful and empowering way. The SoSafe Partnership will work with the Equalities Commission, set up to explore the particular challenges facing black people living in Stevenage and will seek to pro-actively tackle community safety issues as they emerge.

5.4 Risk Implications

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5.4.1 The strategic commitment of key stakeholders in the development of the strategy has helped to mitigate key risks such as focussing on the wrong priorities or those over which the partners have little impact or influence. Risks will continue to be considered as interventions develop through the ongoing work of RAG.

5.5 Policy Implications

5.5.1 The Strategy links into other key SBC policies including the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and the health and wellbeing strategy.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

5.6.1 The posts within the Community Safety Team will be aligned to respond to the needs of the Strategy and the SoSafe Action Plan and other policies and procedures and in line with internal and external funding streams available.

5.7 Human Rights Implications

5.7.1 The development of the strategy has taken into account human rights including a person's right to defend their rights in the courts and compels public organisations (including local authorities and the police) to treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and respect.

5.8 Service Delivery Implications

5.8.1 The Strategy will influence and shape the work of the SoSafe Partnership and its delivery strands are clearly aligned back to the outcomes that are sought. This will also apply to the function of the Responsible Authorities Group that will oversee delivery of the strategy reporting to Stevenage Together.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

BD1 - Community Safety Strategy 2018/21

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Draft Community Safety Strategy 2021/24

Appendix B – Strategy Plan on a Page

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**Working Together to Make Stevenage Safer
Community Safety Strategy
2021-24**



Stevenage Community Safety Partnership

DRAFT



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Aims & objectives

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DRAFT

Foreword

I am pleased to present SoSafe's Community Safety Strategy for 2021/24. It outlines some of our successes, our priorities over the next three years and the actions we will take to address them.

Stevenage is a co-operative council that prides itself on collaborative working with partners and the community. SoSafe will continue to address the issues the residents, visitors and those that work in our town see as a priority, by involving you in the decision making and by consulting with you.

In future years, as in the past three years, our priorities are what the people of the town have told us they want to see us focusing on. This has followed a difficult year dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic where we have had to tackle crimes such as domestic abuse and those associated with drugs and alcohol differently and in many cases by meeting with people virtually. Our teams and partners have risen to these challenging times and been able to support residents with many, and sometimes complex, needs whilst at the same time introducing new ways of working and initiatives that we will continue to develop over the next three years.

The town is rapidly changing; it is a growing, exciting, vibrant place with the regeneration in the town centre already taking shape which will attract new businesses to our town and encourage people to invest in the town, its people and its homes. Our population is growing and the town has a broad cross-section of people who have chosen Stevenage to live and work in. Stevenage continues to be a safe place with lowest level of dwelling burglaries in the Hertfordshire. There will naturally be peaks in crime and anti-social behaviour and we are aware that people in certain parts of our town feel troubled by the crime surrounding the use of illegal drugs and how this affects our young people. SoSafe will continue to work co-operatively with the community to address these issues.



Matt Partridge
Chief Executive

SoSafe is committed to building on progress made in recent years, and will continue to drive down crime and disorder in Stevenage. Our partnership is unique, and encourages other partners to be part of SoSafe which is passionate about its people, the town, and creating safe environments for our communities. As there continues to be unprecedented pressures on public sector funding; this Strategy will ensure that, as a co-operative council, we are effectively utilising all available resources to achieve value for money.

Our aims for this strategy are to consult with the community and work collaboratively with partners & residents to promote the reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). We will do this by supporting Partners to help decrease crime and improve community safety. Over the following pages, we have captured the actions that we have already completed, those which we are committed to achieving, and how we will do this. I hope that, by reading this strategy, you will see how SoSafe is working for the benefit of all of the Community who live, shop and work in the town.

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Councillor Jackie Hollywell
Portfolio Holder – Community Safety



Introduction to SoSafe

SoSafe (Stevenage Community Safety Partnership (CSP) is a strategic partnership, working to reduce crime and offending in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. SoSafe is made up of key agencies that each brings their own unique specialism to the partnership. By working collaboratively with partners and our local communities, we have been able to make significant changes to the lives of those people who need support, guidance and advice, whilst tackling crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour.

The CSP includes the following organisations:

- Stevenage Borough Council (SBC)
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- National Probation Service
- East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group (E&NH CCG)
- Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
- Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS).
- Hertfordshire Trading Standards

This Strategy provides a framework for the many activities and initiatives that the Partnership aims to deliver to improve community safety and community confidence in the town. Following consultation with members of the public and partners, this strategy identifies the priorities that SoSafe will focus on over the next three years.

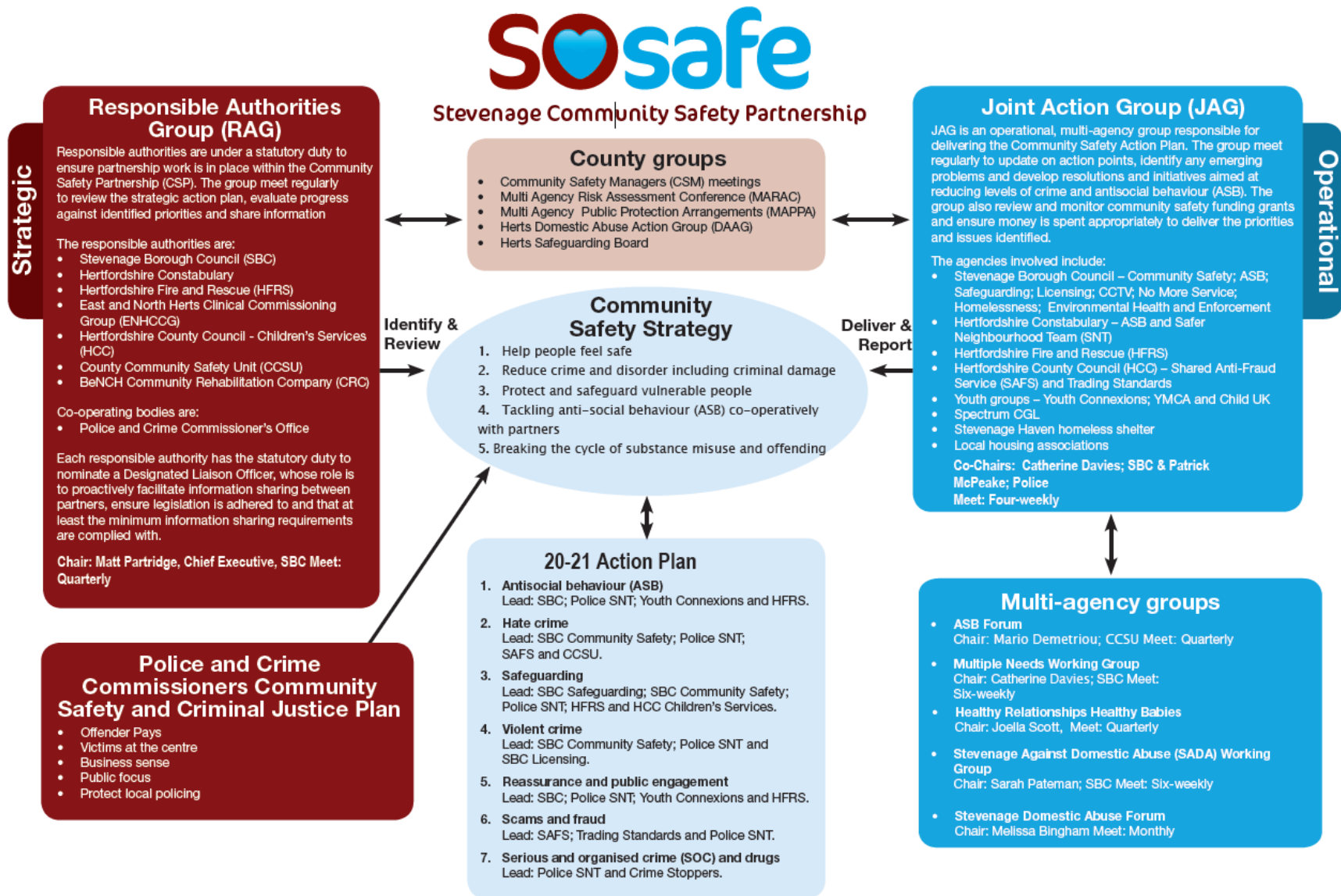
Alongside this Strategy, a detailed action plan is produced each year, which shows how SoSafe will achieve its aim and objectives. It contains specific targets and is monitored, updated and reviewed regularly.

The Community Safety Strategy has been developed with due regard to the following:

- Public consultation
- National developments and changes to legislation
- Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) plan *Everybody's Business*
- Annual Strategic Assessment for Stevenage 2019/20
- County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) domestic abuse strategy and the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Strategy
- CCSU drugs and alcohol strategy
- National Probation Service Reducing Offending Strategy
- Historical and Current Crime Data.
- Residents Survey
- Police Echo data

SoSafe could not achieve its objectives without help from the public. It is the duty of all citizens to play their part in making their communities safer. People can contribute by reporting crime and disorder, supporting criminal justice agencies, and by taking responsibility for their personal safety and the safety of others.

For ideas on other ways to get involved, please visit our website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/town-and-community/community-safety/sosafe-community-safety-partnership>



Findings from the Stevenage Borough Council 2020 Community Survey

We asked members of the community: what makes Stevenage a safe place to live, work and visit? Some of the responses were:

- “Clean vibrant environments, communities looking after and taking pride in environments, low crime levels, flow of people, police presence, reduction in anti-social behaviours”
- “Friendly neighbourhoods, knowing your neighbours”
- “Good Policing/CCTV, positive town planning, a cared for community, a Council and volunteers creating a community which supports vulnerable people, development and investment into the area”
- “Good bus routes. Car free shopping centre. Good rail access. Visible police presence. Good communities. Generally good people.”
- “Cycle paths and walk ways are larger well lit up”
- “The open spaces, green city, trees and greenery”
- “The general environment. Park keepers/Street cleaners are so important.”

We also asked members of the community if there was anything that makes Stevenage unsafe. The answers have been ranked by number of responses, highest to lowest:

1. Dark, badly lit areas
2. Drug use/dealing
3. Youth
4. Underpasses
5. Lack of police presence
6. Speeding

The Police have been collecting community views through their anonymous Echo system. The most talked about topic in Stevenage relates to drug use or dealing. This is followed by Anti-Social Behaviour linked to youth, drug use and begging.

We then used social media to ask members of the Stevenage community to vote and comment on the five aims proposed for this strategy. 86% of votes agreed with the priorities proposed:

1. Divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB
2. Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery
3. Promote reporting of hate crime and equality in the community
4. Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol
5. Work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime

These findings, together with talking to residents through surveys and events (including “drop-in’s” and “street meets” in the community) helped us to determine our SoSafe aims and objectives for the next three years.

At a Glance;

What we did in 2018/21

What we are going to do in 2021/24

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<p>Introduced our warden provision to the town centre and across the town to engage with the community and partners</p>	<p>Teams will work co-operatively with the community through internal and external partners, including our town wardens, and give them an opportunity to get involved in projects and consultation on their local areas. This is part of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods program which will be developed further over the next three years.</p>
<p>Working in partnership with the community to tackle ASB and crime</p>	<p>Work with partners as early as possible to problem solve concerns raised by the community around ASB and crime.</p>
<p>Exploring the perception of youth crime</p>	<p>To provide targeted youth intervention and support through the No More Service.</p>
<p>We offered safe reporting and support for domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery</p>	<p>Expand our offer of accommodation for those fleeing domestic abuse and modern slavery. Introduce further one to one support for perpetrators of domestic abuse.</p>
<p>We focused on safeguarding vulnerable people within the community, our Community Safety youth ambassadors supported North Herts college in becoming a third party reporting centre for Hate Crime.</p>	<p>We aim to help people to feel safe & supported to, as well as knowing where and how to, report Hate Crime.</p>

Key differences between 2018/20 and 2021/24 strategies

We are continuing to take a cooperative approach with partner agencies, volunteers and residents to help make Stevenage a safer place to live, visit and work. The 2021/24 Community Safety Strategy highlights how we work together by using multi-agency problem solving methods and consulting with the community of Stevenage. The aim is to promote effective long term change and to tackle crime and ASB. We have continued to monitor crime rates throughout the last three year period through Police Priority Setting Meetings. These meetings, which take place every 3 months, consider the crime and ASB concerns within local communities and then set the community priorities for the following quarter.

The Joint Action Group (JAG) is the partnership information and problem solving group and the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) which is the strategic partnership, which oversees the Annual partnership Action Plan and other local and national plans and initiatives.

During 2018/21, we focused on helping people feel safe. As part of this we explored the perception of youth crime within the community and discovered that often the view of young people is not a true reflection of this section of our community. In the last strategy we outlined our Student Ambassador programme, which was successful promoting the positive role that young people have in Community. The 2021/24 strategy will focus on providing intervention and intensive support, through our No More Service, YC Herts and Multiple Needs Working Group to young people who are at risk of becoming involved in youth crime. By providing appropriate intervention we can change behaviour and reduce crime and the impact felt by the community.

We continue to prioritise safeguarding people. The Partnership provides safe reporting together with support for domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery. The Safe Space innovative approach will continue to expand as it aims to meet the needs of victims and survivors. We also provide Domestic Abuse perpetrator intervention and 1-1 support to change offending behaviour through the No More Service.

The 2021/24 strategy remains a key component of the Council's Future Town, Future Council Place of Choice theme and its continuing efforts to tackle crime and help people feel safer; this Strategy will be pivotal to the town's wider Covid -19 Recovery Plan.

The Strategy promotes the reporting of hate crime in an effort to reduce inequality and produce inclusive neighbourhoods. We aim to help people feel safe and supported to report incidents where they have been a victim of hate crime as well as promoting community support networks. The Hate Crime Strategy will be available on our website and training for staff, partner and volunteers will be provided. We will also provide information on where the Hate Crime reporting centres are in Stevenage (which includes Stevenage Borough Council offices and North Herts College).

The impact of drugs and alcohol continue to be a concern for the community. We are working cooperatively with residents to encourage the reporting of misuse of drugs and alcohol so we can address these issues. We continue to provide support to our residents with the most complex needs to help them make positive changes to their lifestyle and reduce the disruptive impact that they have on the community.

The strategy will also focus partnership working on the nuisance caused by speeding vehicles and Environmental Crime such as Fly Tipping. Our suite of CCTV cameras support the police and partners in tackling crime and ASB in the town and help to make Stevenage a safer place to live, work and visit.

Monitoring and measuring our performance

The SoSafe Action Plan and the commitment of the partners, including volunteers, are key to delivering this strategy. As a co-operative council we are aware that we can achieve more by working together to deliver all of the activities ensuring that SoSafe achieves its objectives and delivers for the needs of the town.

The SoSafe partnership has to rely on existing resources and making additional funding applications.

Below is a list of Successful External Funding Bids:

SADA	Stevenage/Survivors Against Domestic Abuse	£395,520
No More Service	Tacking drugs alcohol and offending behaviour	£42,500
Rucksacks Project	Providing rucksacks and essential items for rough sleepers	£900
Tacking youth crime	The SOS project working with youths	£15,000
Op educa8	Police and partner funding project in schools in Stevenage	£2,000

How we will measure performance

Performance indicators are agreed annually and reflect the agreed priorities and outcomes whilst taking into account the views of our customers from their engagement with us. We will set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely); challenging targets and measures these four times a year to check that we are making progress. We will report on the progress made at our monthly Joint Action Group (JAG) meetings with partners; at the Stevenage/Survivors (SADA) Domestic Abuse

Board Meeting and the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG) (strategic meetings with partners that meet quarterly to discuss the towns' Community Safety priorities).

To understand crime and associated disorder the Partnership needs to work together to address the underlying problems. Effective crime reduction relies on the partnership working with our communities and listening to what, and where, our problems are. This helps us to direct Partnership resources efficiently and effectively and to deliver services in the right place at the right time.

Crime trends are monitored regularly, and performance against our targets is reported to the RAG group. This group includes SoSafe's most senior managers and the elected councillor with responsibility for community safety. Additionally, elected councillors sit on a scrutiny committee which challenges SoSafe's performance.

Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is the elected representative for policing matters who maintains strong links with the county's CSPs.

