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Daneshill House
Danestrete
Stevenage
Hertfordshire

20 January 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a Special meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held virtually via Zoom on Thursday, 28 January 2021 at 7.00pm and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Partridge
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 16 DECEMBER 2020

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16 December 2020.

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3. REPORT REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FINAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/2022 AND RENT SETTING

The officer report (attached as item 3) on the Housing Revenue Account Final Budget Proposals 2021/2022 and Rent-Setting is to be considered by the Executive on 20 January 2021. The Executive's recommendations to Council will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 16 December 2020

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Mayor), Michelle Gardner (Deputy Mayor), Sandra Barr, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Adrian Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Laurie Chester, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Jody Hanafin, Liz Harrington, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Graham Lawrence, Mrs Joan Lloyd, John Lloyd, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, Lin Martin-Haugh, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas, Rob Broom and Tom Wren.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 7.00pm
End Time: 9.47pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doug Bainbridge, Dave Cullen, Lizzy Kelly and John Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 14 OCTOBER 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 October 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor began by thanking all those involved in the local festive toppers on postboxes campaign, the proceeds of which would be donated to his chosen charities for the year.

The Mayor announced the winners of his Christmas Card Design competition, and thanked all of the schools who had participated.

The Mayor informed the Council of the activities and events he had been involved in over the past two months, including:

- Two further visits to schools during Local Democracy Week;
- The Haven quiz;
- Photo shoot to launch the Stevenage Heritage Map;

- The virtual Pride of Stevenage Awards ceremony;
- Sport Stevenage AGM;
- Welcoming Rev. Karen Mitchell to St. Andrew and St. George Church;
- Opening a new bakery in the Indoor Market;
- Unveiling of a plaque commemorating the 125th Anniversary of an elected Local Council for Stevenage;
- Virtual Half Marathon around Stevenage;
- Remembrance Sunday;
- Knebworth House Trustees AGM;
- Switching on of the Christmas Lights in Town Square;
- Bus User Group AGM;
- Collection of 570 presents from Glaxo Smith Klein and Bioscience Catalyst donated to the Christmas Tree Giving Appeal;
- A Christmas message / appeal for donations to the Stevenage Food Bank; and
- Shimkent 30th anniversary of Town twinning book launch.

The Mayor gave his commitment to receiving the Covid-19 vaccination when invited to do so by the Health authorities.

The Mayor concluded by urging everyone to take care over the festive period and to continue to abide by the Covid-19 guidelines. He wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful, healthy New Year.

4 MAIN DEBATE

There was no Main Debate.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no petitions and deputations.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Council received six questions from the Youth Council. The responses to the six questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

In relation to Question (A), concerning Council support given to homeless people during lockdowns 1 and 2, the Youth Mayor asked the following supplementary question:

“Was the Council accepting donations for the homeless and, if so, which donations would be appreciated?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People replied that the Council currently had no way of accepting such donations, but that she would discuss the matter with officers in the Housing Team and respond to the Youth Mayor in due course.

No supplementary questions were asked in respect of Questions (B) to (F).

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Phil Bibby, asked the following question:

“How does the Council intend to deal with the dilemma of the free parking scheme to help businesses in the Old Town during and after the Covid-19 pandemic with the sustainability imperatives contained in the Sustainable Travel Town initiative of reduced car usage?”

The Leader of the Council replied that she was delighted to hear that Stevenage was being recommended as one of Hertfordshire's first Sustainable Travel Towns, which demonstrated that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) recognised the unique challenges posed by Stevenage's historic High Street. The Council very much sympathised with the ambitions of HCC towards Sustainable Travel Towns, and was committed to supporting those principles.

In terms of the immediate future, the Leader of the Council felt that it was important that the free parking scheme in the Old Town was maintained in order to help businesses through this difficult period. She added that the Council was also committed to working with HCC to drive forward environmental transport initiatives, which could amongst other options include the installation of a number of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the High Street to encourage the use of electric vehicles and help encourage the switch away from fossil fuel powered vehicles.

The Leader updated the Council on the latest situation with the Covid-19 pandemic; the Pride of Stevenage Awards; and the Celebrating Our People Staff Awards. She expressed her thanks to the whole officer team at SBC for their continued efforts and support during the pandemic.

The Council then received updates from relevant Executive Portfolio Holders on the following matters:

- Stevenage Works Awards;
- Housing Development;
- Stevenage Economic Task Force;
- Railways;
- Community Wealth Building;
- Community Development Team;
- SG1 Town Centre Update;
- Towns Deal;
- UK 100 Pledge Update;
- SADA – 16 Days of Action against Domestic Abuse Campaign;
- Leisure Providers' Financial Position; and
- Council Budget.

In relation to the Kenilworth Close project, the Leader of the Opposition asked about the plans for the shops and the timescale for completion of the overall scheme? The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People replied that, in respect of the shops, the intention was to provide a temporary facility for the fish and chip shop, which would also provide general necessities whilst the scheme build was taking place. She would check on the date for completion of the overall scheme and provide a written response.

9 UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that the Committee had met on 2 occasions since the last Council meeting. She commented that a lively debate had ensued at the most recent Committee meeting in respect of the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy for 2021 – 2031.

The Chair of the Community Select Committee reported that the Committee had met in early December to consider a health update from the HCC Director of Public Health which, unsurprisingly, was primarily focussed on the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting also received an excellent report from the Health & Sport Strategy Manager, who had been involved in promoting a wide range of leisure and healthy initiatives for various groups throughout the pandemic

The Chair of the Environment & Economy Select Committee reported that the Committee had concluded a somewhat truncate review of Neighbourhood Centres, and that a draft report was in preparation with recommendations for some immediate improvements, together with some proposals for introduction post-pandemic. The Committee had met in November to consider items relating to the Council's response to the pandemic with regard to the local economy and businesses, and on plans for recovery. Further meetings would be held in January and February 2021 to ascertain the views of a wide range of internal officers and external contributors.

10 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

A motion from the Liberal Democrat Group had been submitted concerning a means whereby the Council could recognise the achievements of Stevenage-born Lewis Hamilton MBE, following his recent record equalling 7th Formula One World Championship success.

An amendment to the submitted motion had been received from the Labour Group. This amendment had been accepted by the mover of the motion (Councillor Stephen Booth).

Accordingly, the amended motion was moved by Councillor Stephen Booth, and seconded by Councillor Sharon Taylor. Following debate, during which a number of tributes were made to Lewis Hamilton MBE, and upon the amended motion being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):

That Stevenage Borough Council congratulates Lewis Hamilton MBE, who lived and grew up in Stevenage, on his remarkable achievement in winning seven Formula 1 motor racing world championships, a record equalled only by one other driver in the history of the sport.

Council notes his early commitment, enthusiasm and determination to excel in entering the sport despite limited resources and recognises that he is an incredible role model to young people all across the country.

The Council further commends Lewis Hamilton on the work he is doing to raise awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement amongst his fellow drivers and teams and in persuading many of them to take a knee; and further his campaigning to eliminate all forms of racism in motor sport. The Council therefore congratulates Lewis Hamilton on his leadership in persuading his team as a mark of respect to the Black Lives Matter movement to change its colours after 90 years as “The Silver Arrows” to black for a season.

Council further commends Lewis Hamilton’s work to give something back to communities through UNICEF UK and other charitable works; to improve diversity in motorsport through the Hamilton Commission to engage young black people in science, technology, engineering and mathematics; and as an ambassador for the sport to encourage and assist more young drivers from BAME backgrounds to compete. We also note his significant contribution in lobbying the Formula One authorities to take rapid further steps towards making motor racing more sustainable by accelerating the development of electric vehicles and/or vehicles powered by energy other than fossil fuels.

Council commits to ensuring that Lewis Hamilton’s achievements are recognised by, and in, his home town and undertakes to contact him to discuss how best that might be done, especially to help him achieve his stated ambition to support the aspirations of young people. We hope he will wish to do that locally and council commits to considering options with him for recognising and promoting his extraordinary achievements to that end.

11 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Council received six questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders. The responses to the six questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

(A) Question from Councillor Margaret Notley

Supplementary question – “What response has been received to the Council’s littering and fly-tipping media campaign run over the summer?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied that he would provide a full written reply. He stated that the campaign had been successful, although the amount of low level littering was beginning to grow again which would be addressed. One of the main challenges would be to try to change the behaviour of individuals

who littered and fly-tipped.

(B) Question from Councillor Stephen Booth

Supplementary question – “Could a breakdown be provided of the type of race awareness and race bias training undertaken by the 109 employees who had completed such training over the past 12 months?”

The Portfolio Holder for Resources replied that she would arrange for a written answer to be provided to this supplementary question.

(C) Question from Councillor Robin Parker

Supplementary question – “Why doesn’t the Council remove the barriers in the High Street relating to outside seating areas during the winter months, when customers are less likely to sit outside?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport replied that he would consult officers on this suggestion and provide a written response to the supplementary question.

(D) Question from Councillor Graham Snell

Supplementary question – “Could Members have more regular updates on the performance of Council IT systems?”

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council replied that he would arrange for a regular bulletin to be sent to Members providing an update on SBC’s IT systems.

(E) Question from Councillor Tom Wren

Supplementary question – “Will the Council retain the free parking scheme in Primett Road Car Park until at least the spaces lost in the High Street due to the Covid-19 restrictions are re-instated?”

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport replied that the position regarding the Primett Road free parking scheme would be reviewed early in the New Year.

(F) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

Supplementary question – “Given the historic strained relationship between the Stevenage MP and the Council, would the assistance of the Leader of the Opposition in “extending an olive branch” to the MP to help improve this relationship be welcomed?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration replied that he would welcome anyone attempting to properly engage with the MP. He added that the MP had been invited to all meetings of Stevenage First and its successor, the Stevenage

Development Board, but had only chosen to attend the very first of the Stevenage First meetings.

12 HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Council considered a report in respect of governance arrangements for the Hertfordshire Growth Board.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that this item had been the subject of an all Member Briefing on 2 November 2020, year prior to it being presented at the November Executive meeting (noting also related discussions at the subsequent Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting). He added that nine of the Hertfordshire Local Authorities had already signed up to new governance arrangements for the Hertfordshire Growth Board, with both SBC and East Hertfordshire District Council taking their decisions this evening. If agreement was secured, the first meeting of the new formally constituted Growth Board Committee would take place on 26 January 2021.

It was moved by Councillor Sharon Taylor, seconded by Councillor John Gardner, and following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the establishment of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee and Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Committee as Joint Committees (inaugural meetings being planned to take place in January / February 2021) be agreed.
2. That the Hertfordshire Growth Board Integrated Governance Framework be adopted and incorporated into the Council's Constitution.
3. That it be noted that the Leader of the Council is nominated as the Council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee, with delegated authority to appoint a substitute representative as required.
4. That authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to nominate a Councillor and a substitute as its representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Committee (nominees must not be a Member of the Executive).

13 MID YEAR REVIEW OF THE 2020/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Council considered a report on the Mid Year Review of the 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy.

The Strategic Director (CF) answered a number of Members' questions regarding the report.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Teresa Callaghan, and following debate and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED:

1. That the 2020/21 Treasury Management Mid-Year review be approved.
2. That the latest approved Countries for investments (set out in Appendix D to the report) be approved.
3. That the updated authorised and operational borrowing limits (set out in Paragraph 4.4.7 of the report) be approved.

14 2ND QUARTER GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/21

The Council considered a report on the Second Quarter General Fund Capital Monitoring report 2020/21, as the budget increase required exceeded the Executive's delegated limit.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, seconded by Councillor Sharon Taylor, and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED that the budget increase to the 2020/21 General Fund capital programme, arising from the additional funding of £7.4Million received from Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), as identified in Paragraph 4.1.4 of the report, be approved, as this exceeds the Executive's delegated limit. The net increase in 2020/21 expenditure is £6.4Million, as summarised in table one, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report.

15 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 17 November 2020 were received and noted.

Before closing the meeting, the Mayor thanked staff in the Constitutional Services Team for their support during the Covid-19 pandemic and for maintaining the democratic process via the use of virtual technology.

In closing the meeting, the Mayor wished everyone a Merry Christmas and hoped for a better 2021.

MAYOR

Part I – Release to Press



Meeting EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area Resources/Housing
Date 20 JANUARY 2021



FINAL HRA RENT SETTING AND BUDGET REPORT

KEY DECISION

Authors Clare Fletcher | 2933
Katia Cousins | 2383
Keith Reynoldson | 2403

Lead Officers Clare Fletcher | 2933

Contact Officer Clare Fletcher | 2933

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the final proposals on the HRA budgets and rent setting for 2021/22, to be considered by Council on 28 January 2021.
- 1.2 To update Members on the formula for setting rents for 2021/22.
- 1.3 To propose the HRA rents for 2021/22.
- 1.4 To propose the HRA service charges for 2021/22.
- 1.5 To update Members on the 2020/21 and 2021/22 HRA budget, incorporating the Financial Security options and fees and charges included in the December Financial Security report, together with any revised income and expenditure assumptions identified since the HRA MTFS update to the November Executive.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That HRA rent on dwellings be increased, week commencing 5 April 2021 by 1.5% which is an average increase of £1.46 for social rents, £2.38 for affordable rents and £1.80 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week

(based on a 52 week year). This has been calculated using the rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the governments rent policy as set out in paragraph 4.1.1.

- 2.2 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 HRA budget as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.3 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 Financial Security options as set out in Appendix B
- 2.4 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 growth options as set out in Appendix C.
- 2.5 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix D.
- 2.6 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 service charges.
- 2.7 That Council be recommended to approve the minimum level of reserves for 2021/22 as shown in Appendix E to this report.
- 2.8 That the contingency sum of £250,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2021/22 (unchanged from 2020/21).
- 2.9 That Council notes the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2020 the Executive approved the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The HRA MTFS included an update on lower borrowing costs, (as a result of the government's reversal of the 1% increase in PWLB rates for housing). However the MTFS did show lower HRA balances by 2024/25 of £1.294Million, compared to the 30 year HRA Business Plan approved at the December 2019 Executive.
- 3.2 For 2021/22 rent setting there has been no change to the government rent policy issued in 2020, which allows social housing providers to increase rents by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) +1% for a five year period. Guidance released in November 2020 allows local authorities to breach this cap in circumstances of exceptional financial hardship. However, this would not currently apply to Stevenage Borough Council's HRA.
- 3.3 There are still developing policy issues in the HRA regarding the decent homes standard, environmental improvements and building safety regulations. Estimates for the potential impact of changes in these areas have been included in the budget plans, but these will need to be refined as the impact becomes clearer.
- 3.4 For the second year, the outcome of the Government's consultation on 'Use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts' and increased flexibilities has still not been concluded. However, local authorities have been allowed to retain their receipts between April 2020 and March 2021 (recently extended from December 2020), without penalties, due to the impact of the COVID pandemic on development schemes. The Government has also issued a further consultation, in November, asking for authorities' current position on

the use of receipts. This may lead to a further extension of the repayment timetable, but this is not known at this time. As there has not been any formal conclusion to the last Government consultation process, future policy regarding the RTB system is not known and this continues to impede the use of the receipts.

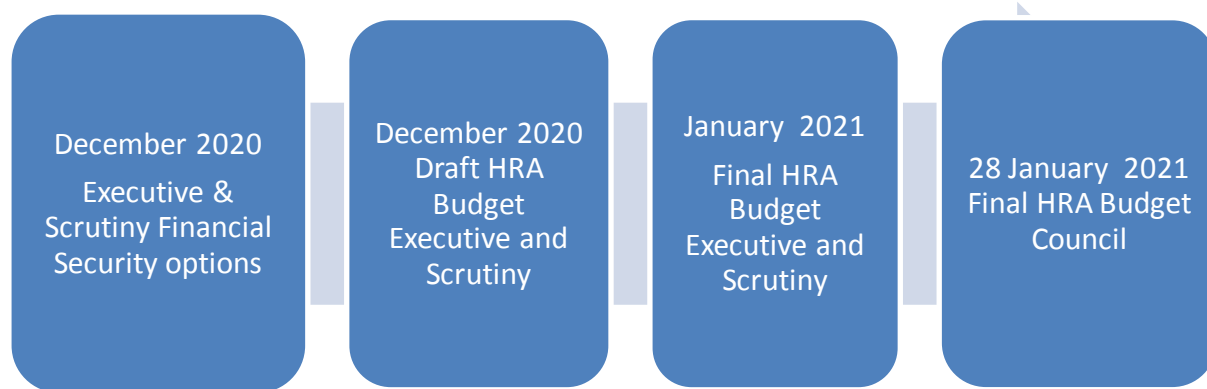
- 3.5 The HRA has been financially impacted by the COVID pandemic. Rent arrears have risen sharply and this is exacerbated by no enforcement, in line with national policy. There have also been additional costs in some parts of the service, most notably in Independent Living, due to increased COVID safety measures. The known impacts have been reflected in the budget proposals, but this is still a developing situation that will continue to be monitored carefully over the coming months.
- 3.6 The total number of HRA homes in management at 6 November 2020 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2021/22 are based on current housing stock, any right to buys or new schemes subsequent to this date may change the average rent per property type.