SoSafe Aims

We have established two overarching aims for the 2021/24 strategy:

- **Consult with the community and work co-operatively with partners and residents**
- **Promote reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

SoSafe Objectives

Within SoSafe's overarching aims, we have established five key objectives:

1. **Divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB**
2. **Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery**
3. **Promote reporting of hate crime and equality in the community**
4. **Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol**
5. **Work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime**

How our services support the Objectives

Objective one – Divert young people from becoming involved in crime

- **The 'No More' Service**

Objective two – Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery

- **Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse**

Objective three – Promote reporting of Hate Crime and promote equality in the community

- **The Hate Crime Strategy**

Objective four – Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol

- **The 'No More' Service**

Objective five – Work with partners to address perceptions of crime and encourage reporting of crime

- **Co-operative Neighbourhoods and working in partnership with our communities**

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The No More



Accessing services for support with:
Drugs • Alcohol • Adult offenders • Young offenders



Don't suffer in silence
Put a stop to domestic abuse





Objective One – Divert young people from becoming involved in crime

What will we do?

We are going to continue working closely with partners to take a multi-agency approach to reducing the risk of young people becoming involved in crime. We can work as a partnership to build the correct package of enforcement, intervention and support for each individual. We will use the tools and powers available to the partnership to deter crime from occurring. This includes the use of dispersal orders to address short term peaks of ASB.

We are developing initiatives to help young people make positive choices from becoming involved in crime. We will continue to provide routes out of crime. This includes being involved in knife crime awareness week, the use of knife amnesty bins and support to exit gangs.

We will be bringing the support service for young people, involved in violent crime, under the No More Service. Young people will be given an allocated worker who will build a team around them and who will contribute to developing their support plan. The young person will be assisted to explore the positive outcomes and consequences of their choices. They will be helped to address: homelessness, unemployment/leaving education, finances, offending behaviour, use of time, relationships, vulnerabilities/safety, DA and social choices.

What have we been doing?

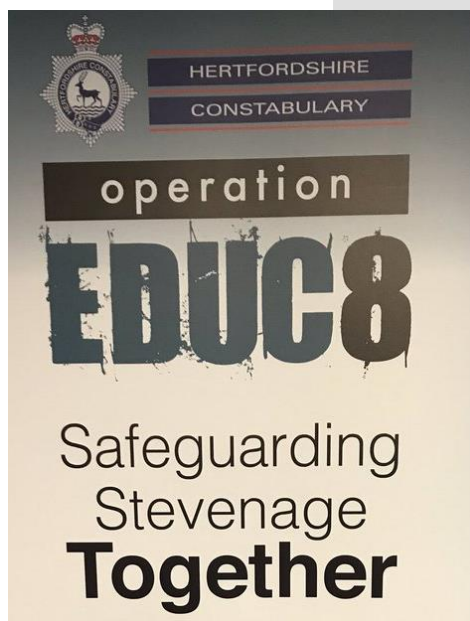
Community Safety Ambassadors

We ran a Community Safety Ambassadors Project. The aim was to engage young people in our SoSafe community safety messages. We had six young people become Ambassadors. They promoted personal safety to other young people during an event at North Herts College to, raise awareness of domestic abuse; attending the Life project run by Herts Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS), and giving personal safety items to members of the public in the Town Centre.

In 2019, we received a contribution to funding for a specialist youth worker from St Giles Trust charity to run the SOS Project in Stevenage as part of a countywide initiative. The SOS project aims to work with young people who are at risk of, or already involved in, violent offending or becoming involved in a gang. The SOS worker provides intensive 1-1 support to assist clients to change their behaviours and make positive choices. Clients are assisted in employment, housing and education. 30 young people have been referred since the start of the project.

To compliment the support offered by the SOS Project, the family are also referred to our multi-agency meeting, the Multiple Needs Working Group (MNWG). The aim is to provide support for any family member due to the young person's behaviour but to also offer support to address issues that contribute towards the young person choices.

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Operation EDUC8 is a working group of police and teachers from each of the 8 secondary education facilities across the town. It is supported by ELSA (Education Skills Learning and Achievement) and SADA. The model involves the designing of bespoke lesson plans to deliver year on year to each year 8 pupil across the town as well as students from North Herts College. The aim is to raise awareness and educate the children so they can make informed decisions and prevent further instances of harm should they ever encounter, what we as professionals recognise to be, the 4 main threats to young people:- knife crime, gangs culture, drugs, online safety & sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

In January 2020 Operation Educ8 successfully delivered a keynote assembly on the topic of county lines gangs and knife crime. The speaker was Criminologist and urban youth specialist Craig Pinkney. The assembly went out in all seven secondary schools and North Herts College and a follow up lesson plan was provided where the key themes were explored further. Just prior to lockdown in March 2020 (and the closure of the schools) we delivered two assemblies on the next topic of domestic abuse with follow up pastoral lessons across North Herts College (Hitchin and Stevenage campuses), this element was also supported by SADA.

Following the initial re-opening of schools in September 2020 we have had to rethink our delivery model as, at the time of writing, there is no scope for large scale assemblies. ELSA has now filmed an inspirational keynote talk on surviving domestic abuse and this film is being shown in year 8 classes across Stevenage. The students will then be taken through further lessons (supported by a bespoke lesson plan) where the key themes are explored further. For 2021 we will deliver lesson plans and

supporting materials on Child Sexual Exploitation and Online Safety; and in the future we also want to deliver on topics including the dangers arising from the misuse of drugs as well as repeating the lessons on gangs and knife crime.

YC Herts have been running projects across Stevenage. The Oval project engaged with young people around The Oval and delivered the “Positive Alternatives Programmer” a Friday Night Project for 14-17 years as well as starting the “boys and men project” which looks at personal safety, sexual health and healthy role models.

Case Study – The SOS Project

Lucy was never at home and would go missing, since being supported by the SOS project she has been staying at home more and occupying her time by attending a college course which commenced in September 2020 this has helped to prevent her from engaging in anti-social behaviour.

Lucy’s support worker supported her to focus on her learning and the importance of talking things through which has helped to her to take the positive steps away from ASB and crime.

Objective two – Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery

What will we do?

We will continue to raise awareness by informing the public about how and where they can report domestic abuse; empowering victims to come forward and seek advice from our dedicated Stevenage/Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) Team and the volunteers from the SADA Forum.

We will continue to grow our stock of safe spaces. These are private properties allowing victims to flee their dangerous environment to a safe home setting. These are available to individuals as well as families. Whilst staying in the safe space, SADA provide 1to1 support looking at meeting immediate needs and next step options. We provide food and toiletries - as we are aware some people are forced to flee their homes with nothing. We aim to meet the individual's immediate needs and also support the person to make the choices that are best for them. During the COVID pandemic we grew our safe spaces from two to nineteen (19), including some "move on" accommodation. This was in response to the number of referrals increasing and the refuges having to stop taking people in – in order to manage the COVID transmission risk. Our safe spaces have been full 90% of the time.

We are expanding the intervention offered by the No More Service to Domestic Abuse (DA) perpetrators. The aim of this is to provide intensive 1to1 support to change offending behaviour to work with the No More Service to change offender's behaviour by providing 1to1 support to address offending behaviour and complex needs.

What have we been doing?

We have employed a further two Domestic Abuse specialist Support Officers as we continue to grow the service in Stevenage and surrounding areas. SADA now provides their DA support service to Stevenage, North Herts, East Herts, Welwyn & Hatfield and running a pilot in Hertsmere.

We continue to provide a drop in service as another method for people to engage and grow their own peer support network. This support has been able to continue during the COVID pandemic as the drop-in is running via a group video call. This continues to average at ten people attending per week.

During the COVID pandemic, March 2020 to November 2020 there were 551 referrals into the SADA service, this was a 90% increase compared to the same period in 2019/20.

21 parents have attended our 10 week "You, Me and Mum programme". The course looks at how parenting is impacted by domestic abuse and also looks at it from a child's perspective.

To raise awareness of DA reporting, we gave resource packs to businesses and held a conference to inform professionals of the impact of DA on children, the conference was called "Through Emily's Eye's"

We have appointed a Modern Slavery Champion and all of the Community Safety Team have received “First Responder” Training to help support and signpost victims of Modern Slavery for help and support. Awareness sessions have also been rolled out as part of our commitment to other departmental managers as part of our Safeguarding Service. During 2020 we have supported 2 victims of Modern Slavery.



Survivors Against Domestic Abuse group carries on its support

Survivors Against Domestic Abuse dealt with 620 cases between January 1 and December 1 this year - but how did the service begin?

GEORGIA BARROW
georgiabarrow@hertfordshire.gov.uk

House in Hertfordshire, providing men, women and children fleeing domestic abuse with a safe haven to go to.

Most recently, it was awarded White Ribbon accreditation - which recognises the organisation's work to end male violence against women - and has launched a book, "SADA Survivor Stories". SADA Survivor Stories, headed up by Roxie Chambers, is available to buy in paperback or you can get it free on Kindle via Amazon.

The service is open to anyone, regardless of gender, class, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or lifestyle. The service is also open to families as well as single victims of domestic abuse. Those in need can call SADA today on 01438 243666 or email SADA@stevenage.gov.uk, or call Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline on 06 008 008 008.

Formerly known as Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse, the scheme was launched by the borough council in 2012.

The organisation centres around the Domestic Abuse Forum - made up of abuse survivors who get together to share their experiences, support one another and offer help and guidance to others.

Last month, we interviewed one of the first SADA service users, Roxie Chambers, who now works for the organisation - which she credits with helping turn her life around.

Since launching, it has helped women and men - who are usually referred by the police, GPs or other agencies - through

counselling and group therapy.

It aims to empower victims of domestic abuse to make positive life choices, provide support around accessing legal advice and provides the provision of 'You, Me and Mum' course - to help parents to support their children after experiencing the effects of domestic abuse.

It is chaired by council leader Sharon Taylor, and is now operational in the Welwyn Hatfield, North Herts and East Herts districts, sparking the name change from Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse to Survivors Against Domestic Abuse.

SADA opened its first Safe House in 2017, and this year opened the 16th Safe

Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) – “The Safe Space”

Following a local authority referral SADA moved a client and her daughter into the Move On property away from the area she was fleeing. Support was offered including support out of hours provided remotely during the pandemic throughout her stay. The client was able to live in the property which she said felt just like a family home whilst she was supported to access her “forever home”. The client and her daughter have now spent their first Christmas safe in their own home.



Objective three – Promote reporting of hate crime and promote equality in the community

What will we do?

We will embed the Hate Crime Strategy into our Partnership Action Plan and engage with the community in different ways to promote personal safety. This includes attending engagement events, promoting third party reporting centres and support available in the community. As a partnership, we will be holding awareness events to promote what a hate crime is and how to report it. During these events we will have resources available to make sure that this information is as accessible as possible. These events may go ahead in person or virtually. Leaflets will be available in different languages, easy read versions and in braille. We understand it is important to promote the support available to people as much as possible.

We will continue to work with partners and the community to promote reporting of hate crime so the issue can be more understood and addressed. We have encouraged sites to become third party reporting centres for hate crime. This means that members of the community can report hate crime incidents where the professionals can report the incident on your behalf and also give advice. The current third party reporting sites are Stevenage Borough Council, College, Police Station and the Library.

What have we been doing?

During hate crime awareness week, we engaged with different faith groups to find out how safe they felt within Stevenage. We gave out information on how to report hate crime and what information and support is available.

We have continued to promote the use of third party reporting centres and have supported victims of Hate Crime by working co-operatively with partners and residents. The third party reporting centres are accessible in the town and include the Council Offices, North Herts College and the Library. Anyone who feels they have been a victim of Hate Crime can attend the Centres and an officer will be available for support.

Members of the Community Safety Team attended training in 2019 regarding the reporting of Hate Crime and supporting victims who may have been affected by Hate Crime.



Objective Four - Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol

What we are going to do?

We will continue to support people to break the cycle of substance misuse or offending behaviour by putting practical solutions in place to tackle issues that cause or exacerbate this behaviour. By doing this, the No More Service will reduce the impact of drugs; alcohol and crime have on the individual and the community. We work alongside other support and enforcement agencies to take a collaborative approach providing an individually tailored support plan to help break entrenched behaviour. The ethos of the No More Service is to improve the person's self-worth, help them to achieve positive outcomes (such as housing or a role in the community) enabling and motivating them to break the cycle of crime or substance use.

Every year we host Community Awards, where we celebrate the life changing progress our clients make. We will continue this tradition again next year.

We will continue to promote the services to engage as many clients as we can. We will continue with clients who are in prison to start their support plans before their release. We will be making contacts with the NHS, including at Lister Hospital and local GPs to encourage them making referrals to the No More Service for support around the misuse of drugs and alcohol. We will continue to work as a partnership to identify members of the community that needs access to support.

We are developing methods of befriending for our clients. We want to create a drop in, for people to attend for one off support, to reduce isolation by taking part in activities such as chess, classes or hobbies.

What have we been doing?

We have continued to develop an innovative approach to addressing substance misuse and offending behaviour. We now have two Complex Needs Advocates whose role is to provide support and guidance to individuals with complex needs (such as substance use, mental health and homelessness). These Advocates breakdown the tasks by discussing positives and consequences of the choices they can make and navigate the systems to access necessary support.



During the COVID pandemic, our clients have experienced many barriers, including struggling with their mental health and isolation, we have had to change our approach to engaging people. We increased our contact with our clients to help ease the feeling of isolation and the impact this can have on an individual's mental health. We worked with the Housing Options Team to support individuals who were street homeless in the hotel accommodation as this was a good opportunity whilst they had a base to offer them support.

During the Coronavirus pandemic we supported clients by:

- adapting coping skills previously developed to manage with addiction and mental ill-health;
- reducing further isolation for our high risk offenders, who already have restrictions placed on them;
- managing within a situation of isolation and loneliness which can simulate prison, which has potential to trigger individuals and bring about relating behaviour;
- filling the gap where there has been a reduction in other support services, clients seeing a reduction in the existing contact with other agencies and feelings of support;
- changing routines, which have existed for many years;
- changing environment for clients that have been rough sleeping for a prolonged period of time and being able to adapt to rules and regulations attached to this accommodation;
- managing clients' anti-social behaviour whilst in their home for extended time, including conflict between neighbours;
- encouraging harm reduction messages due to change in their substance use methods.

The number of clients we are now contacting every week (and often twice a week) has increased by 157%.



As, for some time, we were not able to see clients face to face, we were able to apply for a grant from Stevenage Community trust to provide phones to clients that did not have them. This meant we could have phone appointments and they could also have contact with other support agencies. We have delivered food parcels to those whose finances were impacted by Covid and discussed their finances so they could become self-sufficient again.

Case Study – The No More Service

My support worker never lost their temper; they understood my grieving and were always there when I needed them. They spent time to explain things, in terms I could understand, like explaining letters I got sent. When they said they were going to do something, they would make the time to actually do it. They came back to help me even when I got annoyed. Whilst working with the No More Service they would help me access services that I needed to help reduce my addiction. I am now drug free. I still get texts from dealers but I just ignore them. I have completed grief counselling and I am taking my anti-depressants. I know if I need support with anything I can still call The No More Service and they will help me.

Objective Five – Work with partners to address perceptions of crime and encourage reporting of crime

What will we do?

We will be continuing our “Tower Block Action Plan” which engages the Partnership to address any upcoming issue within any of our residential blocks. We have started to hold “pop-up hubs” in the tower blocks to speak directly to residents and to gather more information on any issues they are facing. We have been holding these at different times of the day to give the greatest opportunity for people to attend around their own schedule.

The Partnership is committed to developing an ongoing dialogue with the town's residents around issues concerning Community Safety. The findings from this survey will be added to throughout the lifetime of the strategy as the council and partners continue to engage with residents in a variety of ways. This will include utilising digital platforms, street meets and engagement exercises linked to the council's co-operative neighbourhood programme. Our aim is always to work on early solutions together.

What have we been doing?

We have engaged with residents to promote personal safety and discuss people perception of ASB and crime. We have attended events including Street Meets, PSPO Events, Operation Night Owl and engagement events in the Town Centre. We have also taken our SoSafe Partnership engagement events to other areas in local shopping precincts to speak to people who do not attend the Town Centre. We attended regular partnership walkabouts to patrol the areas and engage members of the public to raise awareness and encourage reports.



Instead of issuing fines for those suffering financial hardship we used Community Protection Notice Warnings (CPNW). These notices banned the individual from undertaking specific actions that were causing ASB. This could include, for example, not being allowed to sit within ten metres of a cash point, not to have an open vessel of alcohol or to be banned from a certain area they did not need to attend.