Stock Numbers at 06/11/2020	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties	6,799	36	840	85	164	7,924

- 3.7 The assumptions in the HRA Draft report to the December 2020 Executive are shown in the table below.

Financial Assumptions in the HRA Draft MTFS	2021/22
Rent & Service Charge Increases	CPI+1% or 1.5%
New Build policy	50% Affordable 50% Social
Right-to-Buys	35
Financial Security options	£224,883
Growth bids	£161,650
Growth bids Business Plan 2019	£950,000
New Build - Number of Units	29
Repayment of Debt	0
New loans	26,602,339
Capital Deficit in the Business Plan	0

- 3.8 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget also includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the rents; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits. The timescale required to implement this process is outlined below.



4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

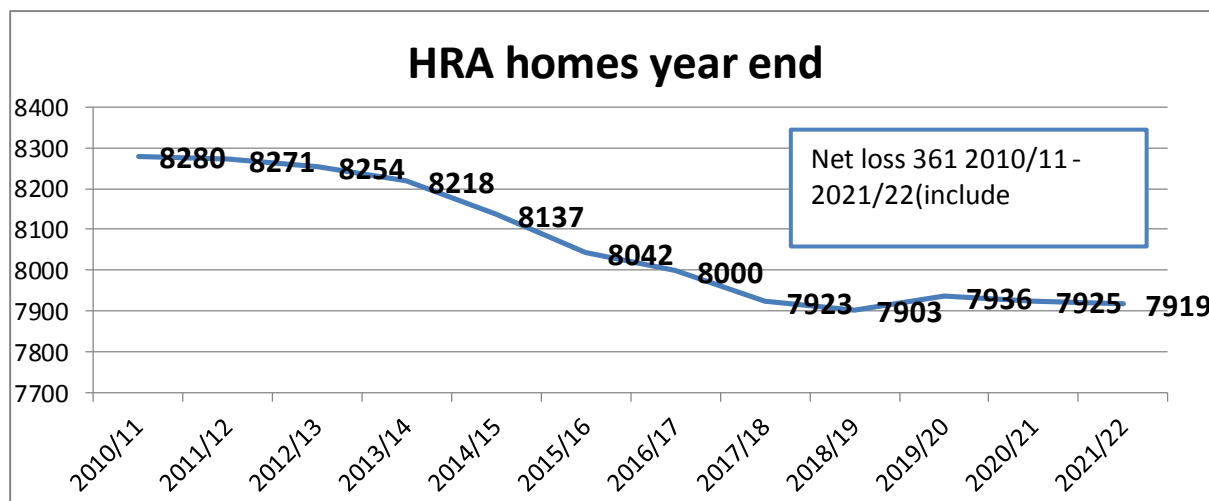
4.1 Rents

- 4.1.1 Rents are calculated on a formula of CPI+1% increase for 2021/22. The CPI inflation increase is based on the September index which was 0.5%, this means the increase for 2021/22 for the council's housing stock is 1.5%.
- 4.1.2 The proposed average rents for 2021/22 are set out in the table below, there are currently 35 affordable rented properties (ranging from four bedroom-two bedroom houses and flats).

Average Rents 2021/22	LSSO	Incr. %	social	Incr. %	Affordable	Incr. %
Average Rent 2020/21	£120.07		£97.58		£159.08	
Add rent impact 2021/22	£1.80	1.50%	£1.46	1.50%	£2.38	1.50%
Total 52 week Rent 2021/22	£121.87		£99.04		£161.46	

4.1.3 The net rental income increase for 2021/22 is estimated to be £609,570, which includes the impacts of estimated right to buys, estimated new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment). This is unchanged from the draft budget to the December 2020 Executive.

4.1.4 The total number of properties available is estimated to have reduced by 361 homes between 2010/11 and 2021/22, (based on net impact of RTB's, new homes, homes awaiting development). The forecast numbers for 2021/22 reflect the latest development timetables for schemes like Kenilworth and Symonds Green and an expected lower level of open market purchases, while they are being built.



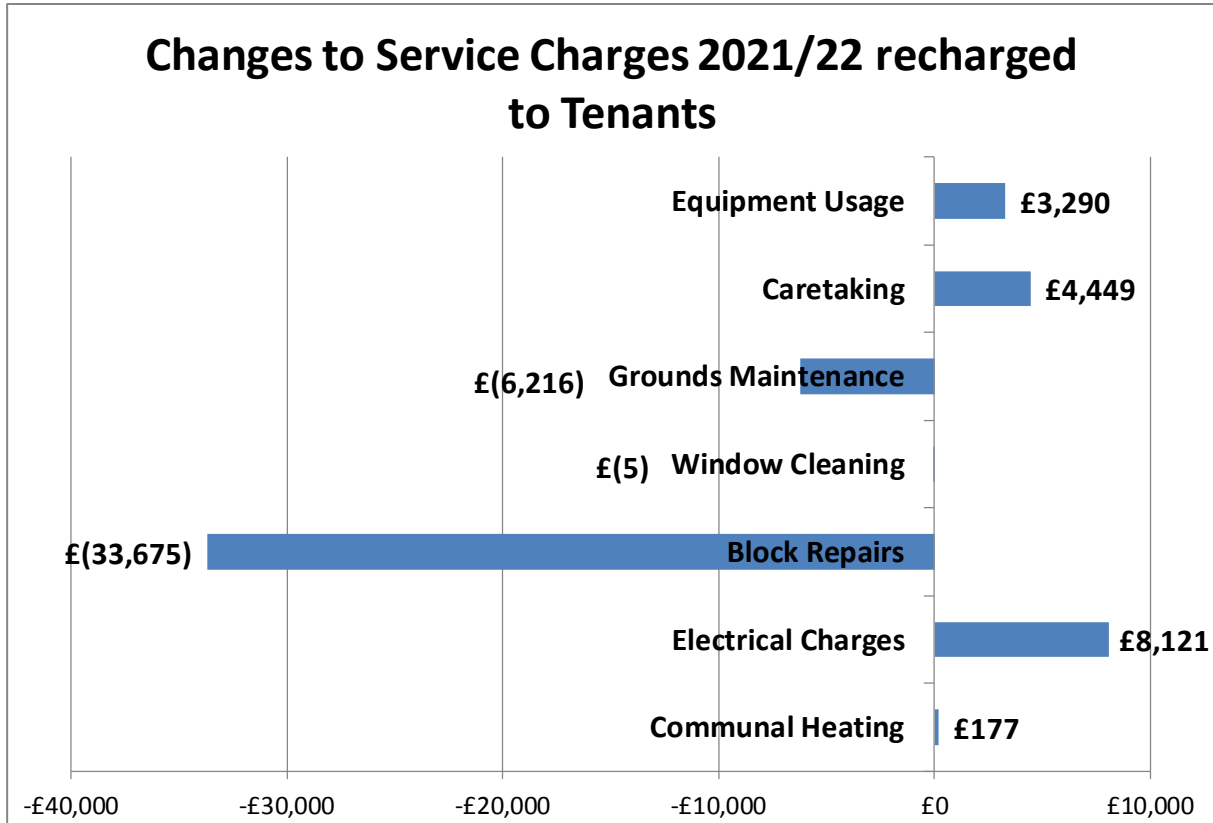
4.2 Service Charges

4.2.1 Service charges are calculated for each block individually for the 2,956 properties, (2020/21, 2,940) or 37% of current SBC tenanted properties. A review of service charges has not been concluded in time for 2021/22 rent and service charge setting and requires tenant and Member consultation. The type of service charges currently provided, (eligible for housing benefit) are shown below.

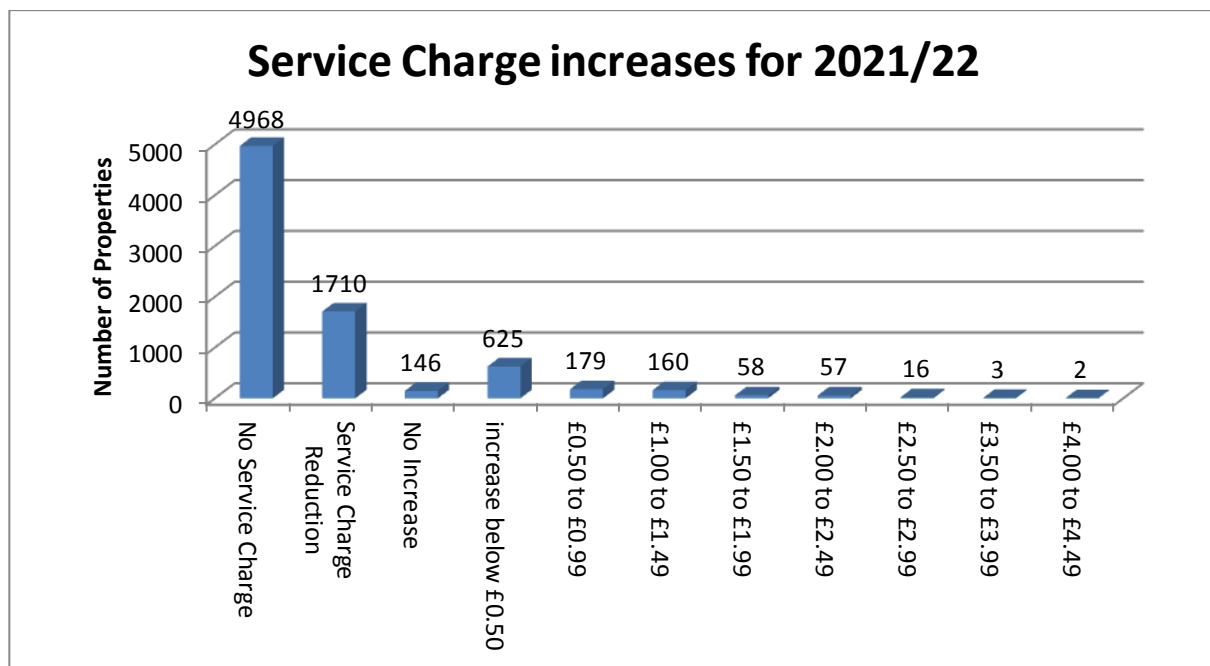
Service Charges:
Caretaking
Grounds maintenance
Window cleaning
Block repairs (including pest control)
Electrical charges
Communal heating

4.2.2 Service charges are not subject to the rental increase of 1.5%, but are based on cost recovery. For 2021/22, service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart below identifies the

changes between 2020/21 and 2021/22 for service charges. The estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs for 2021/22, with the exception of block repairs, which is 'smoothed' over a five year period to eliminate individual in year spikes in repairs spend. This is unchanged from the draft budget to the December 2020 Executive.



4.2.3 The spread of service charge increases for all tenants in 2021/22 is shown in the chart below. The impact of the changes in service charges, means 1,710 or 58% of homes (who get a service charge) will receive a service charge reduction, even though service charges have fluctuated between individual services as shown above. There are only two properties with a service charge increase above £4.00.

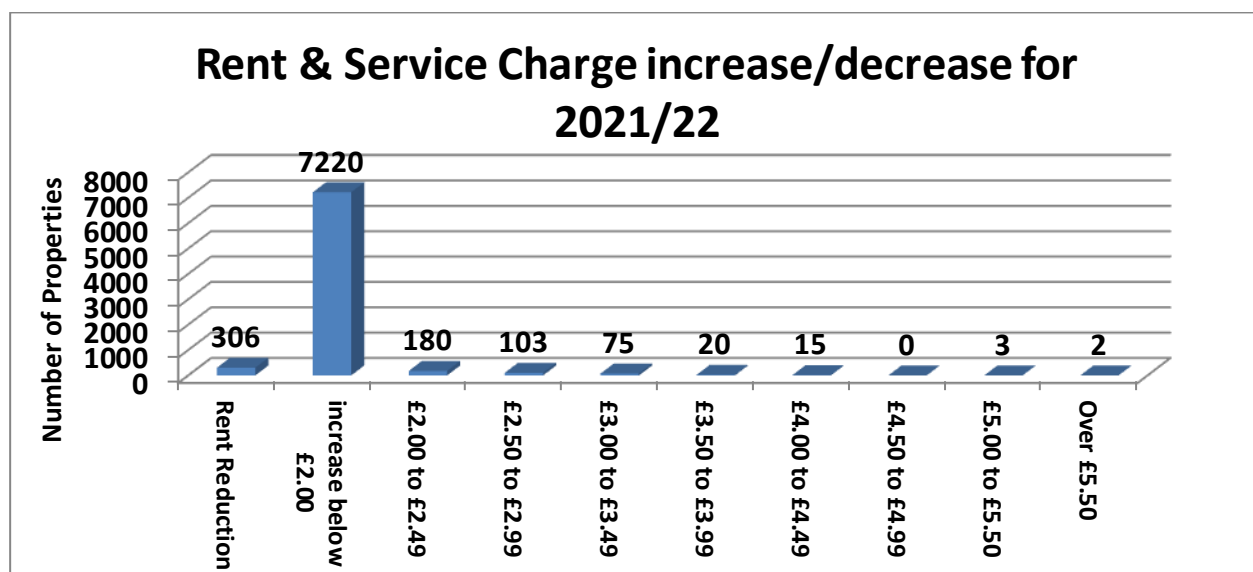


4.3 Rents and Service Charges

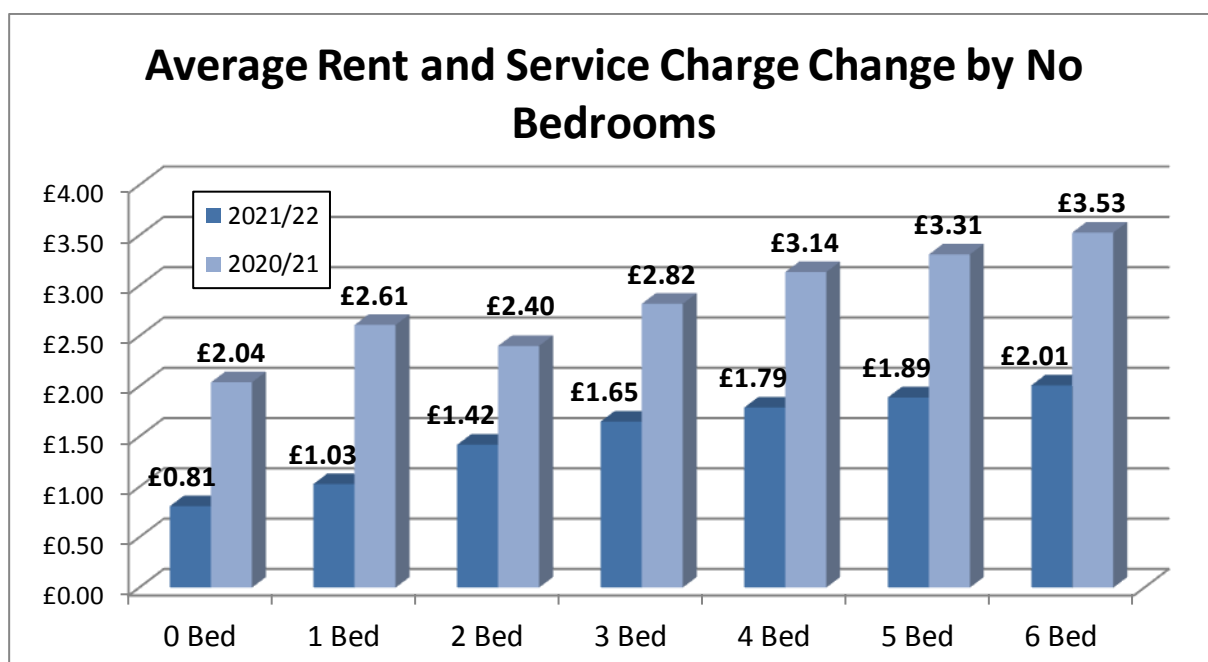
4.3.1 The impact of the 2021/22 rent increase and service charges is

- 306 homes or 4% receive a rent and service charge reduction;
- 7,578 homes or 96% of households will receive a weekly rent and service charge increase of less than £3.50 (based on 52 weeks).
- There are only 5 properties with a weekly rent and service charge increase of more than £5.00.