The Town Centre, Bedwell, The Hyde, The Oval and the High Street in the Old Town were previously subject to a Public space protection order (PSPO). This has meant an individual could receive a fine if they were drinking alcohol, aggressively begging

or urinating in the public space. The PSPO was reviewed in 2019 as it was due to expire. It was not renewed as the Partnership agreed that the use of Community Protection Notices and Warnings, together with Operation Urbans proactive work with The No More Service and Housing, were managing behaviour more effectively than the use of Fixed Penalty Notices were.

DRAFT

Some of our SoSafe Feedback Comments -

“I appreciate the daily calls as I have had no credit to call people” *John - recently moved away from the Town Centre which had recently changed their routine and ability to socialise.

“I am so glad we could do the weekly drug test via video link, as it helps prove to Social Services that I am no longer taking drugs”. *Louise

“People are clapping for the NHS again tonight but I’m going to clap for you and all the support you give me” *Sandra – has daily contact due to mental ill health, neighbour disputes and social isolation

“Thanks for everything and sorting out food bank, appreciate it a lot. THANK YOU AGAIN” *David – Has been in lockdown due to his health and struggled to get food

“I just really want to say thank you for all your help over the past year and more. You’ve done so much to get me where I am today and I would not have been here without you!”

“I really do appreciate the help you have given me and all the support and time you’ve put in” *Lucy – Is experiencing a mental health crisis, struggling with a change in her routine and struggling to engage with mental health referral services as they require triage over the phone, something that she struggles with immensely.

“I honestly can’t thank you enough for all you have done for me and my family. You are the most amazing woman I’ve met you are amazing at your job and I wouldn’t be where I am without you”

“I am so pleased with my gift bag of goodies and food for Christmas; I am pleased to be working with you.”

“Thank you for finding a safe place to call a home, I can’t thank you enough”

Appendix

List of acronyms

ASB	Anti-social Behaviour
A&E	Accident & Emergency
BeNCH CRC	Bedfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridge and Hertfordshire Community Rehabilitation Company (formerly Hertfordshire Probation)
DASH	Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse: domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence (risk assessment tool)
CCSU	County Community Safety Unit
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
Class A drugs	Heroin, methadone, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, LSD and amphetamines
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CPN/W	Community Protection Notice/Warning
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DA	Domestic Abuse
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
E&NH CCG	East & North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group
HBV	Honour Based Violence
HCC	Herts County Council
HFRS	Herts Fire and Rescue Service
IOM	Integrated Offender Management
JAG	Joint Action Group
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LIFE	Local Intervention Fire Education
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MNWG	Multiple Needs Working Group
NMS	No More Service
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
NTE	Night Time Economy
OPCC	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
OWL	Online Watch Liaison
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer

RAG	Responsible Authorities Group
RJ	Restorative Justice
SADA	Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse
SARA	Scanning, analysis, response and assessment
SBC	Stevenage Borough Council
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
SOC	Serious Organised Crime
SoSafe	Stevenage community safety partnership
SoStevenage	Stevenage local strategic partnership
YC Herts	Youth provision in Stevenage

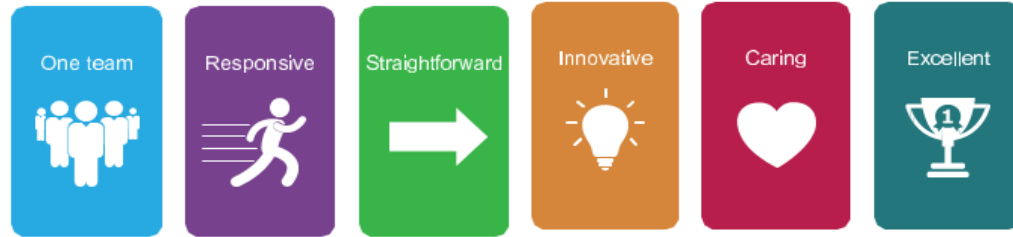


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Draft SoSafe Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024 on a Page



Our values



Future town future council

FTFC priorities



Strategic Objective

To provide a framework for the activities and initiatives that the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership deliver to improve Community Safety in the town

Aims



SoSafe Objectives

- Divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB
- Provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery
- Promote reporting of Hate Crime and equality in the community
- Tackle the harms caused by drugs and alcohol
- Work with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perception of crime

How our services support the Objectives

Objective One - Divert young people from becoming involved in crime
SOS Project

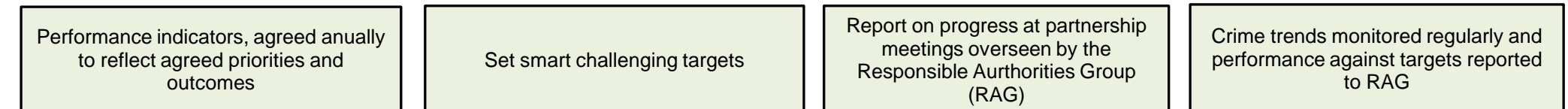
Objective Two - Provide safe reporting and support to Domestic Abuse Survivors
Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse

Objective Three - Promote reporting of Hate Crime and promote equality in the Community
The Hate Crime Strategy

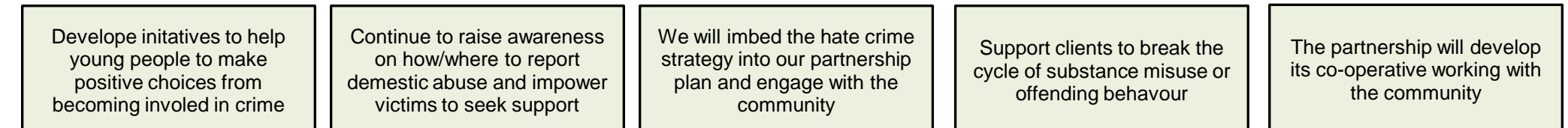
Objective Four - Tackle the harm caused by drugs and alcohol
The No More Service

Objective Five - Work with partners to address perceptions of crime and encourage reporting of crime
Co-operative Neighbourhood

Measuring performance



What we will do as part of the strategy



Finance

We will continue to apply for additional funding to further expand the services available as part of the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership

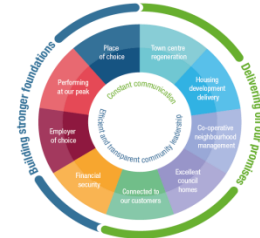
From 2018 to 2021 the partnership secured £455,920 in external funding

Informed by

The Council's Constitution includes the Community Safety Strategy as a Budget and Policy Framework item. The final report incorporating comments made by the overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holders Advisory Group was heard and considered at Executive for recommendation to Council, on the 14 July 2021.

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date 10 March 2021



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER THREE 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 three 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 three 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That the impacts of the Government Directive on the provision of accommodation for "rough sleepers" during the Covid-19 Pandemic are noted. (para 3.60 to 3.67).

- 2.3 That the impact of the Government Directive on evictions during the course of COVID-19, as well as the effects of the Pandemic generally, on the Council’s Housing Options Service be noted. The Housing First report on this agenda considers this. (para 3.68 to 3.72)
- 2.4 That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on rent collection rate are noted and action plans endorsed (para 3.73 to 3.81).
- 2.5 That the impacts of COVID-19 on the Council’s ability to deliver against the following key performance areas and, where appropriate the improvement actions outlined against them, as identified in the paragraphs outlined below, be noted:
 - Job Creation/New Business Start Up through the Business Technology Centre (para 3.88 to 3.90)
 - Food establishment compliance checks (3.91 to 3.92)
 - Letting of council garages (para 3.95 to 3.99)
 - Collection of Council Tax (para 3.105 to 3.106)
 - Ability to identify and remove HRA/GF savings (para 3.107 to 3.110)
- 2.6 That the level of void loss is noted and how sheltered void properties and major works impact the void loss is noted, and improvement activities are endorsed (para 3.82 to 3.87).
- 2.7 That the proposals to further improve website satisfaction are endorsed (para 3.100 to 3.104).

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 At the Council meeting on 24 February 2021, Council agreed to continue with the current Co-operative Corporate Plan beyond the original 5 year term, subject to further review in Autumn 2022.
- 3.3 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 summarised within this report.

Customer, Place and Transformation and Support

- 3.4 In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across all Council services is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement.
- 3.5 A complete set of performance measures aligned to both service delivery and the FTFC programme delivery is attached as Appendix One. Summaries of performance measure results are outlined at paragraph 3.57.
- 3.6 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

- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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 Delivery Update

- 3.11 The planning application for SG1 was submitted by Mace to the Council's Planning Committee in October, where a resolution to grant permission was approved. Government issued a holding directive whilst the Minister made a decision on whether to call in the application and but this has been lifted by the Secretary of State since the end of the quarter.
- 3.12 Discussions have continued to take place with the lead project sponsors to progress the hub project. A report outlining how the delivery of the SG1 scheme could be accelerated is on the agenda for this meeting.
- 3.13 The majority of enabling works have been completed on the site of the bus interchange. The next package of works has been agreed with the contractors and the associated works are being progressed.
- 3.14 Physical works to the Town Square projects are near completion. The North Block building is now in the handover stage with snagging work and final inspections underway. The majority of works to the public realm are also at the handover stage, with surveys to the Clock Tower being completed as well.
- 3.15 Plans for the multi-storey car park (MSCP) have been further developed following the Executive agreeing to fund the project using Growth Deal funds. As part of this work the costs associated with introducing cycling hubs are also being investigated. Discussions are ongoing internally with the Legal and Procurement teams regarding the contract.
- 3.16 The Stevenage Town Investment Plan was successfully submitted on the 30th October 2020, the Council is awaiting the first round of feedback. Initial scoping and preparation for the next 6 months is underway in anticipation of the next steps of the process.
- 3.17 The Even Better website has been updated to reflect changes across the whole programme, including the Towns Fund. Queensway, Town Square and

the Towns Fund. Social media campaigns and promotional work remain ongoing via regular communications updates.

Housing Development Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.18 Work is continuing on the North Road site. Marketing for the one and two bedroom apartments has begun and there has been regular interest in the properties.
- 3.19 The schemes at Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have continued to be progressed this quarter. At Shephall Way external blockwork is being laid on site, and internal work is progressing. At Symonds Green, the brickwork, blockwork and enhanced insulation is continuing on the ground floor in preparation for the first floor slab.
- 3.20 The contract documents for Kenilworth Close were finalised in December, and ground works continue on site at Malvern Close. Contractors are on site at the scheme carrying out the necessary diversion works and disconnections. Utilities to all remaining properties have been disconnected and the main site is fully established.
- 3.21 Work to progress and refine the masterplan for the Oval continues with the design team. The team are working to develop a regeneration document that will demonstrate the vision for the area. As well as this, the team will be examining the feasibility and order of the phased delivery of the scheme and will provide a guide on architectural styles, materials and design.
- 3.22 The report for the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) was reviewed ahead of being presented to the Executive at its January meeting.
- 3.23 A further open market acquisition (OMA) was completed this quarter. Works will now take place to make it ready to be let. Completion dates have not yet been provided for the remaining 3 properties which are currently in the pipeline.

Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.24 The neighbourhood improvements programme has delivered some projects this quarter, but continues to be affected by limitations with regards to community engagement due to the pandemic. Plans for projects in quarter four are on-going including a community orchard in St Nicholas and Pin Green wards, art installations and targeted work in areas highlighted by the local communities.
- 3.25 Further progress has been made in relation to the implementation of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme this quarter. A meeting with operational leads for the six neighbourhood teams took place in December where challenges, successes and opportunities were discussed. Processes to

ensure comprehensive partnership working and resident involvement were also reviewed. The Strategic Board for the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme, which is chaired by Cllr Broom will review the strategic direction of the new operating model in quarter four.

- 3.26 The Estates team continue to progress the Locality Reviews process including considerations to the long term sustainability of the Council's Community Centres assets. This includes the medium and long term benefit realisation of the Hub and Spoke model outlined as part of the Community Centre Review.
- 3.27 The Co-operative Council Innovation Network (CCIN) Policy Lab group met to re-scope its remit in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The policy lab will be reframed so as to further develop the model of cooperative neighbourhood working and community networks to help build new models of collaboration in local communities. A commissioning process is currently underway for an external organisation to support this learning.

Excellent Council Homes Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.28 Delivery of the flat-block refurbishment programme continues to be affected by the pandemic, but contractors and Council staff have worked hard to ensure adherence to government guidance. Throughout quarter three, work has continued steadily to external and internal areas and Council teams have continued to work closely with contractors to mitigate potential issues should the contract period need to be extended, owing to the pandemic.
- 3.29 The lift refurbishment programme has continued at good pace throughout quarter three. Lifts at Truro Court have been completed and Norman Court lift is near completion.
- 3.30 Concept designs have been completed for the Sprinkler project this quarter, and a consultant has been appointed to review the drawings. Once designs are agreed, construction drawings will be issued and a Building Control application will be submitted by the contractor.
- 3.31 The Rapid project, that looks to streamline back office databases for better use for staff when onsite, has continued to progress steadily. The caretaking app is now live following testing this quarter. Progress has also been made with the 'Chatbots' project, beginning with an initial supplier meeting to discuss proof of concept. The project is anticipated to begin in quarter four.
- 3.32 The Housing Older People Strategy (HOPS) was presented to the Executive in December 2020. It was agreed that the HOPS draft strategy 2020-2030 should be adopted, including the case for the financial resources needed to support the implementation of the action plan. Final amendments will be made prior to its publication.

Connected to our Customers Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.33 Following the successful launch of The Council's new look website in quarter two, focus is now on visual appeal and Stevenage showcasing, the website supporting digital journeys, transparent democracy and customer inclusion. This quarter has also provided an opportunity to collect a wide-range of service usage data, and to start the process of reviewing ideas and requests for further digital solutions.
- 3.34 Development to the digital platform has continued this quarter which will act as an enabler for future projects. Elements of this are now in final stages of testing and should be available for customers in quarter four. Training on the platform has also been rolled out to the wider members of the team which will improve team resilience and capability.

Place of Choice Programme

Programme Delivery Updates

Climate Change

- 3.35 The Climate Change Citizens Panel report was finalised in November 2020. Recommendations from the report will be discussed and actioned through the Climate Change Executive Member Group.
- 3.36 Stevenage signed up to the Race to Zero online platform in December 2020 as part of the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) global Race to Zero campaign. The Council also signed up to the revised UK100 pledge. This shows the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and working towards Stevenage wide net zero carbon emissions by 2045.

Community Safety

- 3.37 Work to update the Community Safety strategy and action plan continued this quarter. Consultation took place through various social media platforms, including using data from the Police's Echo platform. The team also completed telephone surveys, email and papers surveys, all which are used to help ensure that the right priorities and initiatives are in place.
- 3.38 An action plan has been completed for the No More Service and this will also be fed into the work to update the Community Safety Strategy and action plan. From April 2021 the No More Service will include work with young people who may be involved in knife crime and or Anti-Social Behaviour. We have met with the other Hertfordshire districts regarding knife crime and how this affects our communities and further work will be undertaken on the back of these discussions.

Community Wealth Building

- 3.39 The Council launched its Cooperative and Inclusive Economy Charter on 19th November 2020. The Charter aims to support a fairer society and more resilient economy, and provides some practical examples of how to achieve this. These include shopping locally, developing local supply chains, supporting the development of cooperatives, and offering work placements and apprenticeships. The Charter is aimed at both individuals and employers.

Healthy Stevenage

- 3.40 The Young People's Healthy Hub was launched in quarter three. A programme of activities has been scheduled with new agencies joining the network of partners including the Stevenage Secondary School pastoral leads and Change Grow Live (CGL). A dedicated counselling service for young people 11-16 years old is being launched in quarter four with a mixture of online and face-to face delivery.
- 3.41 An interim report from the National Institute for Health Research and University of Hertfordshire (UoH), on the subject of how coronavirus and the associated restrictions are affecting how people do everyday activities relating to food, such as shopping, cooking, and eating has been released. Healthy Stevenage partners are supporting colleagues at UoH with ongoing research with partners and their clients to help shape a food policy briefing and final report.
- 3.42 The Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group has hosted their first "mini" virtual meeting in December 2020. The topic for the group was "Physical Activity in Stevenage". A report summarising discussions has been produced.

Stevenage Re-Imagined

- 3.43 Planned cultural engagement and installation programmes have continued throughout quarter three, despite the pandemic. This included work on the COVID Cobra project and St Nicholas and The Oval arts programmes.
- 3.44 A successful partnership application was made to Hertfordshire Community Foundation to support BAME communities most impacted by COVID through racial equality training, community networking and intelligence building, and mental health support sessions.

Sustainable Transport

- 3.45 Stevenage was accepted onto Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Travel Town (STT) programme. The decision was finalised at a meeting of the County Council's Growth, Infrastructure, Planning and Economy Cabinet Panel in December as Councillors approved the officer recommendation, following the appraisal and assessment of bids from all over Hertfordshire.
- 3.46 The Council's Executive approved the public consultation of a draft version of a new Parking Strategy for Stevenage. The Council is responsible for much of the public parking in the borough and the emerging strategy will become the

overarching policy for public parking provision. It will therefore set out approaches that are in line with SBC's Co-operative Council Commitment to engage with the community and relevant stakeholders in managing parking. Following consultation, it is expected to be formally adopted by summer 2021.

- 3.47 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was allocated money by the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 2. One of the key projects this money is to be spent on is cycling improvements on North Road from the Gyratory northwards to the improvements being provided as part of the North Road development. The combination of these two schemes will deliver a large portion of Route 1 as identified by the Stevenage Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, published in 2019.

Enabling Future Town, Future Council Programmes

Financial Security Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.48 The 2021/22 HRA budget and 2021/22 General Fund budget were presented to Full Council in January and February 2021 following reporting during the third quarter to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny. The report included proposed growth (subject to available funding), savings proposals and fees and charges. The savings proposals related to one rather than the normal three year target due to the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances and uncertainty surrounding the medium to longer term impacts of the pandemic.
- 3.49 In addition Members approved that a further £500K of options would be worked up during March 2021 in the event that the financial position as a result of Covid-19 requires further savings.
- 3.50 The Council's Commercialisation & Insourcing Strategy was agreed by the Executive in August 2020, and regular updates are being provided to Members. The strategy is focussed on ideas to find savings to contribute to the Financial Security target and a number of options are being explored.

Employer of Choice Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.51 Activities throughout quarter three focused 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. The programme has continued to focus upon future ways of working, through learning lessons about how our workforce is working differently during the Covid-19 response.
- 3.52 Extensive work was undertaken to develop a new Workforce and Organisational Development strategy during quarter two, including consultation and engagement with SLT, staff, trade union and Portfolio Holder

Advisory Group (PHAG) engagement. The strategy was presented and approved by the Executive in quarter three.

- 3.53 In line with the new Workforce Strategy work commenced during quarter two to draft a new Remote Working policy for which consultation commenced in quarter three.
- 3.54 Work has been progressing to launch a new digital Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) system which will be used for current and new employees, and for taxi licensing. This reaffirms our commitment to safeguarding, and supports the new remote ways of working and streamlining processes. The digital DBS system is on track to launch in quarter four.
- 3.55 Additionally the retender of current agency supply framework is underway and due to conclude in March 2021. The report is on the agenda of this Executive meeting.

Performing at our Peak Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.56 Enhancements have been made to the risk module of the InPhase performance management system during Q3, including a new style of reporting for the Corporate Risk Group and Audit Committee. However, there has been insufficient capacity to undertake further development work in relation to this programme due to resource being diverted to Resilience activities associated with the response to Covid-19. It is anticipated that the main focus of the corporate performance/governance function will continue to be on 'business as usual' activity for the remainder of the year.

Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement

- 3.57 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 these results for April 2020 to December 2020 are outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
53	32	5	10	6*

* (Explanations in paras 3.111 to 3.118) CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC, Pe1: Workforce Stability, Pe2: Agency Usage, ECHFL5: Repairs satisfaction missing, FS3 & 4 % of savings identified for 3 year target

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

Spotlights and Areas for Improvement

- 3.59 The measures below were reported to be at red or amber status for Quarter 3.

Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

NI156: Number of Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

- December 2020 target 120
- December 2020 actual 166 (red)

- 3.60 There are a large number of clients residing within hotel accommodation due to the ongoing and prolonged demands that have been placed upon the Housing Options team.
- 3.61 The impact of COVID-19 has meant that applicants are spending longer periods of time in temporary accommodation. The Providing Homes team continue to work hard to move applicants out of hotel accommodation and into the council's own stock, which has increased by 36 units in this financial year.
- 3.62 Further to this the team is completing essential moves only but prioritising all moves for those owed a duty in Temporary Accommodation, duty through the Housing Register and in the Private Rented Sector.
- 3.63 It is unlikely that the numbers of applicants placed in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation will substantially reduce whilst we remain in a period of national restrictions and continue to see a constant flow of approaches to the Housing Options team.
- 3.64 The Council is continuing to source accommodation at pace. The Housing Supply team have rehoused 26 rough sleepers within the private rented sector this financial year to date and also continuing to seek to source additional accommodation.
- 3.65 Key officers meet every 6 weeks to review B&B spend, monitor B&B usage and to agree what actions are being taken to reduce this.
- 3.66 The Housing Options team have seen 156 rough sleepers approach for assistance since the 'Everyone In' directive was put in place on 26 March 2020. Since this time, placements have continued as detailed in the Housing First Executive report (November 2020) and there is a project underway to engage and rehouse the remaining 39 cases who were rough sleeping or at imminent risk of rough sleeping.
- 3.67 The second report relating to the new Housing First model is included on the agenda for this Executive meeting. The team were successful in their proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding which totals approximately £1.3million for accommodation, support, security and Severe

Weather Emergency Provision. A further £20k worth of security costs can be claimed from the Cold weather fund and the team are yet to bid for a £20k fund for continuing to place cases in the period of the third national restrictions.

Homelessness Preventions

BV213: Homelessness Preventions

- December 2020 target 270 preventions
 - December 2020 actual 217 preventions (red)
- 3.68 The current caseload is 550. This includes those who are seeking housing advice, but who may not currently be threatened with homelessness. The team are currently operating at approximately 50% capacity due to sickness and vacancies, which is affecting the number of preventions. Efforts are continuing to recruit to the vacant roles.
- 3.69 The Housing Options team have increased staffing by two Housing Options Caseworkers, two senior Housing Options Caseworkers and three rough sleeper co-ordinators. Investigations are currently ongoing to explore any additional staffing needs to assist with achieving preventions for a backlog of cases that built up during lockdown which should also assist to ease the numbers in emergency/temporary accommodation.
- 3.70 The Senior Housing Options Caseworkers are funded through the flexible homeless support grant, with one post leading on the day to day management of the Rough Sleeper outreach team, some Housing Options Caseworkers and another working with the remaining Housing Options Caseworkers.
- 3.71 The demand for the service has grown significantly and year on year since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. Approaches from customers 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%
- 3.72 Our records show that there has also been an increase in approaches during this financial year compared to last:

Approaches to Housing Options		
Period	Number	Percentage Increase from last financial year
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 period last year
November 2020 (during Lockdown 2.0)	116	68% increase on same period last year

Rent Collection

BV66a: Rent Collection Rate

- December 2020 target 97.8%
- December 2020 actual 96.4% (red)

- 3.73 Income collection for the end of December is below target due to unprecedented challenges from the impacts of COVID-19; however the performance has improved over that recorded in the previous quarter by 2.95%.
- 3.74 The number of Universal Credit (UC) cases since end of March 2020 has continued to increase and stood at 1529 as at end of December. Of these accounts 1026 are in arrears totalling £675,116.82, which equates to 65.4% of the overall gross arrears. Although there is an increase in the number of cases, the level of arrears reduced by 11.84% in Quarter 3 when compared to Quarter 2.
- 3.75 The number of tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) has continued to decrease since March 2020 and is currently standing at 36.46 % of the total number of current tenants (a reduction of 1.26% from the end of Quarter 2). This could be a direct result of the increase in tenants in receipt of UC.
- 3.76 There has been an increase in Emergency (EA) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) arrears. The total number of cases is 158, of those 118 are in arrears totalling £65,765.70. The team continue to experience high levels of homeless presentations confirmed by the suite of indicators for Homelessness.
- 3.77 There has been an increase in the number of tenants that have been affected and are furloughed, on job retention schemes or made redundant. Please see the table below:

	No of Cases	No in Arrears	Total Arrears
Furloughed	261 (175 in November)	207 (150 in November)	£175,695.05 (£118,483.56 in November)
Retention	77 (54 in November)	65 (43 in November)	£51,405.18 (£34,113.29 in November)
Redundancy	30 (20 in November)	22 (15 in November)	£19,897.58 (£11,930.27 in November)
Total	368	294	£246,997.81

- 3.78 Although Government suspension of legal proceedings in court was lifted at the end of August 2020 and we have resumed taking cases to court. There

are however delays in obtaining hearing dates. This has resulted in a large backlog of cases which has an impact on arrears recovery. The income team have served 268 Notices of Seeking Possession since April 2020.

- 3.79 Government restrictions on eviction action that have been extended to 21 February 2021 have had an impact on the level of arrears. There are 25 cases that would have taken through the eviction process this year totalling £58,863.91.
- 3.80 The combined insecurity of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased financial pressure has seen some of our tenants opting for permanent debt solutions and so far we have 7 cases in the process of obtaining Debt Relief Orders (DRO) with arrears totalling £18,675.79.
- 3.81 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 impact of the post-lockdown furlough process ending. Work to mitigate the impact will continue focusing on sustaining income collection and arrears recovery and tenancy sustainment.

Void Loss, Voids Sheltered & Voids Sheltered Major Works

VoidLoss1: Void Loss in year (£)

- December 2020 target £239,856
- December 2020 actual £289,844 (red)

VoidsSheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids

- December 2020 target 70 days
- December 2020 actual 107.72 days (red)

Voids ShelteredMW: The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids

- December 2020 target 70 days
- December 2020 actual 98 days (red)

- 3.82 Void loss is red this quarter and continues to be closely monitored. After 9 months of the current financial year the Void Loss is 20% over the target at this stage. The voids team are seeing an increasing number of Independent Living and Flexicare properties becoming void as a direct result of the Covid19 pandemic. These are the slowest properties to re-let. Although there is an increase in voids due to the pandemic, the council has continued to let properties during this time. For example:
- 1st April 2019– 12th February 2020 – the team let 76 properties
 - 1st April 2020 – 12th February 2021 – the team let 66 properties.
- 3.83 The team is only 10 lets behind where it was this time last year. This is largely down to the efforts of the Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer (this post did not start until July 20) who has been proactively working in

partnership to support people being able to move to independent living and Flexicare accommodation.

- 3.84 The pandemic has also resulted in restrictions to viewings and Lettings which will inevitably compound rent loss. The largest contributor to rent loss continues to be the list of historical sheltered properties that is accumulating an average of £17k rent loss every month; were the team not operating with this challenge the void loss figure would be approximately £137k, £103k under target. The service will also continue to accumulate rent loss from the Hobbs Court properties that are not being refurbished or returned to the housing stock as they become void (whilst awaiting regeneration).
- 3.85 Of the 18 Standard Sheltered Voids Let in Quarter 3, 12 (out of 18) took over 100 days, including 3 properties that took 252, 329 and 574 days to let. The latter was a Management Void conversion to a 1 bed flat delivered by the Investment team. These are all against a target of 70 days.
- 3.86 The Repairs team is achieving its target for turnaround time for Major Works Sheltered Voids, but the overall KPI performance continues to be affected by voids that have historically been hard to let. There has only been 1 sheltered major works void let in Quarter 3 and this had an overall turnaround time of 98 days (which represents an improvement from 127days in Quarter 2). The Repairs element was completed in 57 days (within target), with the remainder of the time taken to let the property. One property in July took over 200 days to let and we will see the KPI impacted while these older and long term voids are let, so the impact of this one property has significant impacts on the total KPI. Once these are cleared we should see the long term benefits for both this KPI and the void loss figure.
- 3.87 An officer working group is in place and has been tasked with reducing void loss and improve turnaround times for both standard sheltered voids and major works sheltered voids, however the work of this group has been heavily impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions.

Jobs Created and New Business start-ups through the Business Technology Centre

BTC1a: New jobs created through the BTC (ytd)

- December 2020 target 35
- December 2020 actual 22 (red)

BTC1b: New business start up through the BTC (ytd)

- December 2020 target 18
- December 2020 actual 17 (amber)

- 3.88 During Quarter 3 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 10 jobs and supported 7 new businesses starting up in challenging economic circumstances.

- 3.89 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 (East of England Development Agency) 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.
- 3.90 There is 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 decrease quite dramatically for these reasons. 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.

Food Establishment Compliance

NI184: Food Establishments in the Area Broadly Compliant with Food Hygiene Law

- December 2020 target 95%
 - December 2020 actual 90.6% (amber)
- 3.91 Food safety inspections remain largely paused at the instruction of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), in all but the highest risk cases. This, coupled with a surge in new businesses registering with the Council, has diluted the overall number of food businesses that are broadly compliant.
- 3.92 During quarter 4, 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.

Household Waste sent for Recycling, Reuse or Composting

NI192: Percentage of Household Waste sent for Reuse, Recycling or Composting

- December 2020 target 40%
 - December 2020 estimate 37% (amber)
- 3.93 Quarter 3 figures are still estimates until March due to the way this measure is reported from outside sources. The estimate is based on the actual figure for the same period last year. Due to the impacts of COVID-19 it is thought that the target is optimistic for the year.
- 3.94 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.

Garage Voids

CNM2g: Garage Voids as a Percentage of Stock

- December 2020 target 14.74%
- December 2020 actual 15.69% (amber)

- 3.95 Garage lettings have continued during the pandemic and the Garages team is receiving at least 80 garage applications per month; however there have been several factors that have continued to prevent the void rate from reducing. The team have been investigating why applicants are not accepting the offers. This often comes down to applicants no longer requiring a garage or the garage being offered being located too far from their property. There are intentions to continue contacting those applicants that do not respond to offers to see if anything can be done to support them.
- 3.96 It is anticipated that, with the move to Choice Based Lettings in April 2021, the uptake of garage offers will increase as customers will be able to bid for their preferred garages online. Initially this will be for those low demand garages freeing up officers time to concentrate on offering garages of high demand using our extensive waiting list.
- 3.97 There has been a slow return of garages that have been sent out for pre-asbestos inspections, however is being addressed and through the local KPIs the team are aiming for a weekly stream of at least 20 offers per week and a 50% acceptance rate. At this time the current acceptance rate is on average 36%.
- 3.98 There are 3 large garage sites where refurbishment work has been completed, where the voids are high, and offers have already begun on these sites from the first week of January and will continue over the coming weeks. There are 10 more sites with work due to begin in January.
- 3.99 As a result of targeted communications, arrears have continued to decrease in the past weeks and there has been a 1% reduction in arrears compared with arrears in November, with tenants actively approaching SBC to make payments or set up arrangements. This is currently 2.28% of the estimated yearly income and contact with tenants continues to be made and regular repossessions are being carried out on cases where arrears are pre-Covid-19.

Website Satisfaction

WebSat1: Customer Satisfaction with Council website (-1 negative score, 0 neutral score, +1 positive score)

- December 2020 target 0.26
- December 2020 actual -0.08 (red)

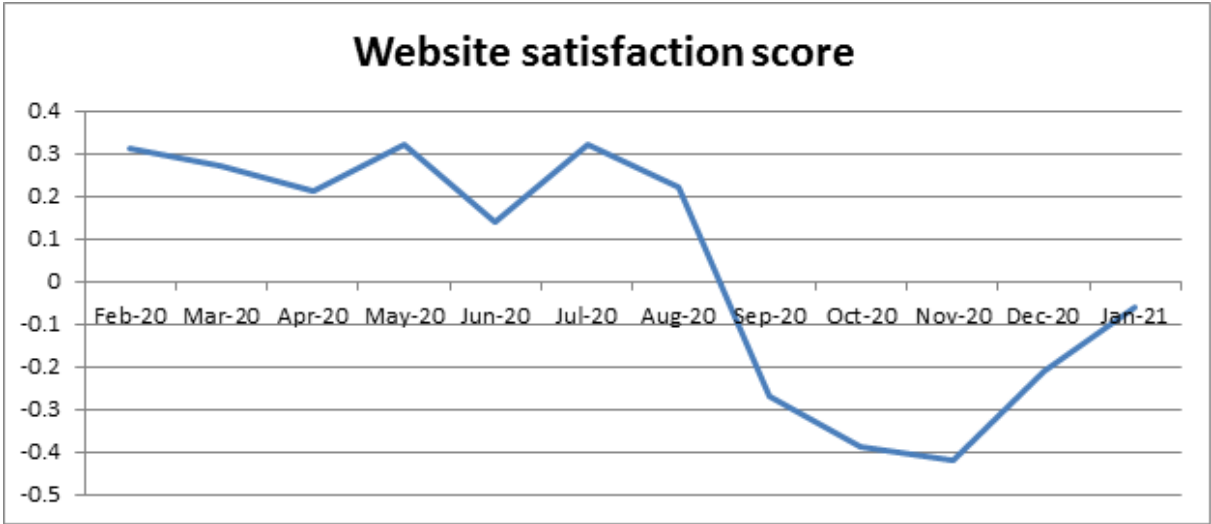
- 3.100 Quarter 3 website satisfaction was particularly impacted by 3 factors, which were all improving by the end of the period.