4.3.2 The spread of the 2021/22 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below.



4.3.3 The average rent and service charge increase/decrease by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below.



4.3.4 The comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week, for one to four bedroom properties, is shown in the table below. A three bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 133%, (2020/21, 137%) more per week than a SBC council home and 32% more than the affordable let properties, (2020/21 34%).

	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Median Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance 2020/21	Median % v SBC Social	Median % v SBC Affordable
1 Bed Property	£84.99	£132.45	£168.89	£155.34	99%	28%
2 Bed Property	£99.23	£168.55	£221.30	£195.62	123%	31%
3 Bed Property	£109.96	£194.37	£256.24	£241.64	133%	32%
4 Bed Property	£121.40	£233.04	£314.48	£299.18	159%	35%

Private rent Data from ONS as at March 2020 updated by ONS rental inflation for East of England to September 2020. Please note the SBC rents are 2021/22 prices and the private rents 2020/21 prices.

4.3.5 **The Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** shown in the table above is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

4.4 Borrowing

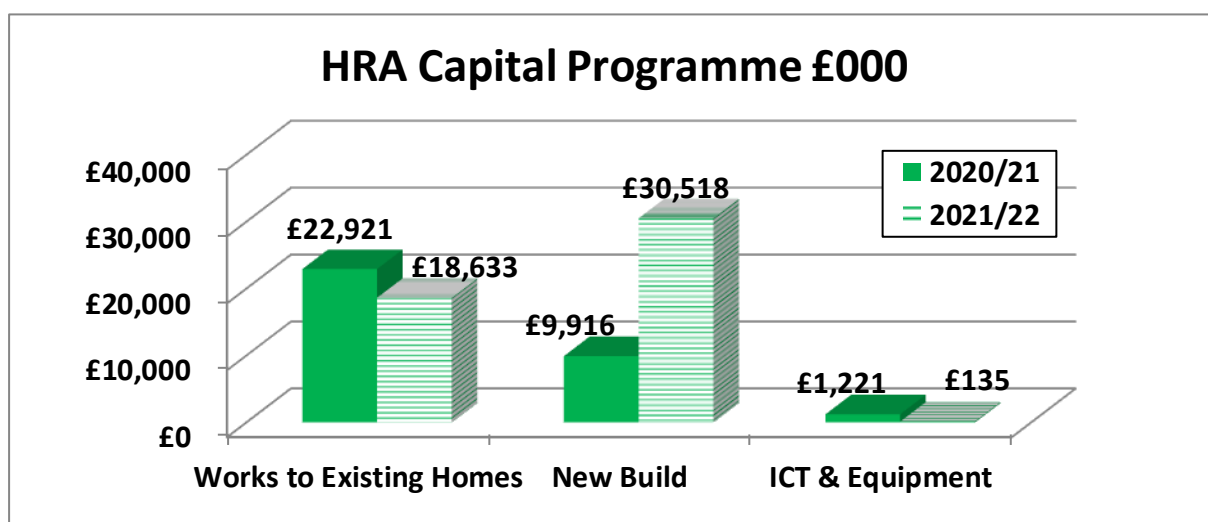
4.4.1 Last year the HRA Business Plan was recalculated to take advantage of the lifting of the HRA debt cap that had restricted HRA borrowing to £217Million. The HRA MTFS reported that loan rates are estimated at 1.47% and 1.56% respectively. New loans totalling £23.8Million and £26.6Million are expected to be taken in the current and next financial years. However, the decision when

to take the new borrowing will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing PWLB rates. The interest payable in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is estimated to be £7,328,770 and £7,800,270 respectively. This is unchanged from the draft budget to the December 2020 Executive.

- 4.4.2 The 2019 HRA Business Plan (to the December 2019 Executive) set out an ambitious programme of investment in current and new housing stock, taking advantage of the new financial freedoms offered by the debt cap removal. These plans were not significantly changed in the HRA MTFS report to November 2020 Executive.

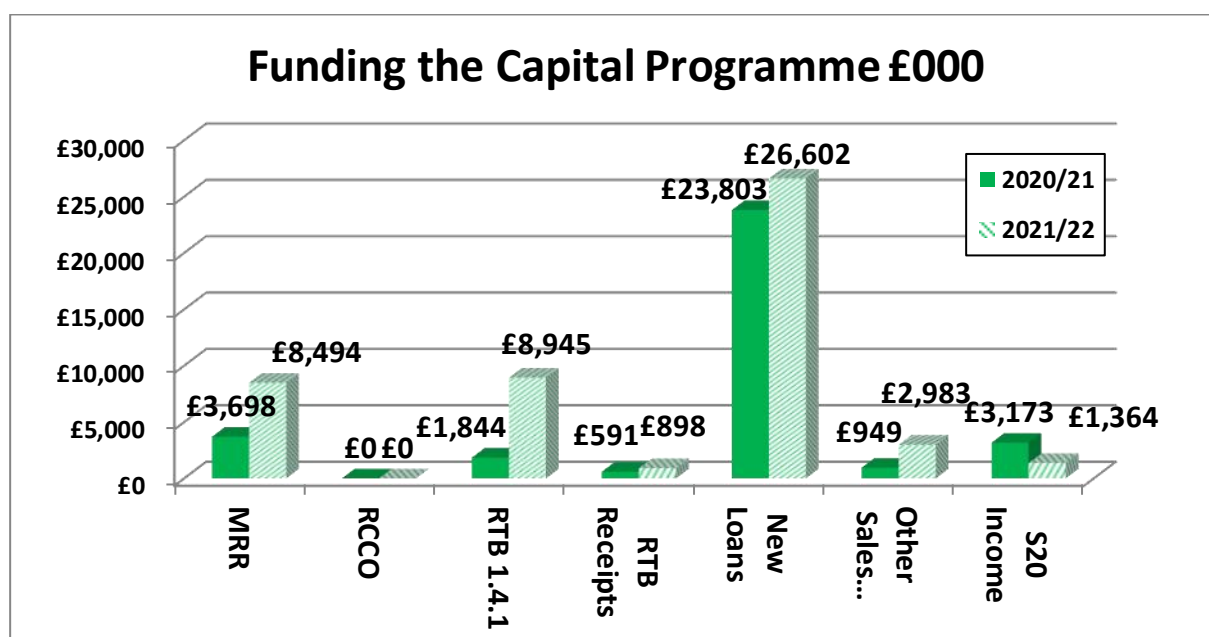
4.5 Contributions to Capital Expenditure

- 4.5.1 There is no requirement for a revenue contribution to capital (RCCO) as result of the borrowing set out in section 4.4 above.
- 4.5.2 The 2021/22 budgeted depreciation allowance required by legislation to be transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to fund the capital programme is £11,484,000. This has been supplemented by a revenue contribution to capital of £1,359,260 in order to support the planned works and these combined figures give an increase of £356,840 on the 2020/21 amount. A summary of the 2020/21-2021/22 capital programme is shown in the chart below.



- 4.5.3 The increase in the value of the 2021/22 capital programme compared to the current 2020/21 programme is mainly due to rescheduling of new build schemes and the impact of the Kenilworth scheme expenditure on the programme. Expenditure on the existing stock is expected to be lower and this is mainly due to the scheduling of the Major Repairs Contract (MRC) works. The draft capital strategy recommends an increase in HRA expenditure on IT and Digital.

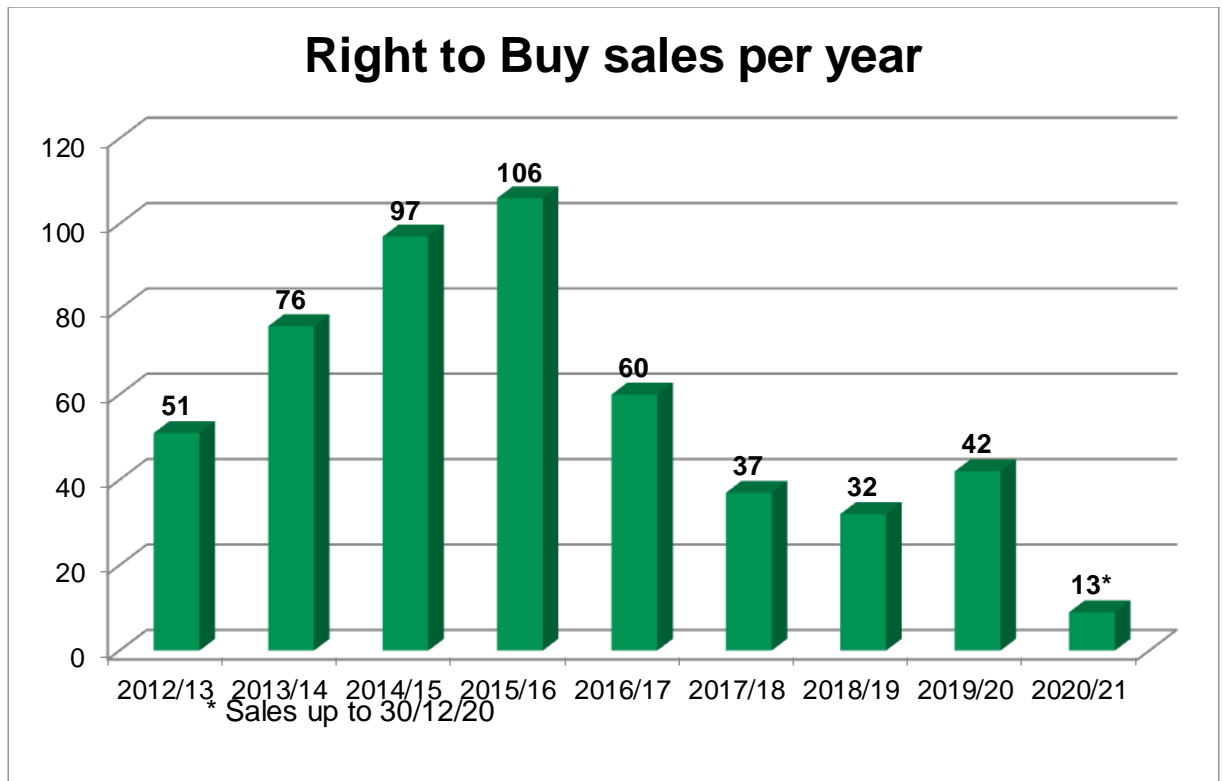
- 4.5.4 The recently published Housing White paper is likely to have an impact on both capital and revenue budgets and once the assessment of any additional costs have been made, further growth bids may be required and the impact included in the refresh of the HRA Business Plan next financial year.
- 4.5.5 The capital programme funding for 2020/21 and the draft HRA capital programme 2021/22 is summarised in the chart below. This is unchanged from the draft budget to the December Executive.



4.6 Use of One for One Receipts

- 4.6.1 The Council continues to retain the majority of the capital receipts arising from the sale of RTB properties, in line with the retention agreement signed with the Government. Under this agreement the receipts must be used within three years to fund a maximum of 30% of spend on replacement properties, or be paid to the Government with a high interest penalty. While the new build programme, identified in the Business Plan, is large enough to make full use of the receipts, there has often been difficulties in matching the timing of expenditure to when the receipts must be used.
- 4.6.2 The Government has recognised the potential difficulties in meeting construction timetables during the current pandemic and have allowed local authorities to retain their receipts between April 2020 and March 2021 (recently extended from December 2020), without penalties. Latest forecasts show that with the use of this extension Stevenage Borough Council will not need to pay receipts to the Government for the current financial year. However this position needs to be continually monitored in case of any slippage in the timing of schemes. The government asked for further views on 1.4.1 receipts which were submitted by officers at the end of November.
- 4.6.3 In future years the issue of spending the receipts within the time limit should reduce, as shown in the graph below. This is partly due to a fall in the levels of

RTB sales, leading to a lower level of receipts that need to be spent. Combined with the Kenilworth scheme that will ensure the use of receipts within the three year time limit. In 2021/22 the Council will need to spend 1.4.1 receipts of £2.9Million, derived from sales in 2018/19. Current projections show that these should be fully used by the second quarter of next year and that no receipts will need to be paid to Government.



13 right to buy sales have occurred in 20/21, an increase of four since the draft HRA budget report which showed nine sales up until the 6th November 2020. It is anticipated that a further 14 sales will be made in the final quarter of 20/21.

- 4.6.4 At this time the risk of surrendering receipts to the Government has further reduced if spend happens as profiled. However, the issues raised on the current time limit in the agreement will continue to be challenged, in order to have a more flexible system that allows these resources to be invested locally. Any delays, or slippage, in the development programme could breach the three year rule and lead to a loss of receipts and interest penalties, despite having schemes that need the funds. For this reason this area is reviewed each quarter in order to minimise the potential cost to the HRA.

4.7 Draft Budget Proposals

- 4.7.1 The HRA budget is estimated to be a net income of £2,791,960 which is a reduction of £204,020 from the reported position within the draft HRA budget report to December 2020 Executive. The reasons for the changes are summarised in the table below.

Summary of 2021/22		
Draft HRA 2021/22 budget		(£2,923,980)
Increases in Income/Reductions in Expenditure:		
Reduction in budgeted salary costs	(£36,690)	
New Savings - Graduate Scheme HRA share	(£16,660)	(£53,350)
Increases in Expenditure:		
Increase in leaseholder Insurance	£20,970	
Additional recharges from GF (including digital ICT)	£213,450	
Other Minor Changes	£22,950	£257,370
Total Changes:		£204,020
Final HRA 2021/22 budget		(£2,719,960)

4.7.2 The 2020/21 budget summarised below includes changes not previously reported in the December 2020 report.

Summary of 2020/21 budget movements		
Working Budget 2020/21		(£3,309,210)
Increase in external audit fees (HRA share)		£23,340
Other budgets		£40,200
Total Changes		£63,540
Revised Working Budget		(£3,245,670)

4.7.3 The 2020/21 HRA projected year-end net income is estimated to be £63,540 lower than included in the November MTFS Report and includes the HRA share of external audit costs, with the remainder a number of budget changes identified as part of the budget setting process.

4.7.4 All HRA balances in excess of the minimum balances held for assessed risks in year, are required to fund the HRA 30 year capital programme.

HRA Balances:	2020/21 £	2021/22 £
HRA Balance 1 April	(19,819,411)	(23,065,081)
Use of balances in Year	(3,245,670)	(2,719,960)
HRA Balance 31 March	(23,065,081)	(25,785,041)
Minimum Balances	(2,985,000)	(2,985,000)
Debt Repayments	(20,080,081)	(22,800,041)

4.8 Comments from Overview and Scrutiny

- 4.8.1 The Overview and Scrutiny committee considered the draft HRA rent, service charge proposals and budget at their meeting of the 15th December 2020. The CFO (Chief Finance Officer) introduced the report and the Committee were advised that the draft HRA budget included the growth set out in the HRA Business Plan and that the average rent increase for Council homes was 1.5%, based on a CPI + 1% rise. The paper was noted with no questions raised.