3.101 Firstly, the new website launched at the end of September, breaking some links and changing the look, feel and navigation of the site which had remained mostly the same over the previous 10 years. Understandably this did generate some negative (and positive) responses in the initial weeks after launch. Further to this officers are looking at options to improve the search function.

3.102 Secondly, there was an intermittent problem causing the online payment system to be unavailable, which was very frustrating for customers. The cause of this hasn't been definitively identified, but it has performed more reliably towards the end of the quarter and into January.

3.103 Finally, the supplier commissioned to provide the new bin collection day checker took several weeks longer than they originally proposed, and many customers found the downloadable calendar of collections difficult to use in the interim. These difficulties were compounded by the late approval of the Q3 waste and recycling collection schedules; we weren't able to publish the October collection days until the very end of September, and the Christmas collections weren't available until December. A large number of negative comments from customers indicated that they want to see a whole year's worth of collections in advance. The new bin collection checker is now available, and customers can find it published here: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/find>

3.104 Performance on this measure started to recover in December and is expected to continue to improve in Q4.



Council Tax

BV9: % Council Tax Collected

- December 2020 target 88%
- December 2020 actual 87% (amber)

- 3.105 The collection rate was 1% lower at 87% as at December 2020, this had risen to 91.4% by the end of January (an increase of 4.4%). Based on this trend the target of 96.8% may be achieved.
- 3.106 During 2020/21 a, larger than normal, number of payment arrangements were made to help those whose incomes had been impacted by Covid-19, by January 5764 households had agreed alternative plans.

GF/HRA Savings

FS1A: % GF approved savings removed from GF for current year

- December 2020 target 92%
- December 2020 actual 67% (red)

FS2A: % HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year

- December 2020 target 91%
- December 2020 actual 40% (red)

- 3.107 There has been a reduction in the 2020/21 savings/income generation achievable due to the impacts of Covid-19.
- 3.108 Normally, a three year view of savings is proposed as part of the Budget Setting process (MTFS) and agreed by Members to ensure that there are sufficient options in the pipeline to deliver a sustainable budget.
- 3.109 However due to considerable uncertainty about the future year impacts of Covid-19, Brexit and any recession on the Council's budgets, along with the financial pressures this has had and will continue to have on the Council's services, a one year budget setting approach is being taken for 2021/22. Due to this decision the team are unable to report on the measures, FS3: % of GF savings identified for 3 year target, and also, FS4: % of HRA savings identified for 3 year target.
- 3.110 This applies to both the General Fund and the HRA. The GF savings for 21/22 are £1.462m and for the HRA are £242k.

Missing Measures

- 3.111 There is no data for Quarter 3 for the measures below.

Repairs Measures

ECHFL5: % of repairs service customers satisfied

- 3.112 The Repairs Team are unable to provide data for this measure for Quarter 3. This is due to a fault with the Cloud Dialogues SMS system, which is used for satisfaction surveys. Housing IT Systems officers are seeking to resolve this issue.

HR Measures

Pe1: Total Human Capital – measures workforce stability

Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of the total workforce

- 3.113 Due to the ongoing additional workload of the HR and OD team to support the Council's Covid-19 response, the establishment of the vaccination centre within Stevenage, and the requirement for the HR Systems Manager to support the running of the payroll in January 2021, measures Pe1 and Pe2 were not completed.
- 3.114 These measures will be completed at the end of Quarter 4 to give a year end outturn figure.

CSC Measures

CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)

- 3.115 The Covid-19 pandemic has massively affected normal working practices and required IT to re-prioritise resources to enable homeworking and delivery of critical components of the IT Strategy. This meant they were not able to provide access to the reporting systems needed to measure CSC13a until December 2020, which was much later than originally intended. The data is now available to access, including historic data, and the team are working on interpreting the data which should be reported in Quarter 4.
- 3.116 The reporting for CSC13a is now being developed and will need to be re-baselined to take account of new processes which have been introduced within Customer Services. This is a very time consuming task as what counts as resolved "at first point of contact" has to be considered for each individual process. Alongside this a new suite of measures is being developed to support new ways of working.
- 3.117 While the team haven't been able to monitor CSC13a they have secured a very good customer satisfaction rate (measure EAA1) of 96% throughout the year, which is well ahead of the 90% target, and is the strongest performance of this measure since recording commenced in 2015. This should provide some reassurance that the focus on delivering for customers has continued in Customer Services throughout this difficult year.
- 3.118 There is also growth in customers self-serving online using the new digital platform (table below). It has grown approximately four-fold since the platform was launched online in June. The team are looking at how best to report on self-service usage in next year's performance figures.

Period	% of Digital platform transactions self-service (rather than Customer Service telephone/ email / face to face)
2020	
Jun	4.4%
Jul	4.5%
Aug	6.3%
Sep	9.7%
Oct	12.0%
Nov	12.1%
Dec	12.3%
2021	
Jan	13.5%

Next Quarter Focus

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

3.120 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at December 2020, the improvement activities outlined below have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Continue to monitor satisfaction with the new Council website after introduction of the new site and monitor issues with online payments (para 3.100 to 3.104)
- Continuing to implement recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation use caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.60 to 3.67)
- Continuing to implement Housing First plans to assist with Homelessness Preventions (para 3.68 to 3.72)
- Continuing to implement recovery plans for Rent Collection (para 3.73 to 3.81)
- Continuing to implement plans and improve processes for Void loss, Sheltered Voids and Sheltered Major Works Voids (para 3.82 to 3.87)
- Continuing to work with/follow advice from WENTA about BTC job creation and new business start-up (para 3.88 to 3.90)
- Ensuring that compliance checks for food establishments resume and checks for high risk establishments continue (para 3.91 to 3.92)
- Monitor the level of waste sent for reuse/recycling/composting (3.93 to 3.94)
- 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 3.95 to 3.99)
- Ensuring that improvement plans for collection of Council Tax are in place (para 3.105 to 3.106)

- Ensuring that General Fund and HRA savings are closely monitored (para 3.107 to 3.110)

3.121 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.

3.122 The Senior Leadership Team will also continue to 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.

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

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

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

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

4.3 A number of areas have been identified in section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement or COVID-19 recovery is required and outline plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

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

5.2 Legal Implications

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

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

5.4 Risk Implications

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). Officers responsible for developing performance improvement plans will need to consider any risk implications from the improvement activity identified.
- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

5.5 Other Corporate implications

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

APPENDICES








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

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 31/12/20	Status at 31/12/20	Target to 31/03/21
CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population	Customers			>>			>>	5.70	6.03		5.70	5.64		5.70	5.31		-
⊕ Voids Sheltered MW - The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids	Customers	70.00	70.00		70.00	103.25		70.00	0.00		70.00	127.00		70.00	98.00		70.00
Void loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Customers	239,856	271,198		319,245	343,051		82,767	87,350		164,594	184,550		239,856	289,844		319,245
NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end qtr	Customers	75.00	89.00		75.00	175.00		120.00	182.00		120.00	150.00		120.00	166.00		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	81.5%	81.5%		76.1%	75.1%		75.1%	75.2%		76.5%	76.7%		78.8%	78.5%		70.1%
⊕ BV66a: Rent collection rate	Customers	97.8%	97.3%		98.7%	98.5%		93.6%	90.2%		96.3%	93.4%		97.8%	96.4%		98.6%
BV213: Homelessness preventions	Customers	270.0	428.0		360.0	525.0		90.0	67.0		180.0	151.0		270.0	219.0		360.0
NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Customers	28.00	7.90		35.00	8.24		10.00	15.30		7.00	8.15		11.00	7.41		7.00
CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Customers	28.00	5.38		33.00	6.80		8.00	10.40		12.00	10.33		8.00	8.19		5.00
⊕ Complaints: Percentage of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially (Housing)	Future Town, Future Council	40.00%	24.71%		40.00%	27.73%		40.00%	27.27%		40.00%	36.11%		40.00%	30.95%		40.00%
CTOC: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline	Future Town, Future Council	95.00%	94.94%		95.00%	93.90%		95.00%	99.65%		95.00%	99.86%		95.00%	92.31%		95.00%
EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	89.7%		90.0%	89.7%		90.0%	96.0%		90.0%	96.0%		90.0%	96.0%		90.0%
WebSat1: Customer satisfaction with Council website	Future Town, Future Council	0.15	0.26		0.20	0.16		0.22	0.22		0.30	0.15		0.26	-0.08		0.16
FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	47.4%	69.6%		69.9%	69.9%		10.0%	10.0%		30.0%	0.0%		50.0%	?		75.0%
FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Future Town, Future Council	91.00%	92.00%		91.00%	91.00%		91.00%	45.00%		91.00%	30.00%		91.00%	40.00%		91.00%
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.	Future Town, Future Council	2.3%	2.1%		2.3%	1.9%		2.1%	2.2%		1.9%	?		2.1%	4.0%		1.9%
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	98.2%		90.0%	95.3%		85.0%	87.6%		85.0%	85.2%		85.0%	86.0%		85.0%
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	Future Town, Future Council	12.00%	14.74%		12.00%	15.38%		10.79%	14.93%		11.58%	15.38%		14.74%	15.69%		15.38%

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 31/12/20	Status at 31/12/20	Target to 31/03/21
FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Future Town, Future Council	92.00%	92.00%	★	92.00%	92.00%	★	98.00%	77.00%	▲	92.00%	77.00%	●	92.00%	67.00%	▲	92.00%
FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	33.5%	79.3%	☆	46.3%	79.3%	☆	2.5%	2.5%	★	30.0%	0.0%	▲	50.0%	?	?	75.0%
EoCrec: Time to recruit	Future Town, Future Council	45.00	46.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	42.00	51.00	▲	47.00	?	?	46.00	45.00	★	46.00
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Future Town, Future Council	212.00	216.00	★	225.00	238.00	★	240.00	239.00	★	242.00	243.00	★	242.00	244.00	★	251.00
⊕ Voids sheltered:The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids	Housing Management	70.00	88.81	▲	70.00	88.89	▲	70.00	70.67	★	70.00	108.88	▲	70.00	107.72	▲	70.00
⊕ Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Place	5.00	2.77	☆	5.00	3.14	☆	5.00	1.14	☆	5.00	1.74	☆	5.00	2.23	☆	5.00
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Place	380.00	365.00	★	520.00	493.00	☆	150.00	130.00	☆	275.00	267.00	★	395.00	400.00	★	-
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse,recycling and composting	Place	41.0%	37.0%	▲	40.0%	40.0%	★	55.0%	44.0%	▲	42.0%	41.2%	★	40.0%	37.0%	●	-
⊕ Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Place	245.30	218.46	☆	327.07	277.58	☆	81.77	56.86	☆	163.54	110.45	☆	245.30	170.96	☆	327.07
⊕ Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Place	20.00	7.08	☆	20.00	7.85	☆	20.00	2.95	☆	20.00	6.03	☆	20.00	11.04	☆	20.00
⊕ VoidsGN: The time taken to relet standard general needs voids	Place	32.00	31.82	★	32.00	29.97	☆	32.00	25.20	☆	32.00	27.49	☆	32.00	28.82	☆	32.00
⊕ VoidsGNMW - The time taken to relet major works general needs voids	Place	65.00	59.00	☆	65.00	59.13	☆	65.00	60.86	☆	65.00	54.06	☆	65.00	55.42	☆	65.00
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Place	45.00	47.00	★	60.00	72.00	☆	15.00	7.00	▲	30.00	12.00	▲	45.00	22.00	▲	60.00
BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Place	15.00	34.00	☆	20.00	57.00	☆	6.00	6.00	★	12.00	10.00	▲	18.00	17.00	●	24.00
⊕ NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Place	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	81.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%
⊕ NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	65.0%	97.2%	☆	65.0%	90.3%	☆	65.0%	96.2%	☆	65.0%	94.4%	☆	65.0%	90.0%	☆	65.0%
⊕ NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	80.0%	97.9%	☆	80.0%	96.7%	☆	80.0%	93.7%	★	80.0%	90.1%	★	80.0%	90.9%	★	80.0%
NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law	Place	95.0%	97.0%	★	95.0%	96.0%	★	95.0%	90.7%	●	95.0%	92.9%	●	95.0%	90.6%	●	95.0%
⊕ ECHFP3: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Place	90.00%	93.01%	★	90.00%	92.72%	★	90.00%	94.01%	★	90.00%	?	?	90.00%	?	?	90.00%
⊕ ECHFP3: Percentage repairs appointment made and kept	Place	95.00%	99.35%	★	95.00%	97.91%	★	95.00%	98.25%	★	95.00%	95.63%	★	95.00%	97.95%	★	95.00%

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 31/12/20	Status at 31/12/20	Target to 31/03/21	
+	ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Place	87.50%	99.11%	☆	87.50%	96.76%	☆	87.50%	98.84%	☆	87.50%	98.83%	☆	87.50%	98.83%	☆	87.50%
+	Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Place	1.00	0.88	☆	1.00	0.94	☆	1.00	0.30	☆	1.00	0.31	☆	1.00	0.30	☆	1.00
+	ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Place	92.50	95.93	☆	92.50	96.88	☆	92.50	92.24	★	92.50	100.00	☆	92.50	91.00	★	92.50
	CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)	Transformation and Support	65.00%	62.10%	★	65.00%	61.40%	●	62.90%	?	?	61.80%	?	?	62.10%	?	?	61.40%
	Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Transformation and Support	40.0%	23.1%	☆	40.0%	25.0%	☆	40.0%	28.6%	☆	40.0%	33.3%	☆	40.0%	33.3%	☆	40.0%
	BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Transformation and Support	89.0%	89.8%	★	99.0%	98.9%	★	36.0%	34.2%	▲	61.0%	66.0%	☆	89.0%	91.8%	☆	99.0%
	Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of total workforce	Transformation and Support	12.0%	11.4%	★	11.0%	11.9%	●	13.2%	9.4%	☆	12.8%	?	?	11.4%	?	?	11.9%
	Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Transformation and Support	8.00	9.56	▲	8.00	9.87	▲	9.49	8.19	☆	9.80	7.79	☆	9.56	7.09	☆	9.87
	Pe6: Appraisal completion to meet corporate deadlines	Transformation and Support	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%
	NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	Transformation and Support	10.00	8.60	★	10.00	5.98	☆	12.00	9.42	☆	12.00	7.44	☆	10.00	7.20	☆	10.00
	BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Transformation and Support	88.0%	87.5%	★	96.8%	96.0%	★	33.0%	32.6%	●	61.0%	59.9%	●	88.0%	87.0%	●	96.8%
	Pe1: Total Human Capital - measures Workforce Stability	Transformation and Support	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	86.0%	★	85.9%	86.9%	★	85.0%	?	?	85.9%	?	?	86.0%
	CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Transformation and Support	8.0%	15.1%	▲	8.0%	15.9%	▲	7.2%	2.6%	☆	10.4%	5.8%	★	15.1%	7.6%	★	15.9%

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.

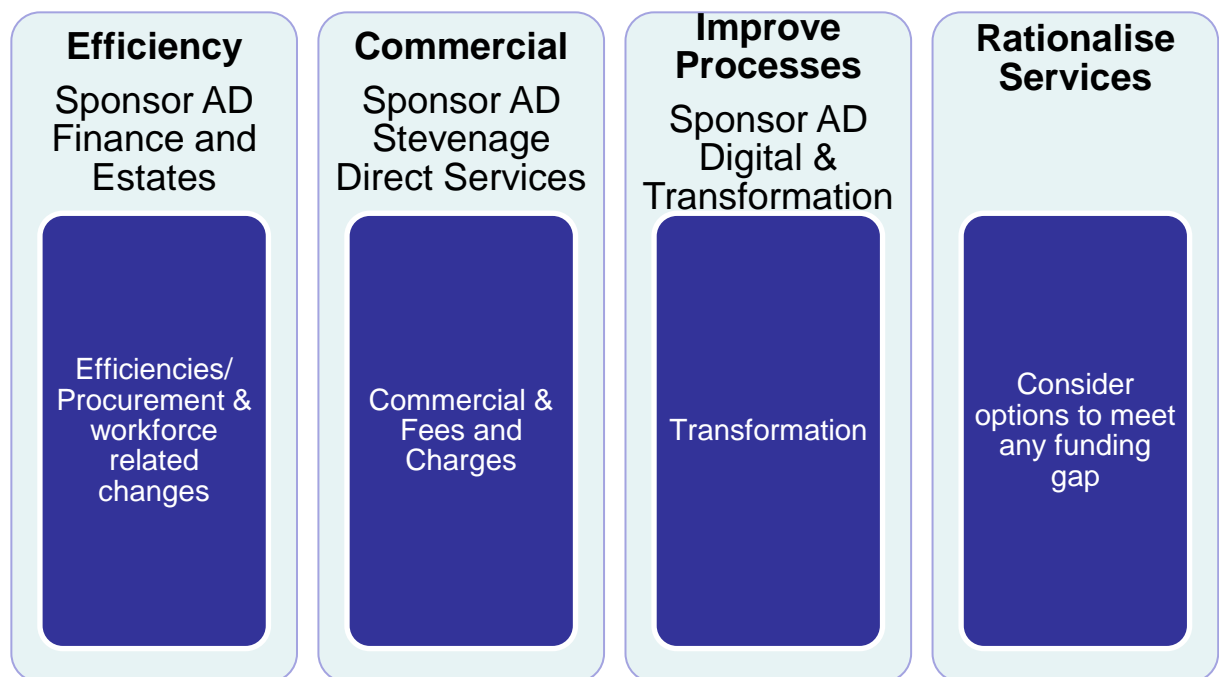


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

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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Agenda item: ###

Part I – Release to Press

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Resources
Date 10 March 2021



3RD QUARTER MONITORING REPORT GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE 2020/21

KEY DECISION

Authors Nick Penny / Keith Reynoldson
Contributor Finance Team and Budget managers
Lead Officers Nick Penny
Contact Officer Nick Penny

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Council undertakes a review of all revenue and associated budgets on a quarterly basis. This is the 3rd quarter monitoring report for 2020/21 and updates Members on the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projected 2020/21 net expenditure and seeks approval for the revisions to those budgets.
- 1.2 To update Members on the General Fund and HRA Financial Security options approved for 2020/21.
- 1.3 To update Members on the Council’s reserves and balances available to support revenue expenditure and to seek approval for revisions to the allocated reserves.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

General Fund

- 2.1 To approve the 2020/21 3rd quarter General Fund projected net decrease in expenditure of £157K as summarised in 4.4.4.
- 2.2 To note the progress of the 2020/21 approved savings, growth bids and carry forwards.
- 2.3 To approve the new carry forward requests of £40k as set out in paragraph 4.2.15.
- 2.4 To approve the transfer to the Income Equalisation Reserve of £8K as set out in paragraph 4.2.14.
- 2.5 To note the additional COVID losses and grants received as set out in section 4.4.

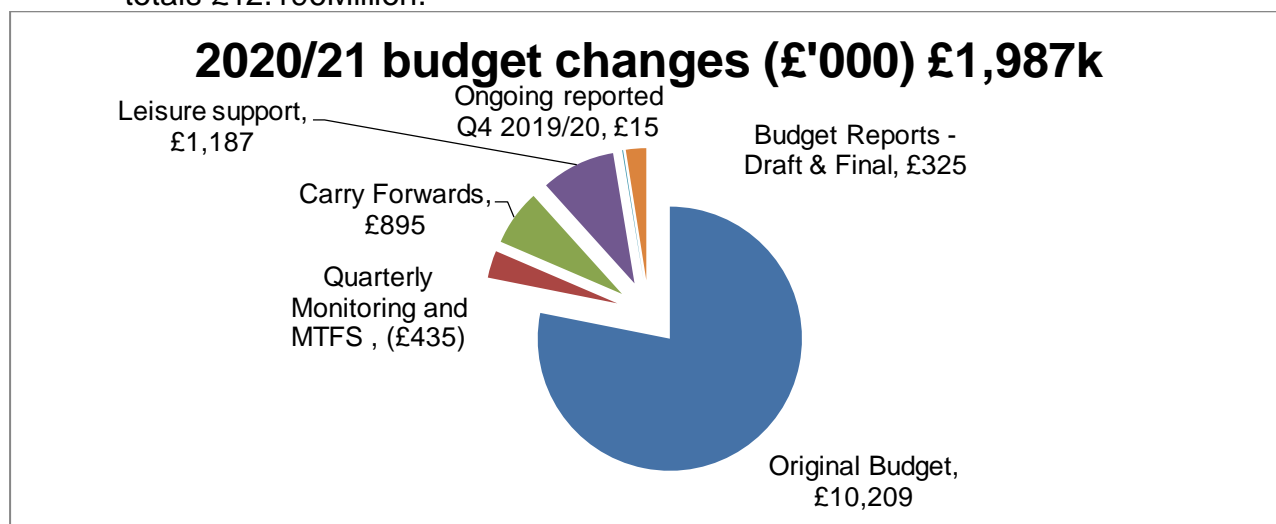
Housing Revenue Account

- 2.6 To approve the 2020/21 3rd quarter decrease in the net HRA surplus of £48K.
- 2.7 To note the progress of the 2020/21 approved savings, growth bids and carry forward requests.
- 2.8 To approve new carry forward requests of £834K as set in section 4.7.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 General Fund Working Budget

- 3.1.1 Since the 2020/21 General Fund net revenue budget of £10.2Million, (adjusted for S31 grants now shown in core resources), was approved by Council on 27 February 2020, Members have approved net budget increases of £1.987Million, (as summarised below). The approved working budget totals £12.196Million.

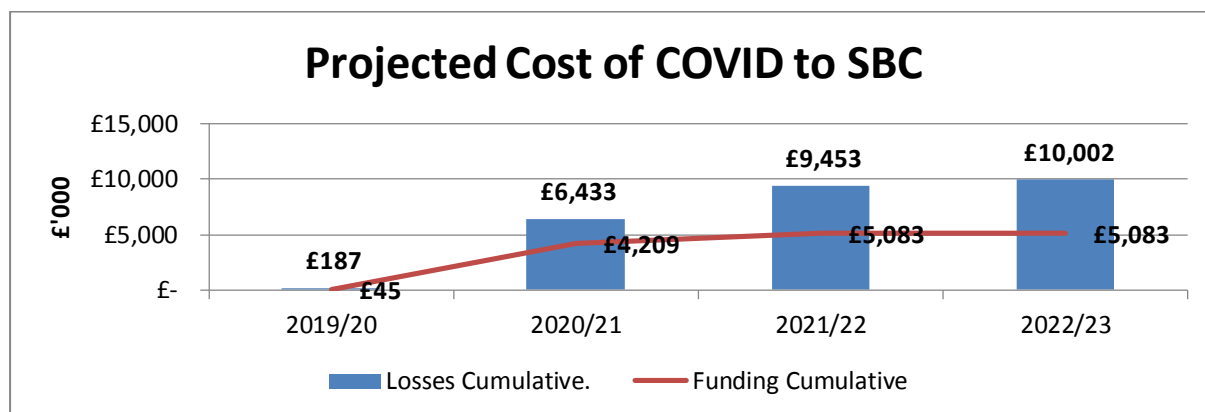


(£) indicates reduction in spend /increase in income

3.2 General Fund COVID Losses

3.2.1 The General Fund COVID losses arising from increased costs or income forgone was £6.246Million as reported to Council in February 2021. The losses for 2020/21 and mitigation to fund this is included in the budget adjustment above.

3.2.2 This report updates the level of losses based on projections taking into account the roadmap as set out by the Prime Minister in February 2021.



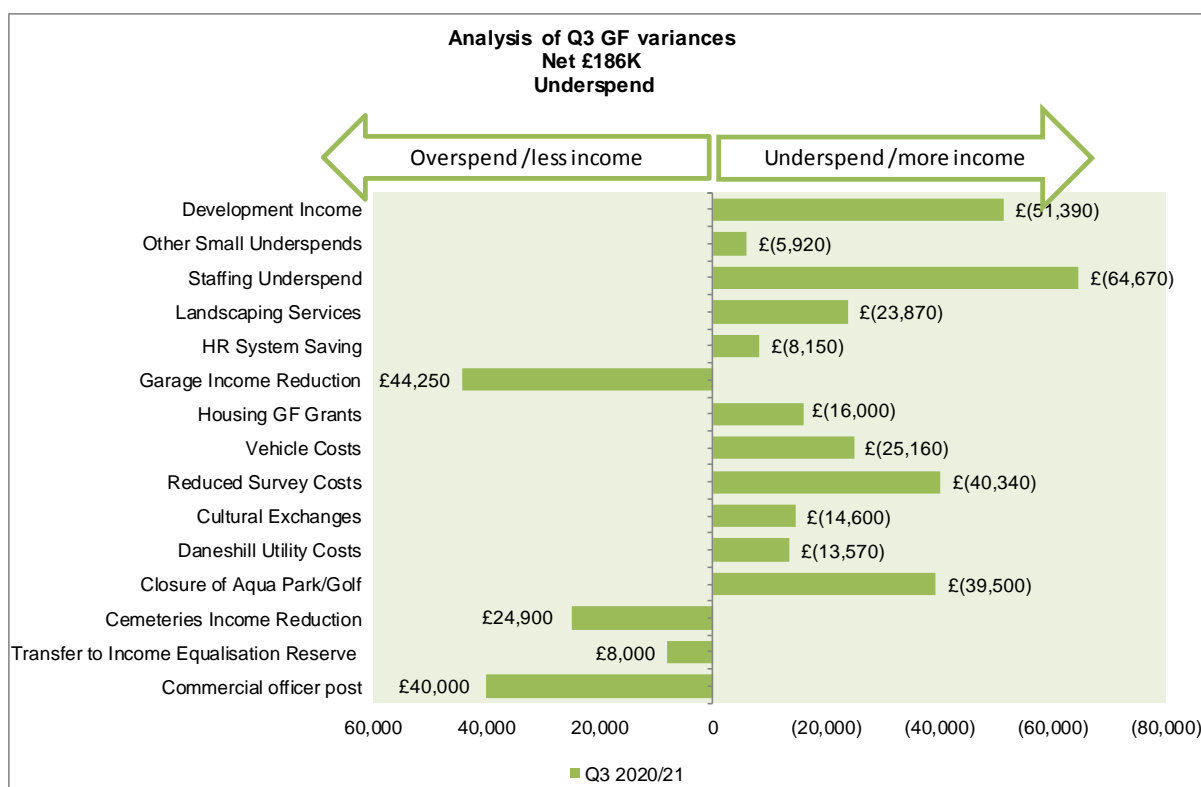
3.3 Housing Revenue Account Working Budget

3.3.1 The HRA net revenue budget of £3,417Million was approved at Council on 28 January 2020. Subsequently Members have approved 2020/21 budget changes of £171K. The approved working budget totals £3,246Million.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 General Fund – Budget Review (excluding COVID Losses)

4.1.1 As a result of the 3rd Quarter review of revenue budgets the following budget movements have been identified based on actual activity and the projected outturn for 2020/21. These movements are those that have arisen as result of general day to day operations and cost avoided/delayed income as a result of the COVID pandemic. The COVID related losses are covered in section 4.4 of this report. Below the table is an explanation of each movement:



(-) lower expenditure / more income

4.2 Explanation of Quarter 3 General Fund budget movements

- 4.2.1 Development Income – increased income of £51K. There has been an increase in monthly planning applications as well as an increase in the number of Majors applications which have been submitted which attract larger fees.
- 4.2.2 Other Small Underspends – net reduced expenditure of £6K. These are smaller net savings across General Fund Services.
- 4.2.3 Staffing Underspends – net reduced expenditure of £65K. Underspends have arisen due to vacancies across Emergency Planning, Strategic Improvement, Business Improvement, Stevenage Direct Services and Community and Neighbourhood Services, which is partially offset by salary cost pressures in Planning due to a post changing from fixed term to permanent and not meeting the Transitional Vacancy Factor in Finance and Estates.
- 4.2.4 Landscaping Services – increased income of £24K. This is combination of additional works carried out for Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) of £13K and the sale of old equipment generating £11K of income.
- 4.2.5 HR System Saving – reduced expenditure of £8K. This relates to delayed implementation of the new Health & Safety system that was brought into use

in December 2020, resulting in a part year saving on the annual licence cost for the period April 2020 – November 2020.

- 4.2.6 Garage Income Reduction – reduced income of £44K. Asbestos has been identified in a number of garages; there is reduced income while testing is being carried out.
- 4.2.7 Housing GF Grants – reduced expenditure of £16K. Budget is held in the event of extreme cold weather events, in order to help voluntary organisations provide temporary homeless shelters. Due to the pandemic and the Government's directive to find accommodation for all rough sleepers which has increased other budgets, this budget has not been required in year and effectively offsets part of the COVID overspend on homelessness and rough sleepers.
- 4.2.8 Vehicle Costs – reduced expenditure of £25K. This has arisen due to a combination of; a number of new vehicles within the SBC fleet resulting in lower spend on tyres; some of the older vehicles have been kept in use resulting in lower hire costs and fuel costs per litre being lower than anticipated in 2020/21.
- 4.2.9 Reduced Survey Costs – reduced expenditure of £40K. The Residential and Star surveys have been delayed till 2021/22. Provision has been made in 2021/22 already for this and the budgets should have been removed in 2020/21.
- 4.2.10 Cultural Exchanges – reduced expenditure £15K. Due to the Covid pandemic and restrictions on travel the town twinning events planned for 2020/21 have been cancelled this year.
- 4.2.11 Daneshill Utility Costs – reduced expenditure of £12K (GF share). Daneshill offices have had reduced occupancy while staff members work from home resulting in underspends on electricity and gas.
- 4.2.12 Closure of Aqua Park/Golf – reduced expenditure of £40K. The COVID pandemic has led to the temporary closure of the Golf/Aqua Park in line with restriction put in place through local and national lockdowns. This has reduced the amount SBC pays to SLL for operating these services.
- 4.2.13 Cemeteries Income Reduction – decreased income of £25K. The volume of ashes interment and memorials are down on previous financial years. The budget is demand led and therefore can fluctuate, the income equalisation reserve set up for 2021/22 would be able to offset year on year fluctuations. There may also be an impact on the level of burials and internments due to current restrictions.
- 4.2.14 The Leader has requested that a review is undertaken on the bulky waste charging regime, this was also raised by other councillors and as a result a trial is starting from the 11 March for six months to see if an offer for three items at £45 (no electricals) would have a better take up than a fixed fee of

£75 for six items. In the event that the trial reduces the level of income for the bulky waste service the CFO recommends a sum of £8K is transferred to the income equalisation reserve. Following the conclusion of the pilot a revised offer will be brought back to Members to approve.

4.2.15 As a result of the Quarter 3 underspends, a carry forward of £40K is requested to fund the Commercial Officer post (from one off underspends in salaries in the Stevenage Direct Business Unit), to support the commercial and insourcing agenda in advance of the growth bid being approved for 2021/22.

4.2.16 There is also an underspend on the costs funded from the SG1 Regeneration allocated reserve of £148K, this has been returned to the allocated reserve and therefore has a nil impact on the General Fund, but increases the reserve balances.

4.3 GF Financial Security Options and growth proposals approved for 2020/21

4.3.1 As part of the 2020/21 budget setting process GF financial security savings of £847K were identified. At the 3rd quarter £716K are on track to be achieved and £131K are not expected to be met in the current year. The undelivered savings are:

- £42K of income foregone on fees and charges due to the impact of COVID.
- £19K relating to charging staff for parking season tickets due to the majority of the workforce being home based for the duration of the year.
- £22K for fee increase at Corey's Mill over and above the amounts set out in the fees and charges schedule.
- £10K relating to a review of parking business concessions which has been delayed.