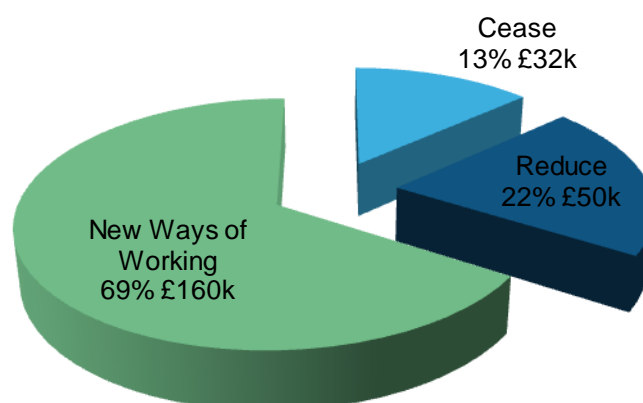
4.9 Consultation

- 4.9.1 The Council remains committed to working in partnership with council tenants and leaseholders to shape, strengthen and improve council housing services and sets out a range of options to enable housing customers to be involved.
- 4.9.2 The Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) acts as an advisory body to the Executive for council housing-related matters, including participation in the HRA budget-setting process and the development of the HRA Business Plan. HMAB currently includes one leaseholder and five tenant representatives in addition to Member and officer representation.
- 4.9.3 The HMAB has not met in the last few months but have received the draft HRA budget report and a slide presentation highlighting the key information and any comments will be fed back to the Executive prior to the final budget report being recommended to the Council.
- 4.9.4 Targeted consultation will be carried out with staff, customers and stakeholders directly affected by the financial security options agreed by the Executive in November 2020. All tenants will be notified of changes to their rent and service charges in February/March 2021.
- 4.9.5 The STAR survey was undertaken in early 2018 and we will seek to understand the priorities when this is updated in 2021.

4.10 The 2021/22 Financial Security Options process for the General Fund and HRA

- 4.10.1 The Leader of the Council recommended a departure to the normal Financial Security process for the 2020/21 budget, which normally has any options channelled through the cross party Leaders Financial Security Group (LFSG). This was primarily because of the potential level of savings required as exacerbated by the COVID pandemic and the need for Portfolio holders and the Executive as a whole to make some service prioritisation decisions.
- 4.10.2 The Financial Security options totalling £241,546 are shown in the chart below, with further detail provided in Appendix B:

Financial Security Options

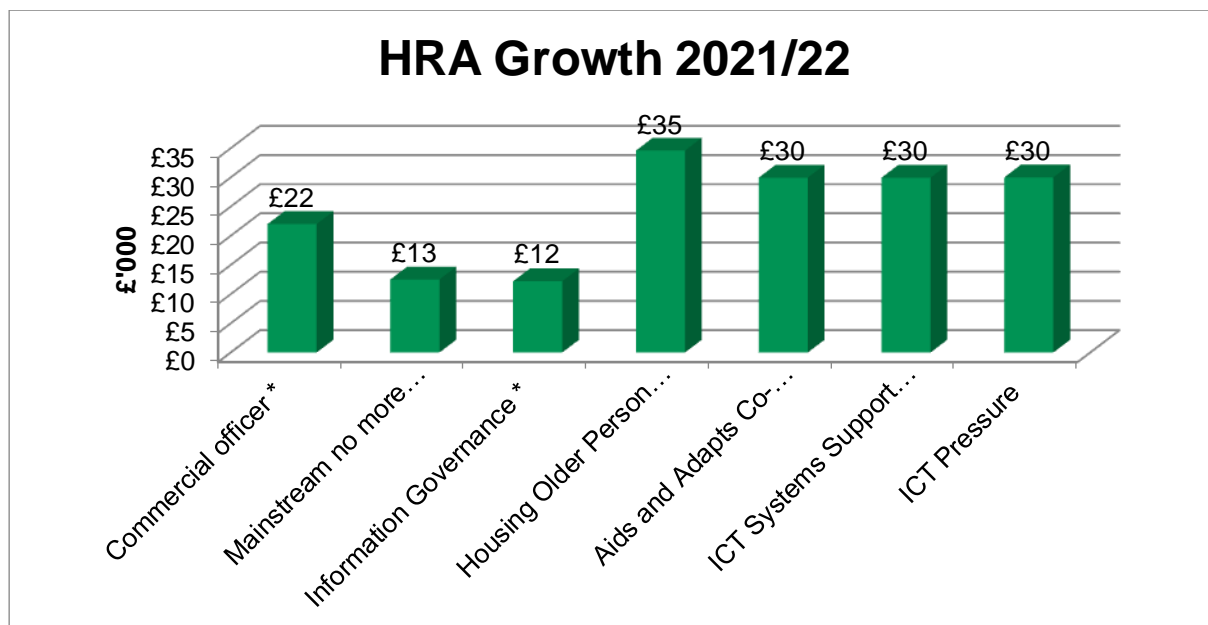


- The options consider changes implemented as part of the different way staff now work due to the move from office to remote working.
- The services that are severely impacted by COVID.
- The functions that the Council were funding but were the responsibility of other public bodies.
- Considering the level of budget pressures which increased the level of savings particularly for the General Fund.

4.10.3 The LSFG did reconvene to consider fee increases on 11 November 2020 and made some recommended changes to the HRA fees and charges. Fees and Charges options total £73,950 and are shown in Appendix D.

4.11 Growth included in the HRA

4.11.1 The growth and service pressure totalling £161,650 included in the 2021/22 HRA budget is summarised in the chart below and detailed in appendix C.



**HRA share of General Fund expenditure*

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 Financial implications are included in the body of the report

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 Legal implications are included in the body of the report

5.3 Staffing Implications

5.3.1 The unions have been consulted on the options approved at the November Executive. Human Resources staff are co-ordinating centrally the implementation of any staff related savings.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 Due to frequent Government policy changes, there are significant risks in setting the HRA budget. Historically the ring fenced account has relied almost solely on rent income to finance both revenue and capital works. Many changes in policy, including the loss of £225Million from the Business Plan from four years of rent reductions (2016/17-2019/20 estimated over a 30 year period), have made medium to long term planning difficult. These risks increase with the removal of the debt cap and further borrowing, as the Council is making long term financing decisions, on capital investment, based on income streams set by the current policy. However the Council has set aside a HRA interest equalisation reserve of £5.7Million to reduce the impact on borrowing costs on the HRA and the increased borrowing was affordable based on the current assumptions.

- 5.4.2 Currently one of the biggest risks to the account is a large increase in arrears. Over 2019/20 weekly rent arrears increased from £300K to £800K and it is believed that this was in part due to increasing numbers of tenants switching from housing benefits to Universal Credit. However, from April 2020 arrears continued to rise and now stand at just under £1.2Million. This was due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and the measures put in place by the Government, which included a suspension of evictions. To mitigate this position increased resources are being employed to help recover rent owed and the provision for bad debt has been increased to recognise that not all of the outstanding debt will be recovered.
- 5.4.3 There is a potential adverse financial impact on the HRA as a result of high inflationary pressures. Rent increases are based on the September CPI figure, which was below normal levels at 0.5% this year. If inflation rises above that assumed in the budget generally, or spikes as a result of BREXIT, reductions in spend may need to be made or some of the growth recommended in the MTFS update removed.
- 5.4.4 The full operational implications of regulatory changes after the Grenfell tragedy are still being implemented. Provision was made in the last Business Plan to allow for an additional £500K in the budget. However, as policy and best practice across the sector is developed this may need to be reviewed and could lead to an increase budget pressures on the HRA.
- 5.4.5 With the increased level of borrowing in the HRA, after the removal of the debt cap, there is a greater risk of interest rates being higher than projected and leading to a reduction in the amount of expenditure for both revenue and capital. There is also a risk that PwLB rate differential between gilts and borrowing rates will be increased as happened in 2019/20. To mitigate this, an interest rate reserve of £5.7Million has been set up to offset any future variances from expected rates.
- 5.4.6 The HRA has an annual Financial Security target to achieve, which for 2021/22 onwards is £100,000 per year.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act replaced three previous equality legislations – the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A) and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the needs described in the legislation. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2021.
- 5.5.2 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2021/22 officers have undertaken Brief Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related budget savings proposals. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers have identified further action needed to inform a final decision and to mitigate the impact where this is possible. These EqIA were included in the November

Report and will be appended to the final HRA Budget report together with an EQIA for the rent and service charges increase for the January Executive.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 Housing Revenue Account MTFS November 2020 Executive

BD2 Draft HRA and Budget Setting Report December 2020 Executive

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Final HRA Summary

Appendix B – Financial Security Options

Appendix C – Growth and Budget Pressures

Appendix D – Fees and Charges

Appendix E – Risk Assessment of Balances

Appendix F – EQIA for HRA Services

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APPENDIX A		HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUMMARY		
	Actual 2019/20 £	Original Budget 2020/21 £	Working Budget 2020/21 £	Original Budget 2021/22 £
Summary of Expenditure				
Supervision and Management	10,002,557	9,177,690	9,422,701	9,404,810
Special Services	4,321,555	4,747,230	4,928,909	5,090,240
Rent, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	637,164	465,290	465,710	539,430
Repairs and Maintenance ⁽¹⁾	5,361,410	7,501,970	7,395,690	7,594,610
Corporate and Democratic Costs	774,300	554,360	937,640	967,050
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	306,264	217,620	322,970	224,220
Total Expenditure	21,403,251	22,664,160	23,473,620	23,820,360
Summary of Income				
Rental Income:				
Dwelling Rents	(39,011,816)	(40,281,360)	(40,211,950)	(40,891,590)
Non Dwelling Rents	(82,958)	(90,430)	(88,120)	(91,640)
	(39,094,774)	(40,371,790)	(40,300,070)	(40,983,230)
Charges for Services & Facilities - Tenants	(2,092,042)	(2,237,800)	(2,250,820)	(2,282,150)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(844,547)	(967,280)	(894,910)	(975,920)
Contributions Towards Expenditure	(747,005)	(344,580)	(399,060)	(346,400)
Reimbursement of Costs	(360,698)	(345,540)	(301,380)	(345,540)
Recharge Income (GF & Capital)	(1,751,255)	(1,789,600)	(1,932,440)	(2,029,100)
Total Income	(44,890,321)	(46,056,590)	(46,078,680)	(46,962,340)
Depreciation	11,351,592	12,486,420	12,327,160	11,484,000
Impairment/Loss on Revaluation	0	0	0	0
Interest Payable	6,866,958	7,837,130	7,328,770	7,800,270
Interest Receivable	(397,855)	(347,750)	(296,540)	(221,510)
Net (Surplus)/Deficit For Year	(5,666,376)	(3,416,630)	(3,245,670)	(4,079,220)
Appropriations:				
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	0	0	0	1,359,260
Self Financing Contribution To Provision	1,810,558	0	0	0
Pension Reversal	(374,384)	0	0	0
Transfer to Interest Rate Fluctuation Reserve	5,712,851	0	0	0
Housing Revenue Account Balance				
Net Expenditure/(Income) for Year	1,482,648	(3,416,630)	(3,245,670)	(2,719,960)
Balance B/Fwd 1 April	(21,302,059)	(19,819,411)	(19,819,411)	(23,065,081)
HRA Balance C/Fwd 31 March	(19,819,411)	(23,236,041)	(23,065,081)	(25,785,041)
SERVICE DETAILS:				
In 2012/13 the HRA became a self financing account and the housing subsidy system ceased. This change allows all future revenues to be available to be spent locally with the exception of the pooled element of Right to Buy sales.				
⁽¹⁾ Repairs and maintenance costs only. Management costs are included in the Supervision and Management line.				

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FINANCIAL SECURITY OPTIONS 2021/22

Ref No	Portfolio holder	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs (any redundancy/ capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Net Direct costs of service	Recharges	Total Cost	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Year 1	£ HRA Year 1
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Fund	Projected 2021/22	Projected 2022/23
General Fund	£455,392	£545,747
HRA	£241,546	£296,802
Total	£696,938	£842,549

2021/22 Budget Options													
FS14	Leader of the Council	Fairtrade	Cease payment			£1,500	£0	£1,500	Y	The Council pays a subscription which costs £1,500 per year.	1 April 2021	1,005	495
FS15	Leader of the Council	CE, Directors & Support	Reduce support to Directors and CE by reducing Executive support by 0.5FTE	£0	1	£586,290	£112,230	£698,520	Y	Reduce the Executive support to 2.5FTE from 3.5FTE	1 April 2021	14,742	6,318
FS16	Leader of the Council	Members Expenses	Cease provision of refreshments			£526,060	£54,370	£580,430	Y	Delete refreshment budgets due to new ways of working	1 April 2021	2,100	1,400
FS17	Leader of the Council	Democratic Services	Delete 18.5 hour post in Member services due to retirement	£0	1	£363,230	£19,080	£382,310	Y	The post holder is retiring and the work will be absorbed within the existing team	1 April 2021	8,940	5,960
FS46	Leader of the Council	Constitutional Services - Management Restructure	Streamlining management arrangements within Constitutional Services upon the retirement of the current Constitutional Services Manager post holder.	£0	3				Y	The current post holder for the position of Constitutional Services Manager is due to retire in October 2021. It is envisaged that current members of the Constitutional Services team would be appointed into the newly created roles and that there would be no redundancies. Option is to delete the Constitutional Services Manager (Grade 10) and Elections and Land Charges Manager (Grade 9) posts. Create a new Constitutional and Electoral Services Manager (Grade 12) role. Involves converting a Constitutional Services Officer(Grade 6) to a Senior Constitutional Services Officer (Grade 8) and the creation of a new Electoral Services Officer Post (Grade 4 and 0.5fte)	Nov 2021	6,624	4,416
FS19	Leader of the Council	Policy	Combine Residents and Star survey			£38,650	£0	£38,650	N-every 3 years	Commission both surveys together and explore the potential to combine and rationalise. This may limit statistical reliability due to sample size, but could also supplement this with community engagement work with those who do not traditionally participate in surveys. i.e. children and young people	1 April 2021	8,500	8,500
FS20	Leader of the Council	Member Training	Reduce Member training by 50%			£8,500	£0	£8,500	Y	Training will be limited to LGA related training and smaller training offer to Members	1 April 2021	2,550	1,700
FS47	Leader of the Council	Member General Expenses	Removal of budget			£500	£0	£500	Y	No longer needed as have an alternative Miscellaneous Budget	1 April 2021	300	200
FS48	Leader of the Council	Member Travel Expenses	Reduction in travel expenses budget due to new ways of working e.g. remote meetings			£12,600	£0	£12,600	Y	Reduction in Member Travel Expenses budget.	1 April 2021	1,200	800
FS18	Leader of the Council	Communications	Cease Pride award dinner function			£15,000	£0	£15,000	Y	Cease holding the evening function but still celebrate with awards.	1 April 2021	12,300	2,700
FS23	Neighbourhood & Co-operative working	CSC and Customer Focus Redesign and efficiencies, supported by implementation of new digital technology resulting in channel shift and automation.	Streamline Customer Focus and Customer Services into one team including: A reduction of 1 FTE Grade 9 post from the combining the Customer Focus and Customer Services Manager roles in a single post. A reduction of 1FTE Manager/Team Leader (currently 5 in total, assumed Grade 5). A reduction of 4FTE Customer Service Advisors at Grade2/3 A reduction of 1 Customer Insight Adviser at Grade 3.	£110,000	2	£1,102,380	£566,770	£1,669,150	Y	Customers - Functionality enabled by the Digital Platform project in 2020/21 will enable some shift of contact away from more resource intensive telephony and face to face channels which will reduce the adviser levels needed in order to maintain current performance for customers. Aligning the customer focus team with customer services will ensure continuous improvement can be embedded in service delivery. Other Business Units - The reduction in the Customer Insight adviser (complaints) would be mitigated by implementing a new digital case work solution using Firmstep (which is less resource intensive than emails) and better early management of cases by customer services to reduce the escalation to formal complaints. Digital case management for complaints will make it easier to track and manage cases. However, there may be some temporary additional pressure on service areas in order to support complaints handling while the tools are embedded, and to deal with complex cases.	1 June 2021	69,668	100,401
FS26	Neighbourhood & Co-operative working	Print Room	Remove the Document Centre Officer (Grade 3) post in ICT.	£60,000	1	£37,010	£65,010	£102,020	Y	This requires services to find alternative solutions for printing or to reduce the need for bulk printing. The key users are Housing Investment and members (committee papers). Members would need to print their own committee papers or to use Modern Gov to view papers for meetings.	1 June 2021	12,722	8,841
FS27	Neighbourhood & Co-operative working	Printing and photocopiers	Remove 4 MFD's from Daneshill & reduce Click usage to 50% of 19/20's volume					£0	Y	Reduce the amount of printing in 2019/20 there were 594,000 prints in qtr. 1 , this had reduced to 200,000 in qrt1 2020/21, increasing to 270,000 in qtr. 2 2020/21. If printing could be reduced by 50% this would give the saving shown	1 April 2021	9,157	6,363
FS28	Neighbourhood & Co-operative working	Reduce Postage costs	Reduce posted items through email and new ways of communicating during the pandemic			£94,650	£0	£94,650	Y	Reduce the amount of postage but this requires staff to continue with new ways of working and contacting residents.	Immediate- savings taken as one off in year	21,730	23,270
FS30	Resources	Facilities Management	Combine FM and compliance Manager role in one post and delete the FM manager and Compliance Manager, delete vacant FM roles , create data manager post to manage Assets and the insourced compliance contract.	£0	0	£419,430	£176,090	£595,520	Y	Combining compliance and insourcing compliance is projected to reduce costs further. However these cannot be released until the backlog of repairs is completed and a fuller assessment made.	Immediate	19,665	6,555

FINANCIAL SECURITY OPTIONS 2021/22

											Fund	Projected 2021/22	Projected 2022/23
											General Fund	£455,392	£545,747
											HRA	£241,546	£296,802
											Total	£696,938	£842,549
Ref No	Portfolio holder	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs (any redundancy/ capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Net Direct costs of service	Recharges	Total Cost	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Year 1	£ HRA Year 1
2021/22 Budget Options													
FS32	Resources	Audit, Anti Fraud & Corp Banking Charges	Reduce the number of Audit days from Shared Anti Fraud Service (SIAS) by 10%.			£114,400	£3,030	£117,430	Y	The number of Audit days was reduced a number of years ago, SIAS will be factoring this into their budgets next year. This could lead to a waiting list for audits. There are currently 350 days and this would reduce the programme by 35 days. Potentially reducing operational audits but sufficient days for a council of SBC size.	1 April 2021	9,209	2,231
FS33	Resources		Reapportion cost between HRA & GF based on case load, the number of cases has increased for housing services			£104,010	£3,500	£107,510	Y	This increases the cost to the HRA as the caseload data shows that a greater proportion of the service is used by the HRA (Stats:156 referrals of which 64 housing 2019/20 & 7 properties recovered and 1 RTB cancelled)	1 April 2021	22,400	-22,400
FS35	Resources	Financial Services	Delete one Graduate Post and one apprentice post		posts vacant	£191,500	£25,510	£217,010	Y	Reduce by one apprentices and one trainee not filled, this will reduce ability to react to organisation requests and will not allow for any succession planning. Significant proportion of the staff are 50+ and this reduces succession planning and does not alleviate current high work demands which was the intention when the structure was approved.	1 April 2021	67,114	11,096
FS36	Resources	Financial Services- procurement	Increase provision to EHDC and Hertsmere Borough Council (2.59FTE's , production of CSO's, training, Procurement Strategy, advice which ahs avoided legal challenges).			£138,390	£76,650	£215,040	Y	The service has been shared with Hertsmere and East Herts and a total of circa £82K of costs reduced by sharing the equivalent of 0.91FTE out of 2.59FTE. The saving shown is the additional savings of the SLA's above that originally estimated.	1 April 2021	21,296	25,273
FS37	Resources	Financial Services-paralegal (There are 2 paralegals posts or 1.91FTE dealing with RTB's, debt recovery, deeds)	Reduce hours in paralegal team, there are 2 posts or 1.67FTE. This would reduce the hours per week by 12 hours		vacant post	£87,350	£20,510	£107,860	Y	The would take out the 0.27 FTE out of the service and would mean that debt recovery would be slowed as would RTB application process if caseload increases. This would reduce the capacity to deal with commercial arrears which are likely to increase due to COVID and the delay to evictions until the end of December 2020 as a result of non-payment.	Immediate	9,816	5,004
FS42	Resources	Human Resources and Training	Delete job advertising budgets- fund any costs from the vacancy of the post	£0	0	£748,330	£212,790	£961,120	Y	There is a risk the transitional vacancy factor may not be achieved this will need to managed as part of the recruitment process. £45K-£50K has been traditionally spent on GF recruitment, exceeding the budget (there have been a number of senior recruitment drives) and for the HRA £6K- £26K over the last 3 years	1 April 2021	19,240	16,760
FS43	Resources		Reduce professional training budget					£0	Y	Where ever possible all professional qualifications will be funded by the apprentice levy. In circumstances where professional qualification is deemed necessary for an individuals roles, SBC will now funded 50% of this through a bursary scheme and ask the individual to fund 50% themselves.	1 April 2021	3,000	4,000
FS45	Resources	Cash Collection	Stop taking cash for car parks, depot and CSC ATM. (saving is the cash contract costs less projected increase in card fees) .			£58,640	£0	£58,640	Y	During COVID no cash has been taken due to safety reasons, the alternative provision for those using the ATM has been to use the post office. This could be continued into 2021/22 to determine whether this causes any issues. NB: If car park card machine software goes off line no income can be taken	1 April 2021	45,000	5,000
NEW	Resources		Cease the graduate scheme						Y	This is in addition the saving shown above and would mean no graduate resource from 1 October 2021 (GF saving increases to £98K in 2022/23). This is likely to impact on the succession planning in the Estates team.	1 October 2021	67,114	16,663
TOTAL				£ 170,000	8	£ 4,648,420	£ 1,335,540	£ 5,983,960				£455,392	£241,546

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

APPENDIX C

GROWTH PROPOSALS & KNOWN BUDGET PRESSURES 2021/22

Fund	GF	HRA
Growth	£98,966	£141,190
Pressures	£41,540	£20,460
Total	£140,506	£161,650

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Growth Proposal	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of	Impact of Growth Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Potential Timing	% General Fund (note 1) Finance can	£ General Fund Year 1	£ HRA Year 1
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REVENUE GROWTH - New Proposals / Services

G1	SDS	New Commercial Officer post (to help deliver the Cooperative Commercial & Insourcing Strategy - Salary TBC, growth figure assumes inclusion of on-costs)	Y	To provide additional resource to help delivery the new cooperative, commercial and insourcing strategy. This is in addition to the Commercial Manager post.	01 January 2021	60%	£33,000	£22,000
G4	Communtiy Safety	Mainstream No More -Core	Y	Community safety- support for those with multiple and complex needs who are either housed by or present to the council.	2021/22	75%	£37,500	£12,500
G5	Information Governance	Enhanced Information Governance Service. We currently have one role covering statutory responsibilities with regard to Information Governance and Data Protection, including GDPR responsibilities and FOI requests. The proposal is to create an additional information Officer (Permanent) There is also a requirement for non-salary costs to cover membership renewals, licenses etc.	Y	Enables SBC to meet statutory responsibilities with regard to Information Governance and Data Protection, including GDPR responsibilities. The current manager's time is taken up with responding to Subject Access Requests and FOI requests, and there is a high risk that we will not meet statutory deadlines. The impact of not resourcing this area is increased risk of: Regulatory enforcement action for non-compliance by the ICO. Monetary penalties and fines of up to €10m for potential breaches of data protection laws Legal claims/class actions for breaches of data protection by customers Adverse impact on service delivery with team members time spent assisting complaint investigations/ appeals regarding mis-handling of personal data Regulatory enforcement action for non-compliance by the ICO. Loss of customer trust and confidence in council's handling of customer information. Adverse publicity from press coverage of complaints and/ or from publication of enforcement action taken by the regulator.	01 April 2021	70%	£28,466	£12,200
G7	Housing Management	Housing Older Person Strategy post	Y	A post is required to deliver the draft Housing Older persons strategy which will be presented at the December Executive. The Strategy identifies 4 broad themes, Development standard and design, information and advice, support and assistance and Inter organisational working. The strategy has an action plan attached to it which this post will ensure is delivered to ensure the aims of the strategy are met. Existing resources will contribute to the delivery, but this post will pull the work together.	2021/22	0%	£0	£34,584
G8	Housing Asset Management	Aids and Adapts Co-ordinator	Y	This post will be required to provide older and less abled tenants who wish to consider their housing and related care options or who have been declined adaptations, with the necessary information and advice to enable them to make an informed choice.	2021/22	0%	£0	£29,954
G9	Housing Management	Systems Admin Support	Y	In recognition that the Housing Services are continually developing and transforming additional modules have been purchased in the Northgate suite of modules. With the increased functionality comes a need to ensure that the team, testing where upgrades are released and understanding bugs in the system are adequately resourced to support these modules and keep them up to date.	2021/22	0%	£0	£29,954
TOTAL GROWTH OPTIONS							£98,966	£141,190

SERVICE PRESSURES - These are budget pressures over the next 3 years

G15	ICT	ICT pressures	Y	Unavoidable ICT licensing and upgrade costs. This includes upgrade to the Real Asset Management system used by finance, additional costs for Java licensing, and licensing costs for Robotic Process Automation to support digital transformation	2021/22	67%	£41,540	£20,460
TOTAL SERVICE PRESSURES							£41,540	£20,460

TOTAL GROWTH AND SERVICE

£140,506	£161,650
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HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2021/22 APPENDIX D

FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2021/22											
Service	Description of Chargeable Service	2020/21 Price £ GROSS FEE PAID BY CUSTOMER	NET FEE (2021/22)	VAT (exemption can be applied for on certain fees)	2021/22 GROSS FEE PAYABLE BY CUSTOMER	Increase £	increase %	Total Budget 2020/21 £	Budget Increase £	Total Budget 2021/22 £	Options considered/Rationale
Housing Revenue Account											
Supported Housing:											
Guest Bedrooms	All schemes other than those listed below (per night, per person)	£12.00	£10.42	£2.08	£12.50	£0.50	4.17%				
	Norman Court/Hobbs Ct/Gladstone Ct/Shafesbury Ct/Truro/ Pitt Court/Grosvenor Ct per night. (any bedsit type guest room, per night, per person)	£21.50	£18.75	£3.75	£22.50	£1.00	4.65%				With the exception of Norman Court, officers to look at converting some of these guest rooms to convert them into accommodation -
Short Stay Units	Assessment (per day)	£11.00	£11.50	£0.00	£11.50	£0.50	4.55%				
	Other, including an element of support (per day)	£21.50	£22.50	£0.00	£22.50	£1.00	4.65%				
								10,300	330	10,630	
Laundry Charges	Sheltered schemes first wash (per week)	£3.00	£2.63	£0.52	£3.15	£0.15	5.00%				
	Second wash and thereafter	£3.00	£2.63	£0.52	£3.15	£0.15	5.00%				
	Guest bedrooms and short stay (per wash)	£3.00	£2.63	£0.52	£3.15	£0.15	5.00%				
								7,000	270	7,270	
Room Hire	Hairdressing at Silkin/Fred Millard, (Hourly charge) *	£3.60	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	£1.40	38.89%				
	Private chiropodist and other services, (per hour) *	£3.60	£4.17	£0.83	£5.00	£1.40	38.89%				
								1,400	200	1,600	
Support Services and careline for HRA tenants	Sheltered housing support * (includes all services shown under careline alarms)	£19.00	£19.65	£0.00	£19.65	£0.65	3.42%		6,000	6,000	Change of supplier has reduced the cost to £1.
	SIM Careline Unit (additional weekly charge)	£2.50	£0.83	£0.17	£1.00	£-1.50	-60.00%				
	independent living and flexi care support charge for previous hHRS protected clients and new residents entitled to HB	£6.00	£8.00	£0.00	£8.00	£2.00	33.33%		62,400	63,000	
	response service for new customers (50 weeks)	£8.28	£7.20	£1.44	£8.64	£0.36	4.35%				
	Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	£4.68	£4.10	£0.82	£4.92	£0.24	5.13%		600		
	Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	£3.60	£3.10	£0.62	£3.72	£0.12	3.33%				
								135,280	69,000	204,280	
Careline Alarm- private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)	Response service (52 weeks) *	£8.28	£7.20	£1.44	£8.64	£0.36	4.35%				Previously charged for 50 weeks per year; amended to 52 week charging from 2021/22
	Response service out of area (52 weeks)*	£8.28	£7.20	£1.44	£8.64	£0.36	4.35%				
	Response service to other provider equipment (52 weeks)*	£4.68	£4.10	£0.82	£4.92	£0.24	5.13%				
	Monitoring only service (52 weeks) *	£3.60	£3.10	£0.62	£3.72	£0.12	3.33%				
								123,900	2,500	126,400	This Saving (£2,500) is for the GENERAL FUND - shown on there as a "one liner" - and only shown here for REFERENCE
	Careline (Winkhouse) keys*	£12.60	£11.00	£2.20	£13.20	£0.60	4.76%				
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Black)	£21.30	£17.92	£3.58	£21.50	£0.20	0.94%				

Replacement Pendants Key safe	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Shark)	£12.75	£10.83	£2.17	£13.00	£0.25	1.96%				
	All Pendants	£51.00	£43.75	£8.75	£52.50	£1.50	2.94%				
	Supply	£20.65	£17.71	£3.54	£21.25	£0.60	2.91%				
	Fit	£59.50	£50.83	£10.17	£61.00	£1.50	2.52%				
Lock Change		£85.75	£73.75	£14.75	£88.50	£2.75	3.21%				
								3,500	80	3,580	
General Needs Tenants and Leaseholders:											
Key Fobs	Old Style "Black fobs"	£21.30	£18.33	£3.67	£22.00	£0.70	3.29%				
	New "Shark" Fobs	£12.75	£10.83	£2.17	£13.00	£0.25	1.96%				
	Replacement keys for entry doors to flat blocks.	£20.00	£17.17	£3.43	£20.60	£0.60	3.00%	1,230	30	1,260	
Communal door entry keys											
Laundry charges - Roundmead, Brent and Harrow											
Management Fees for Westwood Court & Kilner Close											
Stores											
Lock change											
								23,680	2,840	26,520	
Retrospective Charges		£150.00	£200.00	£0.00	£200.00	£50.00	33.33%				
Leasehold charges for services - VAT not applicable. All fees								5,000	1,000	6,000	
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*	10 working day response	£165.00	£166.00	£0.00	£166.00	£1.00	0.61%				
	3 working day response	£247.50	£250.00	£0.00	£250.00	£2.50	1.01%				
	Re-mortgage enquiries*	£57.00	£60.00	£0.00	£60.00	£3.00	5.26%				
Copy of lease*	fee for providing a copy of the lease	£31.00	£32.00	£0.00	£32.00	£1.00	3.23%				
Requests for landlord's consent*	where leaseholder wants to carry out alterations - permission must be sought from SBC.	£103.00	£105.00	£0.00	£105.00	£2.00	1.94%				
	charge for inspection post completion of works	£51.50	£55.00	£0.00	£55.00	£3.50	6.80%				
Retrospective landlord's consent*	where leaseholder is seeking permission for works carried out retrospectively.	£206.00	£225.00	£0.00	£225.00	£19.00	9.22%				
	additional inspection fee	£51.50	£55.00	£0.00	£55.00	£3.50	6.80%				
Copies of quarterly service charge invoice*	additional inspection fee	£5.25	£20.00	£0.00	£20.00	£14.75	280.95%				Statements are available on-line free of charge
Copies of service charge estimate or actual statement*	additional inspection fee	£5.25	£20.00	£0.00	£20.00	£14.75	280.95%				Statements are available on-line free of charge
Deed of Postponement		£85.00	£87.00	£0.00	£87.00	£2.00	2.35%				
Notice of Charge		£25.00	£25.50	£0.00	£25.50	£0.50	2.00%				
Notice of Transfer		£25.00	£25.50	£0.00	£25.50	£0.50	2.00%				
								0		0	
GRAND TOTAL								£318,180	£76,450	£394,630	

Notes

- charges are rounded to the nearest 5p
- All charges are inclusive of VAT @ 20% with the exception of items marked with an *
- Careline and Community Support are subject to VAT for private residents unless they complete an exemption declaration.