4.3.2 The other significant undeliverable savings include:

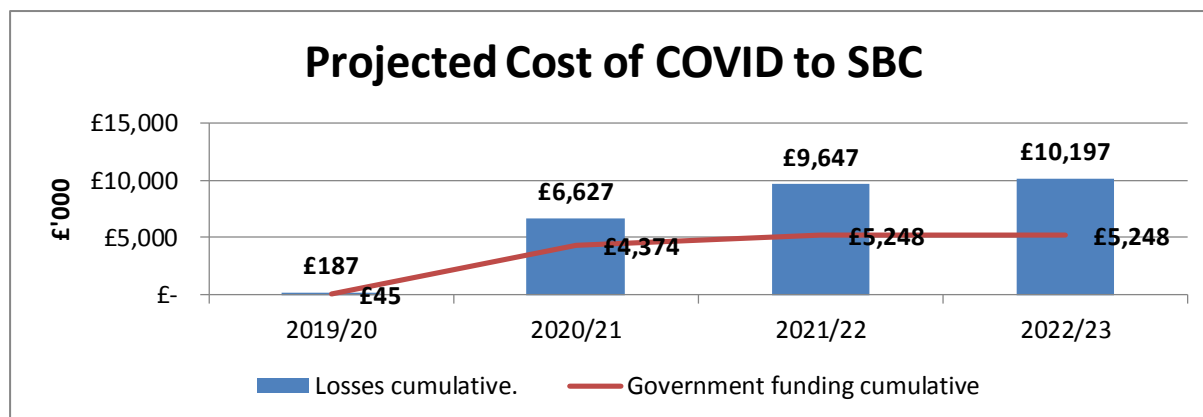
- £15K for a Service Level agreement between the Council and the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) which will be implemented in 2021/22
- £8K further income from cemeteries over and above fees and charges increases.
- The remaining £15K relates to small variances on savings.

4.4 COVID Losses

4.4.1 The projected COVID losses for 2020/21 as at Quarter 3 are £6.627Million (see table below). Since the COVID losses (detailed in 3.2.1) were reported to the Executive in February, the projected losses have increased by £194K of which £165K relates to lower parking income projection due to the first ease in restrictions being 12 April 2021. Officers have still to review the impact on 2021/22.

4.4.2 Projected COVID funding has increased by £166K which is due to:

- Increase in Income guarantee scheme funding due to increase income losses now projected £113K.
- Housing Benefit one off increase for COVID in admin subsidy £27K.
- Track and Trace admin costs for COVID £26K.



4.4.3 The table below shows the funding provided to SBC in 2020/21 relating to COVID:

2020/21 Funding for COVID	Grant	Grant
	Received	Projected
Tranche two	£871,563	
Tranche three	£159,421	
Tranche four	£391,055	
Rough Sleepers	£11,250	
New burdens grant administration	£130,000	
New burdens grant	£25,580	
New burdens grant	£23,028	
COVID Marshals	£45,300	
Income Guarantee	£812,775	£ 1,610,307
New Test and Trace		£26,298
New Burdens Housing Benefit subsidy		£26,989
NDR losses income guarantee		£195,389
Total	£2,469,972	£1,858,983
Grant Total		£4,328,955

4.4.4 The revised General fund budget position is summarised below and all of the Quarter 3 movements are in year improvements only.

Summary of 2020/21 budget movements		£
Quarter 3 Budget		12,196,410
Quarter 3 movements		(£186,020)
Adjustment for Net COVID Losses		28,660
Total movements		(£157,360)
Updated Quarter 3 Working Budget		12,039,050

4.5 Review of General Fund Balances

4.5.1 **Allocated Reserves** - Some balances are 'ring fenced' and have been set aside for specific purposes. The estimated total value of (revenue) allocated reserves available for the Council to spend at 31 March 2021 is £12.343Million of which £8.396Million are due to the Section 31 business rates grant which is to be repaid in 2021/22. The changes from the February budget report are shaded below and relate to the reserve changes detailed in 4.2.14 and 4.2.16.

Movements to/from Allocated Reserves £'000			
Allocated Reserve	Balance as at 1 April 2020	Anticipated transfer to/from reserves	Forecast balance as at 31 March 2021
New Homes Bonus	(£630)	£169	(£461)
Business Rates Reserve	(£1,235)	(£680)	(£1,915)
Business Rates Reserve S31 grants	£0	(£8,396)	(£8,396)
Regeneration Assets	(£1,122)	£660	(£462)
Insurance Reserve	(£103)	£35	(£68)
Regeneration Fund (SG1)	(£826)	£81	(£745)
Town Centre	(£34)	£0	(£34)
Transformation Reserve	(£60)	£0	(£60)
Planning Delivery Grant	(£40)	£40	£0
Income equalisation reserve	£0	£0	£0
Rough Sleeper & Homeless reserve	(£347)	£154	(£193)
Income equalisation Reserve	£0	(£8)	(£8)
Total	(£4,398)	(£7,945)	(£12,343)

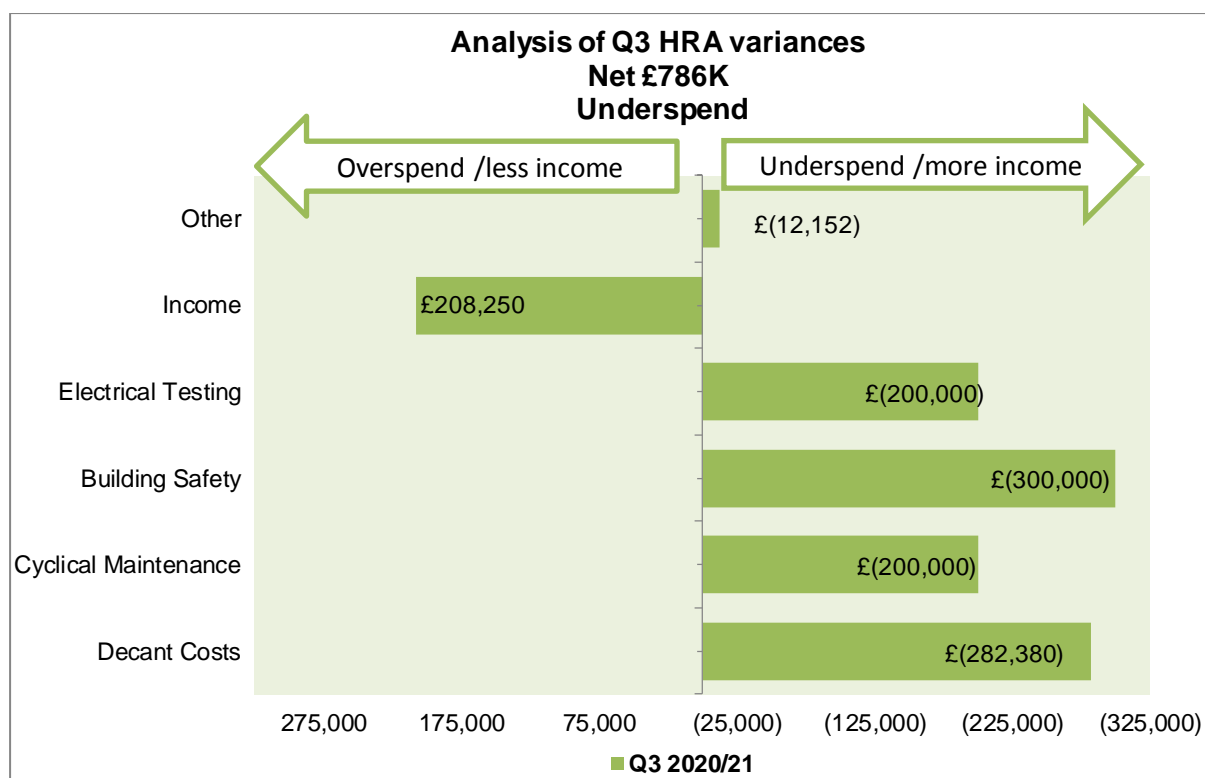
4.5.2 General Fund Balance – Following the 3rd quarter review and GF Budget report to February Executive the General Fund balance as at the 31 March 2021 is now forecast to be **£4.678Million**.

Balances £'000	2020/21
Revised Balances at 31 March each Year:	(£6,930)
use of balances	£2,252
General fund Balance 1 March	(£4,678)
Minimum	(£2,920)

4.6 Housing Revenue Account – Budget review

4.6.1 The 3rd quarter monitoring position for the HRA is unspent budget of £786K. However, there are requests to carry forward unspent budgets totalling £834K into 2021/22 which means that the net change in HRA balances is a decrease in balances of £48K.

4.6.2 Pressures and savings identified during the 3rd quarter are summarised in the graph below.



4.6.3 **Decant Costs** – £282K expenditure not incurred. This expenditure relates to the cost of decanting tenants to allow for the redevelopment of the Kenilworth site. However the program has slipped due to COVID delays which mean the cost will not be incurred in 2020/21, a carry forward request

has been made for this amount, as the funds will be needed in 2021/22 to complete the redevelopment.

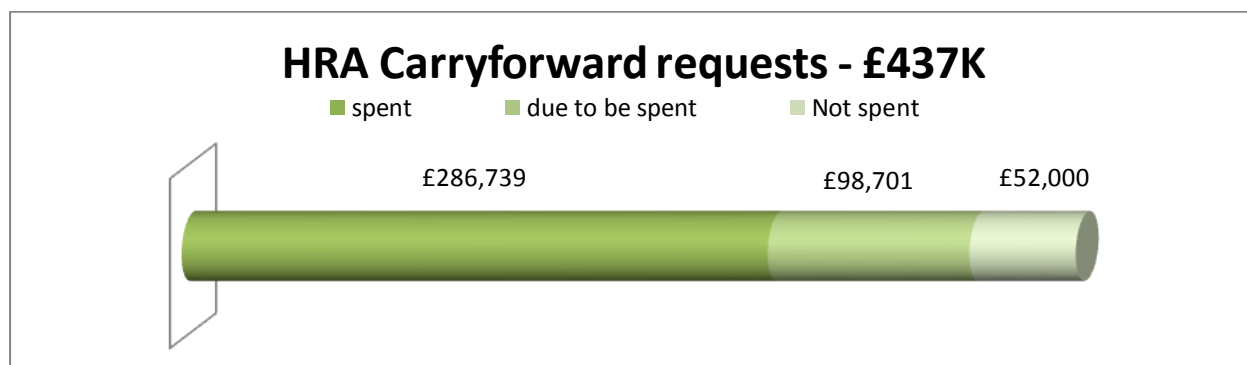
- 4.6.4 **Cyclical Maintenance** – £200K expenditure not incurred. As part of the 2019/20 HRA business plan review a budget to cover the costs of cyclical repairs (items like gutter maintenance, exterior painting etc.) was included in the 30 year plan. Due to the pandemic, the implementation of the new programme has been delayed and has led to a projected underspend in this year. A further £200K budget is available in 2021/22 therefore no carry forward request is required for this item.
- 4.6.5 **Building Safety** – £300K expenditure not incurred. Work has begun on sprinkler systems and lifts to ensure SBC buildings are in line with new building and fire safety regulations introduced in the wake of the Grenfell fire. However, funding was also budgeted to meet expected legislative requirements from the national building safety review. The implementation of this legislation was later in the year than expected and therefore the impact of this is there will not be time to spend the entire budget in 2020/21. A request is being made to carry forward the unspent budget for use in 2021/22, when the impact of the regulation changes will need to be met.
- 4.6.6 **Electrical Testing** – £200K expenditure not incurred. The COVID pandemic has meant works have been curtailed in line with the National guidance during lockdowns. This has resulted in unspent budget of £200K in 2020/21, however there will be a recovery programme put in place when COVID restrictions ease and it is requested that this budget is carried forward to next year to fund this.
- 4.6.7 **Income** - £123K reduced income. Rent projections indicate an in year pressure against the current budget. The largest driver of this has been void losses with works to convert properties to temporary accommodation and difficult to let properties in the independent living schemes.
- 4.6.8 **Other** – £12K net underspend. There are net other projected variances included in this area is an under spend of £52K for project design fees in Housing Development. It is requested that this budget is carried forward to be used on future project design in the next financial year.

Repairs and Voids

- 4.6.9 **Income** – £493K income shortfall. There is a shortfall in trading income due to lockdown restrictions during 2020/21 and operatives shielding. Currently only emergency and urgent works are being carried out and the time taken on each job has increased in order to minimise risk to customers and staff. Demand for ad hoc repairs also fell during the first half of the year, as customers were cautious in allowing operatives into their homes.
- 4.6.10 **Repairs and Voids net cost to the HRA** - £493K increased cost. As a result of the fall in income outlined above, the net cost of the service to the HRA has increased. This is offset in the HRA by reduced repairs costs (offsetting the impact on the HRA).
- 4.6.11 **Other** – £4K expenditure. There were net other variances identified at quarter 3.

4.7 Approved Carry forwards 2019/20 (HRA)

4.7.1 Members approved HRA carry forward budgets totalling £437K.



4.7.2 Overall, £287K of the total £437K has been spent by quarter 3, with a further £99K expected to be spent by the year end. The £287K spend has mainly been on the transformation programme.

4.7.3 At Q3 there are no planned returns to HRA balances, but £52K for housing development consultancy costs will form part of a further carry forward request to match the timing of development schemes.

4.8 HRA Financial Security Options and growth proposals approved for 2020/21

4.8.1 As part of the 2020/21 budget setting process financial security savings of £400K were identified. At the 3rd quarter £162K are on schedule to be achieved and £238K are not expected to be met in the current year. The reduction in savings mainly relates to delayed delivery, with the largest variance being the reconfiguration of the housing repairs function (£101K), which is currently ongoing and will be a saving in 2021/22-2022/23.

4.9 2020/21 HRA Outturn position

4.9.1 Following the 3rd quarter review the HRA balance as at 31 March 2021 is projected to be **£23.851Million** as detailed in the table below.

Housing Revenue Account Out-turn Position	£
Working Budget	(3,245,670)
3rd Quarter Net Projected Pressure	48,100
3rd Quarter Carry Forward	(834,380)
Projected net Surplus post 3rd Quarter review	(4,031,950)
HRA balance brought forward 1/4/20	(19,819,411)
Surplus in year	(4,031,950)
Projected HRA balance 31/3/21	(23,851,361)

4.10 2021/22 HRA Budget

4.10.1 The 3rd quarter budget review has not identified additional ongoing budget pressures or savings. However, there are several areas that will be reviewed before the year end to ensure that ongoing budget impacts are included in future reports.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included above.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The objective of this report is to outline the projected General Fund net expenditure for 2020/21 and the impact on the General Fund balances. While there are no legal consequences at this stage Members are reminded of their duty to set a balanced budget.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 This report summarises external and internal factors that impact on approved budgets and recommends changes to those budgets in year. Budget changes identified for future years that could adversely impact on groups covered by statutory equality duties will be incorporated into the budget setting process which includes Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). None of the budget changes reported will change any existing equalities and diversity policies.

5.3.2 The service department has been asked to look at the equalities and diversity implications in the increase in void re-let times and any potential impact on protected groups.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 A risk based assessment of General Fund balances is undertaken and reported to Council as part of the General Fund Budget setting process. The required level of 2020/21 General Fund balances was calculated at £2.920Million. This report forecasts General Fund balances of £4.678Million which is above the minimum balances required.

5.5 Policy Implications

5s.5.1 The budget framework represents a development of a policy led budgeting approach across Council services and the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.6 Climate Change Implications

5.6.1 The Budget and Policy setting process prioritised growth for climate change as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process. The 2020/21 process should have

due regard for climate change implications based on the Council's Climate Change Strategy. There are no direct climate change implications from the budget changes in this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

BD1 – 2021/22 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Budget (Council 24th February 2021)

BD2 – 2021/22 HRA Final Budget (Council 28th January 2021)

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Meeting: EXECUTIVE

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: Resources

Date: 10 March 2021

QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORT (CAPITAL) - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT



KEY DECISION

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Finance team and budget managers
Lead Officer Nick Penny
Contact Officer Nick Penny

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Council's 2020/21 and 2021/22 capital programme.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the revisions to the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the 2020/21 General Fund capital programme net decrease in expenditure of £750K be approved, as summarised in table one and detailed in section 4.2.
- 2.2 That the £232K growth for additional investment in Vehicles be approved and added to the capital programme for 2021/22 as detailed in paragraph 4.2.3.
- 2.3 That the 2021/22 General Fund capital programme net increase in expenditure of £782K be approved (including the above growth), as summarised in table one and detailed in section 4.2.
- 2.3 That the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account capital programme slippage of £4.838Million be approved, as summarised in table six, section 4.6 refers.
- 2.4 That the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account capital programme net increase in expenditure of £4.487Million be approved, as summarised in table six, three, section 4.6 refers.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The latest 2020/21 capital programme was approved at Council on 24 February 2021. The 2020/21 approved budget for each fund was:

- General Fund £20.878Million
- Housing Revenue Account £31.600Million

3.2 This report provides an update on the programme and includes revisions to the programme that were not available/ known at the time of writing the Capital Strategy report to the February Executive.