Additional Income (fees & charges)

£76,450

Less: £2,500 (G Fund Saving)

£73,950

**APPENDIX E: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES
2021/22**

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that the budgeted level of income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved. This is anticipated largely to be as a result of the downturn in economy and COVID, but could also be as a result of increased void rates, lower collection rates, disputed bills, All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the monthly/quarterly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Rechargeable works not raised or recovered	£153,790	10.00%	£15,379
Leaseholder charges not realised (excluding insurance)	£887,590	5.00%	£44,380
Rental income (increase in voids rates)	£40,843,590	0.75%	£306,327
Service Charges (increase in voids rates)	£1,679,960	0.75%	£12,600
Heating charges	£242,110	5.00%	£12,106
Total			£390,791

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	Potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide the service increases significantly, including due to COVID. Individual budgets reviewed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience and so any variances should show up during the year.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Storm damage and fire damage uninsured costs (excess is £25,000 for fire damage)	£25,000	100.00%	£25,000
Response and Emergency repairs increase as a result of inflationary pressures or unforeseen repairs	£7,595,760	5.00%	£379,788
Unforeseen Capital works not budgeted for requiring a contribution to capital (based on a proportion of the capital programme)	£51,649,050	2.00%	£1,032,981
Inflation pressures on capital works requiring additional revenue resources to fund the shortfall	£51,649,050	0.75%	£387,368
Insufficient budget identified for damp and mould works	£250,000	10.00%	£25,000

APPENDIX E: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES
2021/22

Cost of decanting tenants from redevelopment sites is higher than budgeted for	£330,000	5.00%	£16,500
Total			£1,866,637

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increase in borrowing costs for internal borrowing	£4,857,066	0.25%	£12,143
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5% not achieved	£218,630	10.00%	£21,863
Increase in bad debt provision	£224,220	10.00%	£22,422
Utility inflation (Electricity increase in April 2018, Gas increase from Oct 2018)	£626,260	5.00%	£31,313
NEW pay award is higher than budgeted for	£7,693,340	0.00%	£20,630
Total			£108,371

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that changes in government policy and legislation mean income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increased Right to buys as a result of Government initiatives reducing the amount of collectable rent. Assume an additional 20 RTB's increasing the number to 65 in 2021	£98,582	50.00%	£49,291
NEW higher rent arrears as a result of COVID	£500,000	2.50%	£12,500
Total			£61,791

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors
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APPENDIX E: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES 2021/22

Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Savings Options delayed or not realised	£224,883	15.00%	£33,732
Total			£33,732

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Gross Expenditure (excluding fixed interest costs and depreciation and RCCO)	£24,945,477.00	1.50%	£374,182
Total			£374,182

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Greater exposure to interest rate changes	Moving from RCCOs to new borrowing to support capital increases the risk of higher borrowing costs due to increased interest rates.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
General allowance in the balances to meet any potential increased cost of borrowing (new 2021/22 loans)	£26,602,339	0.56%	£149,239
Total			£149,239

Level of Balances Assumed in Housing Revenue Account Based on risk **£2,985,000**

Balances held for future debt and capital programme. **£22,800,041**

Total Required balances **£25,785,041**

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Equality at Stevenage Borough Council

Stevenage Borough Council as a service provider, employer and community leader is committed to achieving equal opportunities for everyone. We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.

Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the EqIA considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion in considering the impact on people in terms of their social or economic background.

EqIAs also help the Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Savings Proposals 2021/22

Prior to their consideration at Executive in December 2020, all savings proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Some of these have no public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqlA.

Where a negative, positive or disproportionate impact is likely, Assistant Directors and other appropriate managers have drafted Brief or Full EqlAs. These have been summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Executive on 20/1/2021 and 10/2/2021. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on equality groups is identified where appropriate.

The following activity has taken/will take place:

December 2020 – February 2021	EqlAs finalised considering further evidence as necessary
January and February 2021	Consideration of all completed EqlAs at Council meetings

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
FS23	CSC and Customer-Focus redesign and efficiencies.	<p>Full – Unequal Impact</p> <p>Overview Overall the proposal will not have negative impacts as we aim to maintain current service levels. Customers will still be able to access services over the telephone or access services face to face.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging with it, that could be to the detriment of people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online which may overlap with many of the protected characteristics.</p> <p>Age Research evidence from ONS data suggests that older people tend to be less digitally active, and potentially at risk of digital exclusion, although the picture is complex and social class / income can be a relevant factor too.</p> <p>If the Council stopped providing telephone or face to face support that could be to the detriment of those older people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online.</p> <p>Disability People with some types of disability may have difficulties using or making the most of digital technologies. These people may benefit less from enhanced digital channels.</p> <p>Socio-Economic</p>	<p>Measure the take up of digital services by different groups and use the insight to design future services.</p> <p>Ensure the customer service model supports those who cannot benefit from digital channels by providing alternatives.</p>	Ruth Luscombe/ Greg Arends

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		Low income, social class and social housing tenancy have been identified in some research as indicators of whether someone is likely to have the competence, confidence and capability to make the most of digital technologies.		
FS25	Print Room	<p>Brief – Unequal Impact</p> <p>Overview This saving involves the closing of the print room and the putting into place of alternative arrangements including paperless committee meetings, digital alternatives and directing work through Docmail print service.</p> <p>Age Digital alternatives to printed documents may disproportionately impact on older people. Research evidence from ONS data suggests that older people tend to be less digitally active, and potentially at risk of digital exclusion, although the picture is complex and social class / income can be a relevant factor too.</p> <p>Socio-Economic Digital alternatives to printed documents may disproportionately impact some socio economic groups. Low income, social class and social housing tenancy have been identified in some research as indicators of whether someone is likely to have the competence, confidence and capability to make the most of digital technologies.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging</p>	Complete Full EQIA assessment.	Ruth Luscombe

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		with it, that could be to the detriment of people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online.		
FS43	Reduce Professional Training Budget	<p>Brief – Unknown / Neutral Impact</p> <p>Overview This proposed saving involves the reduction of the professional training budget. Where possible professional qualifications would be paid for by the apprenticeship levy.</p> <p>Currently no workforce information is monitored on the take up of learning and development opportunities by protected characteristic group.</p> <p>However, learning and development opportunities are available and taken up by all staff regardless of their background. In response to the Covid pandemic more learning and development offers are available virtually.</p>	Record protected characteristics data on staff completing learning and development courses	Clare Davies/ Kirsten Frew
FS44	Reduce Graduate Training Budget.	<p>Brief – Insignificant Impact</p> <p>Overview This proposed saving involves the reduction of the graduate training budget. The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore the protected characteristics have not identified in the EQIA for reasons of anonymity.</p> <p>However, all graduates at SBC are from the National Local</p>		Clare Davies/ Kirsten Frew

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		development Government Scheme and have a full learning and programme.		
FS45	Stop taking cash payments for Car Parks, depot and CSC ATM.	<p>Brief – Equal Impact</p> <p>Overview We know that Cash represented only 1.17% of payments collected last year and alternative means are available for all services. This saving proposes that the council stop collecting cash in order to support financial security.</p> <p>We do not know who pays for car parking in cash. However there are a number of alternatives, including card for car parks and phone payments for on street parking.</p> <p>Socio-Economic Those small minorities of people who may not have a bank account may be negatively impacted. Cash payments which would have been made to Customer Services can still be made via the Post Office.</p>	Keep payment options under review in response to customer feedback	Ruth Luscombe
FS19	Combine the Residents and Star Surveys	<p>Brief – Positive / Negative / Unequal Impact</p> <p>Overview This proposal suggests combining the Town-wide Resident Survey and the Council Tenant Satisfaction Survey (STAR). There are also plans to undertake other complementary community engagement activities.</p> <p>Age - Older People</p>	<p>Establish the revised Resident/STAR survey sampling/questionnaire approach</p> <p>Develop an engagement plan incorporating both the Resident/STAR survey</p>	Rob Gregory/ Katrina Shirley

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>It will not be possible within a combined, shorter survey to ask specific additional questions to Independent Living Scheme tenants, and the number of responses from these tenants will be lower. This may be mitigated through a separate engagement activity.</p> <p>Age - Younger People As the Resident Survey is targeted at householders, the profile of respondents is inherently older than the general resident population. By undertaking other engagement activity specifically targeted at younger people, the views of this group will be better captured.</p> <p>Sex/Age/Ethnic Origin/Disability/Marital & Working Status The surveys collect information in respect of sex, age, ethnic origin, disability, marital status and working status. This enables some analysis of the profile of tenants and residents to be undertaken and enables significant differences to be identified.</p> <p>However, all results are subject to sampling tolerances and not all differences are statistically significant. By complementing the surveys with a range of focused engagement activities, a greater diversity of views can be captured.</p> <p>Religion or Belief/Gender Reassignment /Sexual Orientation</p>	and other engagement activities	

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		Previous surveys have not analysed results in relation to religion, gender reassignment and sexual orientation. Plans to undertake further engagement activities will provide the opportunity to capture the views of these protected characteristic groups.		
HRA Rent & Service Charge	Rent and service charge setting for 2021/22	<p><u>Overall</u></p> <p>The aim of the rent and service charge policy is to provide a fair method of calculating rents and service charges for all the Council's tenants. It also aligns with the Council's Concessions for Fees and Charges Policy and the principle of recovering the cost of providing services.</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups.</p> <p>Tenants benefited from four years of rent reduction from 2016-2020, so the impact of the rent increase is mitigated partially by having to use a lower base than it would have been had there not been a mandatory rent reduction (cumulative) of 1 % per annum for four years.</p> <p><u>Unequal/Negative Impact</u></p> <p>Age</p> <p>A proportion of tenants may see an increase in service charges in any given year. The majority of tenants who are charged for services live in flats and/or flexicare/independent living accommodation. Data indicates that the age profile of</p>	<p>Publish rent increase information on the website to start preparing tenants.</p> <p>The rent notification letter will offer tenants the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with staff.</p> <p>Make links to clear support and guidance on all of our communication platforms</p> <p>Prepare staff to enable them to respond effectively and empathetically with tenants.</p> <p>Consult with residents</p>	Jaine Cresser/ Elizabeth Ddamulira

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>tenants of flexicare/independent living accommodation is older than those in the general needs stock. The age profile of tenants living in general needs flats is younger than for the SBC housing stock as a whole.</p> <p>For people living in independent living/flexicare schemes, in addition to basic rent and service charges, those who pay for the support/emergency response services that are not eligible for Housing benefit may also see an increase in the overall payment due each week.</p> <p>Disability Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. However, to give some context, the data indicated that the proportion of tenants in flexicare/independent living accommodation with a disability was almost double the proportion for the whole SBC tenant population. As referred to above, most flexicare/independent living housing will be subject to service and support charges.</p> <p>The proportion of tenants living in flat blocks declaring a disability was very similar to the proportion living in all properties; therefore a disproportionate impact on these tenants is not anticipated.</p> <p>Socio Economic The rent increase will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Work and Welfare Reform Act and in line with the current Rent Standard Direction, regardless of socio-</p>	<p>throughout 2021/22 to establish the impact and put in place systems to mitigate this.</p>	

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>economic circumstances. Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of those services.</p> <p>Those reliant on Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) housing costs to cover their full rent and eligible service charges will not be affected by the increase in rent and service charges as their benefit award will be recalculated.</p> <p>The COVID19 pandemic has caused unemployment and unstable employment. Residents experiencing exceptional economic hardship who are unable to work due to a duty to self-isolate are receiving a drop in earnings.</p> <p>The policy allows for capping of service charges, subject to any legal constraints. As a means of mitigating the impact of an increase that would cause hardship, the Council may subsidise the costs.</p> <p>Support provision for this group has been increased as part of an income recovery action plan. This includes additional staffing resources.</p>		
HRA support charge	Increase contribution to support costs to £8 per week	<p><u>Overall</u></p> <p>This applies to residents living in independent living/flexicare housing that are in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging, universal credit (UC) or are 2003 protected (i.e. those in the service prior to the government supporting people grant funding starting in 2003). As at 20 November 2020 this affects 595 people. The remaining residents in independent living/flexicare already pay the full charge.</p>	To ensure that the charge is explained as clearly as possible when the support charge notification is sent, there will be a FAQ sheet and details	Jaine Cresser/ Karen Long

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p><u>Positive Impact</u></p> <p>Socio Economic Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified the emergency alarm service and the supported housing officer as the 2nd and 3rd most important priority associated with living in their property. The application of the support charge will help to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver this service.</p> <p><u>Negative Impact:</u></p> <p>Age Residents of independent living and flexicare schemes who will have to pay the increased charge are predominantly older people. Conversely however, the costs are currently subsidised by the wider tenant population, who have a younger age profile and do not benefit from the service.</p> <p>Disability The residents who are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.</p> <p>Socio Economic The support charge is not eligible for housing benefit and could have a negative impact for those on lower incomes in terms of affordability.</p>	<p>on the website.</p> <p>Review whether any elements of the independent living service should be eligible for housing benefit.</p>	

Saving Ref	Saving/Income proposed	Summary of potential impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>This group of residents may also be affected by increases in Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) charges affecting the overall amount that older and disabled people can afford to pay.</p> <p>However, the introduction of the charge is considered to be fairer than under current arrangements, whereby support charge costs are subsidised by the wider tenant population who do not benefit from the service.</p> <p>Furthermore, the charge has been introduced on an incremental basis, to mitigate the impact, rather than applying the full amount of £19.65 per week in one 'hit'.</p> <p>In addition, HCC have confirmed that they will be continuing with our flexicare support contract until end March 2022, which will mean that this will help offset some of the costs that we would have had to pass on to this group of residents.</p> <p>We currently have 3 people that have made nil payment of the support charge either since the introduction of the contribution charge or since moving in. As at 20 November 2020 there are 71 people who are in arrears over £30 totalling £12,384. This is likely to increase when the new charge starts in April 2021.</p>		

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		FS23 – Savings to Customer Service Centre and Customer Focus Service			
Lead Assessor	Ruth Luscombe			Assessment team	
Start date		End date			
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	April 2021				

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Who may be affected by it?	Council customers (residents, businesses, voluntary organisations and other partners), Customer Service Centre and Customer Focus staff
What are the key aims of it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect current service levels while delivering structural savings by reducing avoidable demand and increasing self-service through digital channels. • Improve customer awareness of digital channels and encourage take up • Enable better value for money customer service and complaints handling provision • Improve consistency and transparency through adopting enhanced digital case management for complaints. • Embed insight and continuous improvement as a core part of the Customer Service model

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	A new website launched in September 2020 to meet government accessibility guidelines	Encourage good relations	Improved access channels for customers and staff, digital options available 24/7

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Desk research drawing on a broad range of national (Office Of National Statistics), local survey research (STAR survey 2017, 'Big Knock' 2017), MySociety.org website as well as examples from other councils (Cambridge City Council, Sutton Council)
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>Overall the proposal will not have negative impacts as we aim to maintain current service levels as our customers increasingly choose to adopt digital self-service channels. Customers will still be able to access services over the telephone, or where required access services face to face by booking an appointment. This proposal has been enabled by our Connected to our Customers (CTOC) programme which has delivered a new website & digital platform, as well as an online portal for housing, and enhancements to waste processes e.g. for missed collections. An EQIA has been undertaken for this programme and will be kept under review.</p> <p>As technology evolves, (and is adopted by different communities differently) the ways in which people can be excluded or disadvantaged will change too. We will need to review our digital access solutions regularly to ensure changes in requirements are identified and potential solutions agreed on.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Research evidence from ONS data suggests that older people tend to be less digitally active, and potentially at risk of digital exclusion, although the picture is complex and social class / income can be a relevant factor too.			

		<p>Older people are much less likely to use the internet than other age groups. In 2019, 47% of adults in the UK aged 75 years or over had used the internet in the last 3 months, compared to 91% of all adults.</p> <p>During Housing's 2017 'Big Knock' Tenants Survey, 77% of all respondents reported having access to the internet. (This result compares to STAR survey which indicated 74% of residents using internet at home and further 9% outside of home). Of the 23% that don't have access, 76% were over 65 years old. 48% of over 75 year olds reported to having access to the internet, which is similar to the national statistics.</p> <p>If the Council stopped providing telephone or face to face support that could be to the detriment of those older people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online; however this is not an aim of this proposal and we are retaining these more traditional channels.</p>	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Disability e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<p>People with some types of disability may have difficulties using or making the most of digital technologies, which may not be adapted to their needs related to their specific disability. These people may benefit less from enhanced digital channels.</p> <p>Disabled people are less likely to use the internet than people without disabilities. In 2019 78% of disabled adults (10 million) in the UK used the internet, which is a massive increase compared with 25% in 2016, but still significantly lower than the all adult rate of 95% (ONS 2019). Although disabled people are reported to be less likely to continue using the internet after they have first accessed it. The difference between internet use in disabled and non-disabled adults was greater in the older age groups.</p>			

	<p>For adults aged 75 years and over, 41% of disabled adults and 54% of non-disabled adults were recent internet users. In comparison, there was only a small difference in recent internet use for disabled and non-disabled adults in the 16 to 24 age group; 98% of disabled adults and 99% of non-disabled adults in this age group were recent internet users.</p> <p>There are a number of tools (software and hardware) available now to make that more possible, we continue through the CTOC programme to explore their feasibility and future implementation. The Council also plans to continue to provide assisted digital approaches and, where necessary for those who cannot engage digitally, more traditional channels or routes through which people with these characteristics can engage with us.</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender reassignment				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or civil partnership				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and	Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)			

information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Pregnancy & maternity					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Religion or belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sex			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Unequal impact			
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sexual orientation e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Unequal impact			
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Socio-economic¹ e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement			
Positive impact		Negative impact	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Low income, social class and social housing tenancy have been identified in some research as indicators of whether someone is likely to have the competence, confidence and capability to make the most of digital technologies.</p> <p>People living in social housing are less likely to access the internet than people living in other housing tenures. During Housing's 2017 'Big Knock' Tenants Survey 23% of all respondents reported not having access to the internet (the same results were also received during the STAR survey).</p> <p>The evidence also suggests that people on low incomes are less likely to have digital access and basic digital skills. Nationally, 17% of people earning less than £20,000 never use the internet, as opposed to 2% of people earning more than £40,000. 44% of people without basic digital skills are on lower wages or are unemployed.</p> <p>People with any of the protected characteristics may be more vulnerable to poverty, and may therefore be at greater risk of digital exclusion, which may be exacerbated by inter-sectionality between their characteristics and their income.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging with it, that could be to the detriment of people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online.</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

Other					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Our research has not identified any particular negative impacts (or differential impacts)			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?		Residents?	
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :			
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified			
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made		
	2b. Continue as planned	X	
	2c. Stop and remove		

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Measure the take up of digital services by different groups and use the insight to design future services	Promote equal opportunities	Ruth Luscombe	From April 2021	As part of the new customer service model
Ensure the customer service model supports those who cannot benefit from digital channels by providing alternatives.	Promote equal opportunities	Ruth Luscombe	From April 2021	As part of the new customer service model

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Ruth Luscombe
Date: 18.11.20

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	FS25 – Closing the Print Room	What are the key aims of it?	Remove the document centre staff post and put in place alternative arrangements including paperless committee meetings, digital alternatives and directing work through Docmail print service.			
Who may be affected by it?	Staff, Councillors and Customers					
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	April 2021					
Form completed by:	Ruth Luscombe	Start date	June 2021	End date	n/a	
		Review date				

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	ONS Data, Housing STAR and “Big Knock” Survey data	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	We need to do further analysis of the documents currently printed by the Print Service and ensure a clear alternative plan in place for each. This will be reviewed in a full EQIA.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	Unequal – Digital alternatives to printed documents may disproportionately impact on older people. Research evidence from ONS data suggests that older people tend to be less digitally active, and potentially at risk of digital	Race	N/A

	<p>exclusion, although the picture is complex and social class / income can be a relevant factor too.</p> <p>Older people are much less likely to use the internet than other age groups. In 2019, 47% of adults in the UK aged 75 years or over had used the internet in the last 3 months, compared to 91% of all adults.</p> <p>During Housing's 2017 'Big Knock' Tenants Survey, 77% of all respondents reported having access to the internet. (This result compares to STAR survey which indicated 74% of residents using internet at home and further 9% outside of home). Of the 23% that don't have access, 76% were over 65 years old. 48% of over 75 year olds reported to having access to the internet, which is similar to the national statistics.</p>		
Disability	N/A	Religion or belief	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	Sex	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	Sexual orientation	N/A

Pregnancy & maternity	N/A	Socio-economic ²	<p>Unequal – Digital alternatives to printed documents may disproportionately impact some socio economic groups. Low income, social class and social housing tenancy have been identified in some research as indicators of whether someone is likely to have the competence, confidence and capability to make the most of digital technologies.</p> <p>People living in social housing are less likely to access the internet than people living in other housing tenures. During Housing's 2017 'Big Knock' Tenants Survey 23% of all respondents reported not having access to the internet (the same results were also received during the STAR survey).</p> <p>The evidence also suggests that people on low incomes are less likely to have digital</p>
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²Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			<p>access and basic digital skills. Nationally, 17% of people earning less than £20,000 never use the internet, as opposed to 2% of people earning more than £40,000. 44% of people without basic digital skills are on lower wages or are unemployed.</p> <p>People with any of the protected characteristics may be more vulnerable to poverty, and may therefore be at greater risk of digital exclusion, which may be exacerbated by intersectionality between their characteristics and their income.</p> <p>If the Council failed to provide non-digital means of engaging with it, that could be to the detriment of people who do not have the skills or capabilities to engage online.</p>
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Full EQIA assessment	Ruth Luscombe	Project to be set up to review the impacts and alternatives to be put in place.	June 2021

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Ruth Luscombe
Date: 18.11.20

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	FS43 – Reduce Training Budget during 2021-22	What are the key aims of it?	To consider the potential impact of the proposed saving of reducing the training budget for 2021/22 on all staff and particularly those under the protected characteristics.		
Who may be affected by it?					
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)					
Form completed by:	Clare Davies	Start date	November 2020	End date	Ongoing
		Review date	November 2021		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Workforce Equalities Data as of November 2020	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Currently no workforce information is held on socio-economic status of the Stevenage Borough Council workforce and therefore this cannot be assessed.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities	Race	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities
Disability	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities	Religion or belief	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities

Gender reassignment	Data for this protected characteristic is incomplete for the employees impacted by the proposed savings options.	Sex	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities
Marriage or civil partnership	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities	Sexual orientation	We do not hold data on employee characteristics for take up of learning and development opportunities
Pregnancy & maternity	No information is held on the pregnancy and maternity status of the employees impacted by the proposed savings.	Socio-economic ³	No information is held on the socio-economic status of the employees impacted by the proposed savings.
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Learning and development opportunities are available and taken up by all staff regardless of their background In response to the Covid pandemic more learning and development offers	Promote equal opportunities	Access to the apprenticeship levy funded courses is available to all staff	Encourage good relations	

³Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

	and moving to virtual platforms and this often reduces costs.				
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What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Record protected characteristics data on staff completing learning and development courses	Clare Davies	Developing the HR System	April 2021

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Clare Davies
Date: 12.11.20

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	Reduced Graduate Training Budget	What are the key aims of it?	To consider the potential impact of the proposed saving of reducing the graduate training budget for 2021/22 on all staff and particularly those under the protected characteristics.		
Who may be affected by it?					
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)					
Form completed by:	Clare Davies	Start date	November 2020	End date	Ongoing
		Review date	November 2021		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Workforce Equalities Data as of November 2020	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Currently no workforce information is held on socio-economic status of the Stevenage Borough Council workforce and therefore this cannot be assessed.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified. However, all graduates at SBC are from the National Local Government Scheme and have a full learning and	Race	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified.

	development programme. We also have vacant posts so they will not be disproportionately impacted.		
Disability	None of the employees impacted by the proposed savings have identified as disabled and therefore no disproportionate effects are anticipated.	Religion or belief	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified.
Gender reassignment	Data for this protected characteristic is incomplete for the employees impacted by the proposed savings options.	Sex	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified.
Marriage or civil partnership	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified.	Sexual orientation	The number of employees impacted by the savings is less than 5 and therefore not identified.
Pregnancy & maternity	No information is held on the pregnancy and maternity status of the employees impacted by the proposed savings.	Socio-economic ⁴	No information is held on the socio-economic status of the employees impacted by the proposed savings.
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination	Continue with	Promote equal	Access to the	Encourage good	

⁴Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

& harassment	National Graduate Programme Development Programme and promote other learning opportunities	opportunities	apprenticeship levy funded courses	relations	
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What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Clare Davies
Date: 12.11.20

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	FS45 – Removal of cash collection	What are the key aims of it?	Stop collecting cash in order to save money, as alternative payment methods are available.			
Who may be affected by it?	Residents, Businesses, Staff, Partners					
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A					
Form completed by:	Ruth Luscombe	Start date		End date		
		Review date				

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Cash represented only 1.17% of payments collected last year and alternative means are available for all services.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	We do not know who pays for car parking in cash. However there are a number of alternatives available. There are health and hygiene reasons for not accepting cash during the COVID-19 pandemic – card and phone payments are available.
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	N/A	Race	N/A
Disability	N/A	Religion or belief	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	Sex	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	Sexual orientation	N/A

Pregnancy & maternity	N/A	Socio-economic ⁵	Unequal – That small minority of people who may not have a bank account may be negatively impacted. Cash payments which would have been made to Customer Services can still be made via the Post Office.
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
If a negative or unequal (high or low) impact has been identified, you should assess this further in a Full EqIA	Ruth Luscombe	Keep payment options under review in response to customer feedback	April 2022

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Ruth Luscombe
Date: 12th November 2020

⁵Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	FS19 - Combine the Town-wide Resident Survey and the Council Tenant Satisfaction Survey (known as 'STAR'), which are now undertaken every 3 years.	What are the key aims of it?	<p>The Town-wide survey of resident householders seeks feedback and resident perception on a range of issues and services and supports the council's priority-setting process.</p> <p>The 'STAR' survey is used across the housing sector and enables the council to assess levels of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction, to identify their priorities and to shape its services accordingly.</p> <p>The proposal is to reduce the overall cost by combining the two surveys and/or reducing the survey length/overall numbers surveyed. Additionally, there are plans to increase other community engagement activities at the co-operative neighbourhood level, which will complement the Resident and STAR surveys. These will be undertaken 'in-house' by the council's community development team, supported by other colleagues – potentially using a “big knock” approach.</p>		
Who may be affected by it?	Resident householders and council tenants				
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A				
Form completed by:	Katrina Shirley	Start date	14.11.20	End date	
		Review date		N/A	

<p>What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<p>SBC Resident Survey Report 2017/18 SBC STAR Survey Report SBC Community Engagement Framework SBC Equality and Diversity Policy Housemark STAR guidance Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on benchmarking resident satisfaction data.</p> <p><u>General Comments:</u></p> <p><u>Resident/STAR survey responses:</u></p> <p>In conducting the surveys, the views of random samples of resident householders and tenants are canvassed. In 2017/18, the surveys resulted in the following number of responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident survey – 1067 (margin of error in results = +/- 3%) • General Needs tenants – 483 (margin of error in results = +/- 4%) • Sheltered tenants – 367 (margin of error in results = +/- 3.75) <p>Returned samples are checked for differential response rates and results are weighted to correct for this, so that the reported results are broadly representative of the population of residents and tenants.</p> <p>The number of responses achieved in 2017/18 met good practice standards and benchmarking requirements. Every effort will be made to achieve the same level of responses from residents and general needs tenants in 2021/22 through the combined survey, if the budget allows. It is unlikely that the same level of sheltered tenant responses can be achieved as in 2017/18 however. It should be noted that the combined total number people surveyed will be lower than in 2017/18, and the</p>	<p>Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify</p>	<p>Detailed information on the size of sample/ breadth of survey questions that can be achieved within the revised budget.</p>
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	<p>range of issues consulted upon will be reduced (however, see comments below on addressing this and enhancing the approach through the use of other engagement channels).</p> <p>Anonymised information on the protected characteristics of respondents is collected through the survey in respect of sex, age, ethnic origin, disability and working status. This enables some analysis of the profile of tenants and residents to be undertaken and enables significant differences in responses to be identified. It should be noted that all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant, particularly where the numbers within a particular protected characteristic group are relatively small.</p> <p><u>SBC Community Engagement Framework</u></p> <p>The Resident and STAR surveys are just one part of a broader approach to community engagement in Stevenage, which involves a range of ways in which the council consults with and involves residents and tenants. The Community Engagement Framework includes the following aim (which aligns with Goal 3 of the Equality & Diversity Policy):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and developing creative ways to engage with our communities, ensuring equality of opportunity in having a voice, which will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting and supporting processes that engage and provide representation for communities in decision making - Developing more creative approaches that encourage engagement from all sections of our community, using digital and neighbourhood networks - Providing opportunities for our protected characteristic communities to come together in exploring the needs of minority communities, groups and organisations. <p>In this context, in 2021/22, a co-ordinated approach will be adopted, in</p>		
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	which the Resident/STAR survey will be complemented by other engagement activities at the Cooperative Neighbourhood level. This is a positive step that will enable us to reach new people in different ways, including those from protected characteristic groups.		
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	<p>General (potential neutral impact) In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and general needs tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18 within the revised budget, views of differing ages can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined Resident/STAR survey to the same level of statistical accuracy.</p> <p>Older People (potential negative impact) It will not be possible within a combined, shorter survey to ask the specific additional questions to Independent Living Scheme tenants that were asked in the STAR 2017/18 and the number of responses from these tenants will be lower. This may be mitigated through a separate engagement activity, but this will require internal resource.</p> <p>Younger People (potential positive impact) As the Resident Survey is targeted at householders, the profile of respondents is inherently older than the general resident population. By undertaking other engagement</p>	Race	<p>Potential Positive Impact In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18, views of residents and tenants from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined survey, to the same level of statistical accuracy.</p> <p>However, the Resident/STAR survey has limitations in this regard, given the generalised nature of the survey and the relatively small number of responses that can be achieved through the sample from people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.</p> <p>By undertaking more focused engagement activity with the diverse range of black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Stevenage, their views and feedback can be better captured.</p>

	activity specifically targeted at younger people, the views of this group will be better captured.		
Disability	<p>Potential Positive Impact</p> <p>In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18, views of residents and tenants with disabilities can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined survey, to the same level of statistical accuracy.</p> <p>In addition, by undertaking complementary engagement activity specifically targeted at people with disabilities, more focused consultation with this group can be achieved.</p>	Religion or belief	<p>Potential Positive Impact</p> <p>Previous Resident and STAR surveys have not analysed results by respondents' religion or belief and because of the general nature of the surveys and the sampling approach, it is unlikely they would be particularly effective in this regard.</p> <p>By undertaking more focused engagement activity with faith groups the views of people of different religion or beliefs can be better captured.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>Potential Positive Impact</p> <p>Previous Resident and STAR surveys have not analysed results by this protected characteristic and because of the general nature of the surveys and the sampling approach, it is unlikely they would be effective in this regard.</p> <p>There is the potential to undertake more focused engagement activity to capture the views of this protected characteristic group.</p>	Sex	<p>Potential Neutral Impact</p> <p>In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18, views of male and female respondents can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined Resident/STAR survey to the same level of statistical accuracy.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<p>Neutral Impact:</p> <p>In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18, views of people of</p>	Sexual orientation	<p>Potential Positive Impact:</p> <p>The previous Resident and STAR surveys did not analyse results in relation to this protected characteristic and more focused engagement</p>

	different marital status can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined Resident/STAR survey to the same level of statistical accuracy.		activity may enable views to be better captured.
Pregnancy & maternity	Neutral Impact: The Resident and STAR surveys do not analyse results in relation to this protected characteristic.	Socio-economic ⁶	Potential Neutral Impact: In general terms, if the same number of responses from residents and tenants can be achieved as in 2017/18, views of respondents from differing socio-economic backgrounds can continue to be canvassed and compared through the combined Resident/STAR survey to the same level of statistical accuracy.
Other			

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	By widening the range of engagement activities, the council can better understand whether perceptions of the town and the experience of council services differ amongst people from protected	Promote equal opportunities	The proposed approach to widen the range of engagement activities will increase opportunities for people from protected characteristic groups to express their views on issues and services and better	Encourage good relations	

⁶Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

	characteristic groups compared to the wider population		inform council decisions		
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What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Establish the revised Resident/STAR survey sampling/questionnaire approach	Corporate Policy & Business Support Manager	C&N Service Plan	February 2021
Develop an engagement plan incorporating both the Resident/STAR survey and other engagement activities	Community Development Manager	C&N Service Plan	February 2021

Approved by Assistant Director/ Strategic Director: Rob Gregory
Date: 16/11/20

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		HRA: Rent and Service Charge 2021/22			
Lead Assessor	Jaine Cresser			Assessment team	Elizabeth Ddamulira
Start date	December 2020	End date	Jan 2022		
When will the EqlA be reviewed?	Jan 2022				