3.3 There has been slippage reported as part of the Capital Strategy and also included within this report that has been exacerbated by COVID in the commissioning and completion of works.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 2020/21 and 2021/22 General Fund (GF) Capital Programme Summary

4.1.1. The updated projected spend for the 2020/21 General Fund capital programme at Quarter 3 is £20.128Million, this is a decrease of £0.750Million, with a corresponding increase of £0.782Million for 2021/22 giving a £18.182Million programme. This is shown by programme in table one below:

Table 1: General Fund	2020/2021			2021/2022		
General Fund Capital Programme 2020-22	Final Capital Strategy £	Q3 Revised Budget £	Final Budget v Q3 £	Final Capital Strategy £	Q3 Revised Budget £	Final Budget v Q3 £
Stevenage Direct Services	1,434,140	1,397,140	(37,000)	3,612,970	3,775,820	162,850
Housing Development	2,177,640	2,177,640	0	7,003,669	7,003,669	0
Finance and Estates	1,078,820	948,870	(129,950)	1,640,040	1,758,130	118,090
Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology	1,068,050	641,280	(426,770)	369,530	796,300	426,770
Regeneration	14,586,260	14,586,260	0	3,900,000	3,900,000	0
Communities and Neighbourhoods	393,800	240,300	(153,500)	321,361	381,361	60,000
Planning and Regulatory	86,130	71,960	(14,170)	352,160	366,330	14,170
Deferred Works Reserve	53,000	64,860	11,860	200,000	200,000	0
Programme Total	20,877,840	20,128,310	(749,530)	17,399,730	18,181,610	781,880

(£) indicates reduction in spend /increase in income

4.2 2020/21 and 2021/22 GF Movement in Budget Since the Final Capital Strategy

4.2.1 **Stevenage Direct Services** capital spend overall has reduced by £37K due to slippage on Hertford Road Play Area (£25K) and the welfare improvements at out based hubs (£10K). The latter relates to the saving option to cease the use of the yellow site huts and the budget will be spent in 2021/22 and £2K on plant and Equipment.

4.2.2 However overall there is growth in the Stevenage Direct Services capital programme for future years. As part of quarterly review three vehicles require replacement in 2021/22 at a cost of £232K in 2021/22. This is partly due to lead-in times of ordering vehicles and the need to replace tractors has been recommended. There is a further re-profiling of vehicle/plant replacement programme expenditure planned for 2021/22 which will now be deferred for 2022/23 (£146K) to mitigate part of the increased cost in 2021/22 of the vehicles below.

Table 2 Additional vehicles	2021/22	Commentary
Replacement for LN09 PLU Refuse Vehicle	166,852	8 month lead-in time. £4k-£5k trade-in value for larger vehicle not being used . The intention had been not to replace as the service review would reduce numbers. However, the requirement timescales for a full round review alongside housing growth mean a replacement is now needed to ensure current service delivery.
Tractor replacements for JCB 2X & F589FUD	65,000	Tractors with a loader for flexibility, replace 3 old with 2 new vehicles. 3-4 month lead-in time. Life span have been pushed back on review but they are now required to be renewed.
Total Requested	231,852	

4.2.3 In addition to the vehicle growth in 2021/22 there is also slippage brought forward from 2022/23 for Green Space Access Infrastructure project requested to be spent in 2021/22,(£40K).

4.2.4 **Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Technology** -planned expenditure on IT projects has been slipped to 2021/22 due to the focus in 2020/21 on the Network Replacement Project, Microwave Link, VDI and Microsoft 365 (£359K). A further £10K of planned expenditure on the Corporate Website Redesign (£10K) and expenditure on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technology (£58K) will also now be spent in 2021/22.

4.2.5 **Finance and Estates**-there is a 2020/21 slippage on the programme into 2021/22, some of these works have been impacted by COVID and are:

- Depot expenditure (£65K)
- Business and Technology Centre (BTC) (£48K)
- Community Centre Health and Safety works (£5K) of now taking place during 2021/22.

4.2.6 In addition to the slippage in 2020/21 there are a number of under and over spends. The biggest underspend relates to the boiler works at Bedwell Community Centre boiler works which were £20K less than estimated as a result of an alternative solution implemented, which restored the heating system to working order without full replacement.

There are other Finance and Estates projected net overspends of £8.9K which relates to:

- Underspend on 2020/21 health and safety works at Community Centres (£10K)
- Small overspend on St Nicholas centre boiler (£2.9K)
- Small overspend on Springfield house wall (£2K)
- Underspend on the Town Hall Ramp (£6K).
- Cabling works at the Council offices were £20K overspent on the £45K budget. However £20K was given up at budget setting which was done in error.

4.2.7 **Communities and Neighbourhoods** – there is slippage from 2020/21 into 2021/22 on the Arts and Leisure Centre (£30K) for the pipework replacement project and on new equipment installation at Pin Green Play Centre (£18K) and the boathouse and Fairlands Valley Park (£12K).

4.2.8 There is also re-profiled slippage for the cost of replacing the distribution board at the Leisure Centre, this was in 2020/21 but has been now planned for 2023/24 (£45K).

4.2.9 The health and safety works required at SALC, Swim Centre, and Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre have cost £49K less than previously budgeted for. Generally some of these health and safety works initially identified have been completed under other repair and maintenance regimes including compliance works.

4.2.10 **Planning and Regulatory Services** -expenditure on town centre ramp improvements is projected to be £9.8K lower than budgeted with a further £10K of the budget now anticipated to be spent in 2021/22. There is also £4K of expenditure relating to electrical charging points deferred to 2021/22.

4.2.11 The cost of the parking enforcement scheme in the Old Town was budgeted at £10.7K but this now projected to be £16.8K. The implementation of a parking permit area came after a longer consultation exercise, resulting in higher costs for staff time and postage than originally anticipated. The cost of the contract for the supply and installation of signage was higher than the original budgeted for. The resulting £6k overspend has been offset by underspends in other engineering budgets.”

4.2.12 **Deferred Works Budget** – This budget is used to address unforeseen works and as a result of the under spends in 2020/21. A small increase of £12K has been added to the budget. If this budget is underspent in 2020/21 it can be used in 2021/22 to fund any pressures particularly any of the growth bids not approved at budget setting or growth removed to balance the Capital Strategy.

4.2.13 A summary of the changes to the capital programme are shown in table three below and 86% of the reduction in 2020/21 relates to slippage with the remaining 14% as a result of net underspends.

Table 3: Programme Movement by Type			
General Fund Capital	2020/21 Q3 Revised Budget £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
Slippage in later years	(£645,940)	(£106,000)	£0
Slippage in future years	£0	£645,940	£106,000
Underspends	(£138,950)	£0	£0
Overspends	£35,360	£10,090	£0
Growth	£0	£231,850	£0
Total Programme	(£749,530)	£781,880	£106,000

(£) indicates reduction in spend /increase in income

4.2.14 The additional growth and reported underspends for 2020/21-2021/22 total £138,350 in this report and therefore are within the £250,000 delegated to the Executive to approve for schemes which can be funded within existing capital resources.

4.3 Capital Resources General Fund

4.3.1 Capital Receipts from disposals for the current and future years have been reviewed and have increased by £27K due to an increase in adhoc minor sales.

Table four: Disposal Schedule (General Fund)	February Final Budget £'s	Q3 Revised Budget £'s	Variance £'s
Total 20/21 Capital Receipts Estimate	(2,433,759)	(2,460,759)	(27,000)
Total 21/22 Capital Receipts Estimate	(5,185,480)	(5,185,480)	0
Total 22/23 Capital Receipts Estimate	(5,327,040)	(5,327,040)	0
Total 23/24 Capital Receipts Estimate	(23,556,500)	(23,556,500)	0
Total 24/25 Capital Receipts Estimate	(13,384,000)	(13,384,000)	0
Major Capital Receipts Programme	(49,886,779)	(49,913,779)	(27,000)

4.3.2 The Locality review receipts forecast remains unchanged since the February 2021 Council Final Capital Strategy. The total value of receipts expected from disposals between 2021/22 and 2023/24 is £4.459Million with £474K required for 2021/22.

4.3.3 The current capital strategy also includes the use of Section 106 (S106) monies to support current and future capital schemes, this position is also unchanged.

Table Five: S106 Update					
S106 balance	Total Available	2020/21 Forecast	remaining	Future Years Forecast	remaining
	£	£	£	£	£
Affordable Housing	62,091		62,091	62,091	-
Children's Playspace / open space	27,867	27,867	-	-	-
Community / Greenspace / Ecological Infrastructure	70,338		70,338	70,338	-
Parking / Transport	156,189	8,191	147,998		147,998
Gardening Club	4,576		4,576		4,576
Arboretum	25,420	25,420	-		-
Biodiversity Net Gain	45,867		45,867		45,867
Pedestrian Link	35,000		35,000		35,000
Household Surveys	15,990		15,990		15,990
Total	443,337	61,479	381,859	132,429	249,430

4.3.4 Prudential borrowing required to support the Capital programme will be a treasury management decision as to when the external borrowing is actually taken. As per the Treasury Management Strategy, while cash balances are high and rates for borrowing are significantly higher than interest earned on balances, internal borrowing will be used.

4.4 2020/21 and 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Programme Summary

4.4.1 The updated projection for the 2020/21 HRA capital programme is £26.762Million a budget decrease of £4.838Million on the position presented as part of the Final Capital Strategy report to February Council. There is an increased budget requirement of £4.487Million in 2021/22.

Table six : HRA Capital Programme	2020/21			2021/2022		
Scheme	February Final Capital Strategy £	Q3 Revised Budget £	Capital Strategy Budget v Q3 £	February Final Capital Strategy £	Q3 Revised Budget £	Capital Strategy Budget v Q3 £
Capital Programme Excluding New Build Special Projects & Equipment	20,569,980	16,511,080	(4,058,900)	21,822,260	25,881,160	4,058,900
New Build (Housing Development)	149,500	149,500		25,000	25,000	
IT Including Digital Agenda	9,958,901	9,608,901	(350,000)	30,177,240	30,176,560	(680)
TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME	31,600,401	26,762,462	(4,837,940)	52,487,550	56,974,810	4,487,260

4.5 2020/21 and 2021/22 HRA Movement in Budget Since the Final Capital Strategy

4.5.1 The majority of the decrease to the budget in 2020/21 relates to slippage on the capital programme for workings to the existing stock. This is largely due to the impact of Covid restrictions, where works have been halted due to the National restrictions, works are now due for completion in 2021/22. The projections were not completed until after the Capital Strategy had been published for the February Executive.

Schemes	2020/21	2020/21 (Revised)	Slippage
Decent Homes - Internal/External Works	£1,200,000	£730,000	(£470,000)
Decent Homes - Flat Blocks	£12,834,650	£11,834,650	(£1,000,000)
Communal Heating	£1,881,560	£650,000	(£1,231,560)
Lift Installation	£741,550	£450,000	(£291,550)
Sprinkler Systems - Flat Blocks	£421,640	£150,000	(£271,640)
Asbestos Management	£375,250	£250,000	(£125,250)
Contingent Major Repairs	£549,670	£300,000	(£249,670)
Asset Review - Challenging Assets	£569,230	£150,000	(£419,230)
Total	£18,573,550	£14,514,650	(£4,058,900)

- 4.5.2 Slippage of £350K is projected for the New Development budget, however this represents 3.5% of the overall budget of £9.9Million and is across a number of schemes.
- 4.5.3 The HRA share of Council ICT costs has also been re-profiled into 2021/22 as set out in paragraph 4.2.4. A further £36.7K relating to the FTFC programme 'Excellent Homes for Life' is reported of which £28K is slippage on the On-Line Housing Application Form project.

4.6 Capital Resources Housing Revenue Account

- 4.6.1 The HRA had 13 Right to Buy (RTB) sales by the end of the third quarter (28 RTB sales by the same point last year). The forecast for the year remains unchanged at 27 sales on the basis of expressions of interest, and a further 4 sales have taken place to date in quarter 4 bringing the current total to 17.
- 4.6.2 The HRA capital funding resources have been re profiled for the current year with the use of Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) (£3.2Million) replacing the use of Section 20 contributions, that should have been re-profiled in later years reflecting the expenditure on the Major Repairs Contract.
- 4.6.3 The slippage in 2020/21 HRA spend (£4.1Million) from 2020/21 to 2021/22, has reduced the amount of borrowing required in 2020/21 and £2.9Million of the loans are projected to be taken in 2021/22.
- 4.6.4 The total amount of HRA borrowing remains unchanged for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25 (£78.0Million). However the physical taking of loans versus internal borrowing is a treasury management decision, as to when the external borrowing is actually taken.
- 4.6.5 Capital resources unused at year end relate to the MRR reserve of £15Million and restricted use 1-4-1 receipts (£9.8Million), the latter monies can only apply 30% to the cost of any one new build property. The MRR and 1.4.1 receipts are planned to be fully utilised in the HRA Business Plan.

4.7 Update on Other HRA Schemes

- 4.7.1 The Decent Homes programme forms a large part of the ongoing investment programme of the HRA. The number of properties where works have been carried out to bring the property up to the decent homes standard (the standard by which each element i.e. kitchen, bathroom, electrics, windows, roof etc. condition is measured) in 2020/21 is 271 to the end of December, against an in year target of 327 to the same period. The target for the year remains at 557 properties in total for 2020/21. Due to COVID restrictions only essential works are being carried out within the housing stock which has had an impact on hitting the target for this financial year. If restrictions are lifted by the new financial year, the service is looking to make up for the shortfall this year.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included in the above.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 None identified at this time.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 This report is of a technical nature reflecting the projected spend for the year for the General Fund and HRA capital programme. None of the budget changes reported will change any existing equalities and diversity policies and it is not expected that these budget changes will impact on any groups covered by statutory equalities duties.

5.3.2 Schemes contained within the capital programme will have an EQIA particularly those relating to housing schemes.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 The significant risks associated with the capital strategy are largely inherent within this report.

5.4.2 If the Housing & Investment team's procurement of HRA contracts is delayed it could lead to works not being completed in line with the current profile.

5.4.3 A significant risk exists that works deferred due to lack of funding become urgent in year, requiring completion on grounds of health and safety. A reasonable assessment has been made in the prioritisation process to try to keep this risk to a minimum, and these schemes are monitored by the Assets and Capital Board. There is a £200K Deferred Works budget held for such items in the budget each year.

5.4.4 There is a risk in achieving the level of qualifying spend, including Grants to Registered Providers, to fully utilise retained one for one receipts. Should qualifying schemes slip or new schemes fail to be developed the three year deadline for spending these receipts will not be met and will have to be returned to the Government plus interest (base rate plus 4%).

5.4.5 The level of receipts for the General Fund is a significant source of funding for its capital programme. There are risks around achieving the level of disposals budgeted for which is critical in 2021/22 as the programme relies on a couple of significant receipts. The Council manages this risk by reviewing and updating the Strategy quarterly, including resources where a sale is likely to complete and enabling action to be taken where a receipt looks doubtful.

- 5.4.6 The Council must keep the Strategy under review, which may be impacted by COVID losses and the need to put spend on hold as in 2020/21 budgets.
- 5.4.7 There are risks around achieving the level of Locality Review Receipts budgeted for, which are required to replace NHB funding and contributions from Revenue underspends.

5.5 Climate Change Implications

- 5.5.1 The council's buildings across the town do not meet the climate change agenda in terms of energy efficiency or divestment of use of fossil fuels and in their current condition they would undermine the Council's carbon zero by 2030 target.
- 5.5.2 There is an opportunity with the local asset review agenda to have design principles built into renewed assets in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources. This should be a core principle of any future designs arising from the local asset reviews. There would be a further benefit of reduced energy costs.
- 5.5.3 The climate change agenda is far wider than just the buildings the Council uses, the Council are also examining the vehicle fleet the Council uses and consideration will be given to reducing the carbon impact of the fleet moving forward.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- BD1 – FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2020/21-2024/25

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