Who may be affected by it?	All tenants
What are the key aims of it?	<p>To increase the rent on dwellings from week commencing 5 April 2021 by 1.5%, which is an average increase of £1.46 for social rents, £2.38 for affordable rents and £1.80 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52 week year). This has been calculated using the rent formula CPI +1% in line with government policy and the Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy.</p> <p>The Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy provides a framework for setting our rents and service charges within legislative requirements. The rent and service charge income underpins the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan's key housing objectives to deliver effective services, to invest in its properties to ensure homes are of a modern standard and to provide new social housing to rent. The policy was revised in December 2019.</p> <p>The revisions aimed to ensure that the policy complied with the government's direction on the Rent Standard 2019 and to clarify the Council's position in relation to service charge increases and affordable rents. A further aim this year is to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 on our customers and their ability to pay rent and service charges. Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase rents on social rent and affordable rent properties by up to CPI+1% each year from 2020, for a period of at least five years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the rents for all excluded properties by CPI +1%, e.g. LSSO • Set the rent for a proportion of new build homes at affordable rents. • Set the rent where adaptations or extensions have resulted in the property being increased in size (for example, an additional bedroom), in accordance with the formula rent as detailed in the policy. • Further to the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, charge the rent payable by new tenants of existing social rent housing at the higher of the formula rent (i.e. the 'social rent rate'), or the actual rent (i.e. the 'assumed rent rate') as at 8th July 2015, with the appropriate rent increase applied in line with the current Rent Standard Direction (February 2019). • Charge actual costs for service charges but with the provision to apply a cap, subject to any legal constraints, on affordability grounds where appropriate. • Mitigation of COVID19 impact
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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	The aim of the Rent & Service Charge Policy is to provide a fair method of calculating rents and service charges for all of our tenants. It also aligns with the council's Concessions for Fees and Charges Policy, and the principle of recovering the cost of providing services.	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, February 2019 • Direction on the Rent Standard, 2019 • Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 • Housing and Planning Act 2016 • Rent and service charge policy agreed by Exec December 2019 and recommended to Council in January 2020
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent account information • Housing System data • Specialist Support service data
<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>Approval to increase rents by CPI + 1% for 5 years from 2020/21 required a revision of HRA Budget plans priorities. The HRA Business Plan was agreed at the December 2019 Executive Meeting.</p> <p>The average rent increase for 2021/2022 is (Adjusted Limited Basic 2020) + 1.5% (General stock) and + 1.5% (LSSO stock).</p> <p>When calculating rents and service charges accounts, consideration will be taken of the need to balance any increase in the combined rent and service charge with the potential financial impact on customers. This relates to 37% of homes to which a service charge applies, which are predominantly flats as well as flexicare/independent living accommodation. The Council must recover the actual cost of providing the service and service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage.</p> <p>The impact of the 2021/22 rent increase and service charges is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 306 homes or 4% receive a rent and service charge reduction; • 7,578 homes or 96% of households will receive a weekly rent and service charge increase of less than £3.50 (based on 52 weeks). • There are only 5 properties with an increase of more than £5.00. <p>We had 6,799 general social rented properties, 36 affordable rent properties, 832 flexicare and independent living accommodation and 85 LSSOs as at November 2020. The setting of a proportion of new build lets at affordable rents will contribute positively to increasing the supply of new homes in Stevenage. All target groups will benefit given the need for affordable housing is common across all socio-economic and minority groups. The current low supply of new affordable housing and the high cost of the private rented sector in Stevenage have impacted adversely on those groups whose</p>

	<p>incomes are average or below average.</p> <p>This also further supports work with people who need help to live independently at home and those at risk of homelessness, through wider housing options, continued provision of support, and financial assistance for adaptations and more homelessness preventative programmes respectively.</p> <p>Any groups that are potentially disadvantaged are still expected to be able to benefit from a council property set at a social rent.</p> <p>Tenants benefited from four years of rent reduction from 2016-2020 so the impact of the rent increase is mitigated partially by having to use a lower base than it would have been had there not been a mandatory rent reduction (cumulative) of 1 % for the four year period.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age				
Positive impact		Negative impact		<p>Unequal impact</p> <p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. A proportion of tenants may see an increase in service charges in any given year. The majority of tenants who are charged for services live in flats and/or flexicare/independent living accommodation.</p> <p>Tenants living in flexicare/independent living housing do so because they have additional needs that require support relating to age, disability or both. The minimum age for entry into flexicare/independent living housing is 55 years and data from Northgate indicates that the proportion of tenants aged 60+ in flexicare/independent living housing, is almost three</p>

					<p>times the proportion for all tenant housing.</p> <p>People living in independent living/flexicare schemes who also pay for the support/emergency response services (that are not eligible for Housing benefit) on top of rent and service charges, may see an increase in the overall payment due each week.</p> <p>In relation to flat blocks, the data indicates that there is a higher proportion of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks compared with all SBC housing.</p> <p>The below table illustrates the age groups that have been affected by Covid19 in terms of their employment since April 2020.</p> <table><tr><th>Age</th><th>19 and under</th><th>20-29</th><th>30-39</th><th>40-49</th><th>50-59</th><th>60+</th></tr><tr><td>Furlough</td><td>0</td><td>26</td><td>76</td><td>55</td><td>54</td><td>28</td></tr><tr><td>Retention</td><td>0</td><td>4</td><td>30</td><td>20</td><td>18</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Redundancy</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>9</td><td>4</td></tr></table>	Age	19 and under	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Furlough	0	26	76	55	54	28	Retention	0	4	30	20	18	5	Redundancy	0	2	6	7	9	4
Age	19 and under	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+																											
Furlough	0	26	76	55	54	28																											
Retention	0	4	30	20	18	5																											
Redundancy	0	2	6	7	9	4																											
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				See section above on data sources.																													
What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact?	Ongoing consultation will take place with residents in 2021/22 to establish the impact of the rent & service charge increase. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section below, most of which will also apply to this protected characteristic group.			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)																													

Disability					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information

					<p>was also disclosed at the tenants' discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. To give some context, the data indicates that the proportion of tenants in flexicare/independent living housing declaring that they had a disability was almost double the proportion for the whole SBC tenant population.</p> <p>The proportion of tenants living in flat blocks declaring a disability was very similar to the proportion living in all properties; therefore a disproportionate impact on these tenants is not anticipated.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				See section above on data sources.	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?				What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender reassignment, Marriage or civil partnership, Pregnancy & maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?				What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Socio-economic⁷ e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users					
Positive impact		Negative impact	The rent increase will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Work and Welfare Reform Act and in line with the current Rent	Unequal impact	

⁷Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			<p>Standard Direction (February 2019) regardless of circumstances. This will be applied for at least the next 4 years. Those reliant on Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) Housing costs to cover their full rent and eligible service charges won't be affected by the increase in rent and service charges as their benefit award will be recalculated.</p> <p>The number of bids on the new build properties let at affordable rents are similar to the number received for new build let at social rents. There is a mixture of employed and unemployed applicants. Applicants in receipt of benefits are not excluded or unfairly treated.</p> <p>Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of those services. Heating charges are exempt from HB and tenants are expected to pay this. Water charges are also exempt from HB and are set by the Water Authority. SBC collects the water charges on behalf of the Water Authority.</p> <p>The COVID19 pandemic has caused unemployment and unstable employment. So for example we have 249 residents as at 16 December 2020 who are furloughed, on job retention or have been made redundant.</p> <p>Residents experiencing exceptional economic hardship who are unable to work due to a duty</p>		
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			to self-isolate are receiving a drop in earnings.		
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		See section above on data sources			
What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact and promote equality and inclusion?	<p>The policy allows for capping of service charges, subject to any legal constraints. As a means of mitigating the impact of an increase that would cause hardship, the council may subsidise the costs.</p> <p>Rent increase information will be published on our website early February 2021 to start preparing tenants.</p> <p>The rent notification letter (to be sent out at the end of February) will offer tenants the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with staff. It will explain why the rent has increased and also explain any increase in service charges. Where a property has a number of service charges they will be fully explained, with a summary of how the weekly charge has increased overall.</p> <p>Where support charges are also included (mainly but not exclusively for independent living and flexi care schemes) separate notifications will be sent out to these residents to ensure it is clearly set out how each element of the weekly charge is made up.</p> <p>To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website and hard copies available for those who need them.</p> <p>The policy states that the Council will have regard to the Local Housing Allowance when setting affordable rents. If affordable rents are set at this level, HB/ UC housing cost will cover the rent in full for those tenants who are entitled to the maximum amount of housing benefit. Setting at the Local Housing Allowance will also benefit tenants who are, for example on a low wage or zero hour contracts and where partial housing benefit can be paid.</p> <p>For those moving into Affordable Rent (AR) properties a comprehensive</p>			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

	<p>affordability assessment is carried out prior to offer to ensure that the tenancy is sustainable.</p> <p>The implementation of the policy in respect of AR will be kept under review by the Housing Development Executive Committee and should adverse impacts be identified this will inform future decision making in this regard.</p> <p>Support provision for this group has been increased as part of an income recovery action plan, to ensure that tenants can pay through sustainable arrangements to maintain payments towards rent and service charges. Additional staffing resources have been secured to continue work to target and support UC cases to maximise income collection and minimise the level of arrears for this group of tenants.</p> <p>We will make links to clear support and guidance on all of our communication platforms.</p> <p>We will prepare staff to enable them to respond effectively and empathetically with tenants.</p>		
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Other					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to mitigate the impact?					What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

What are the findings of any consultation with:

Residents?	Planned consultation with residents during 2020/21 regarding the impact of the new rent policy was postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID19. This will be the second year of increase since the rent reduction regime was introduced and consultation will enable us to establish the impact and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly.	Staff?	
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?	<p>Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) was consulted in November 2019 and was supportive of the policy to charge service charges at actual costs but with the provision in the policy to cap any increases if this would cause hardship.</p> <p>In terms of affordable rents, HMAB broadly supported this policy. There are still some concerns about the affordability of such schemes and the position if tenants lost employment/were on a low wage. The rent would be covered in full for those tenants entitled to full HB/UC housing costs due to the rent being set at the LHA level. Also those in low paid employment may be entitled to partial HB/ UC housing costs. Thorough affordability assessments will be carried out.</p>		

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>The future viability of the HRA Business Plan will be reliant upon us being able to recover the costs of service provision where it's possible to do so.</p> <p>Only a proportion of new builds will be at affordable rent in line with the</p>

		<p>revised HRA Budget plan. The proposal to offer a mix of new build rents at affordable rent levels and at social rent levels would result in additional income to the HRA over 30 years which makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of the plan and the Council's ability to build new homes and to deliver other housing priorities.</p> <p>There are plans to build 240 social rented and 270 affordable rented houses over the first 5 years of the revised Business Plan. The policy and the aim is for a 50/50 split, but due to the timing of delivery on schemes the weighting is slightly biased towards affordable, but it evens out over the whole 30 year plan. So far 243 new builds have been delivered by the Council and 295 are under construction.</p> <p>This means that there will be a total of approximately 4% of council homes at affordable rent at the end of the 5 year period. The majority of annual lettings (i.e. of new build and re-let properties) would continue to be at a social rent level and it is estimated that after 30 years the vast majority of council property rents (an estimated 88%) will be set at the social rent rate, subject to any changes in legislation or Government guidance.</p>
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Consultation with residents to establish the impact of the rent increase	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities	Elizabeth Ddamulira	March 2022	Systems will be put in place to mitigate impacts

Approved by Assistant Director (Housing and Investment): Jaine Cresser

Date: 16 December 2020

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Support Charge increase by £2 from £6 to £8			
Lead Assessor	Kelly Holland			Assessment team	Kelly Holland Karen Long
Start date	10 November 2020	End date	9 November 2021		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?		8 November 2021			

Who may be affected by it?	Residents living in independent living/flexicare housing that are in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging, universal credit (UC) or 2003 protected (i.e. those in the service prior to the government supporting people grant funding starting in 2003). As at 20 November 2020 this affects 595 people. The remaining residents in independent living/flexicare already pay the full charge.
What are the key aims of it?	To contribute to the recovery of costs for providing the support/emergency response service to people living in independent living/flexicare schemes that historically have not had to pay anything towards the cost as we received housing related support funding from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC). The support/alarm service is not eligible for housing benefit, but in order to be able to continue this service to residents we needed to introduce the initial weekly contribution of £2.00 in 2018/19, £4 in 2019/20, £6 in 2020/21 and propose to increase this to £8.00 in 2021/22. The total cost of the support/alarm service will be £19.65 per week so Stevenage Borough Council will still be subsidising £11.65 per week. This option has the support of the housing portfolio holder.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	This will remove discrimination against other residents that pay the full cost for not being in receipt of housing benefit or fairer charging.	Promote equal opportunities	This also aligns to the Council's aim to be financially sufficient and recover costs of services where possible.	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data of those on full/partial housing, fairer charging, universal credit or those that are protected due to supporting people implementation in 2003. • Age profile of independent/flexicare housing tenants
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	We currently have 3 people that have made nil payment of the support charge either since the introduction of the contribution charge or from moving in. The majority of people do not pay through direct debit and pay through a payment card. This is not always a regular payment and historically it took a lot of effort by the Support Services team to get people to pay £6. As at 20 November 2020 we have 71 people who are in arrears over £30 totalling £12,384. This is likely to increase especially when the new charge starts in April 2021. Following the housing and investment business unit review the management of the support charge income has transferred to Income Services in line with other income collection functions.
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age

Negative impact

The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.

Conversely however, the costs are currently subsidised by the wider tenant population, who have a younger age profile and do not benefit from the service.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

Age profile of independent/flexicare housing residents

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?

What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

Disability

e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness

Unequal impact

The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

Northgate report on disability profile for independent/flexicare residents and also whole population living in SBC properties.

What opportunities are

What do you still need

Northgate data on tenants relating to

there to promote equality and inclusion?		to find out? Include in actions (last page)	tenants with disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information was also disclosed at the tenant's discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. We have introduced a support services module on Northgate whereby we will be able to collate more data on disability and this will inform future EQIAs. Northgate are in the process of getting the reports set up so we are able to extract this information in the future.
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Gender reassignment N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or civil partnership N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Pregnancy & maternity – N/A				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race – N/A				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or belief – N/A				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this				

assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sex – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sexual orientation – N/A e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Socio-economic⁸

e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement

Positive Impact:

Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified the emergency alarm service and the supported housing officer as the 2nd and 3rd most important priority associated with living in their property. The application of the support charge will help to ensure that the Council can continue to deliver this service.

In January 2018 we held drop in sessions at each scheme for residents to come and discuss the charge and for us to explain what it is for. We had a lot of positive comments with the majority understanding the need to pay towards the service. Some residents recognised that housing associations had withdrawn the emergency service and scheme manager and didn't want this to happen to them. One person wanted to pay more.

HCC have confirmed that they will be continuing with our flexicare support contract until end March 2022 which will mean that this will help offset some of the costs that we would have had to pass on to this group of residents.

Negative Impact:

The support charge is not eligible for housing benefit and could have a negative impact for those on lower incomes in terms of affordability. However, of 103 residents where we had to chase payment following 2018's introduction of the £2 weekly contribution only one resident said they couldn't afford it and was referred to the welfare benefit and debt advisors. We have not had any indication to suggest that residents can't afford the current charge. If anyone is struggling with money we will refer them to the welfare benefit and debt advisors for support.

This group of residents may also be affected by increases in Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) affecting the overall amount that older and disabled people can afford to pay. (We have not had notification of what the charges will be for 2021/22):

- HCC charge for some of their community based adult social care services that they used to provide for free. This has

⁸Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

impacted on many people over 60 in the independent living/flexicare schemes as they are in receipt of some care due to their age/medical conditions. The low care band in flexicare doubled in 2018 and this had an impact on residents being able to afford care and HCC had received a number of complaints.

However, the introduction of the charge is considered to be fairer than current arrangements, whereby support charge costs are subsidised by the wider tenant population who do not benefit from the service.

Furthermore, the charge has been introduced on an incremental basis, to mitigate the impact, rather than applying the full amount of £19.65 per week in one 'hit'.

During 2021/22, officers will also review whether any elements of the independent living service should in fact be eligible for housing benefit. This will be reflected in the charges from April 2022 due to the fees and charges timeline.

Communication

The support charge notification letter will go out in February 2021 to all residents living in independent living and flexicare properties.

To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website.

HMAB will agree and /or make recommendations for the content of the letters in January 2021, with the portfolio holder signing off the final letters.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

- Comments from drop in sessions held in January 2018.
- A copy of charges for community based care from HCC in 2018
- Spreadsheet detailing those who hadn't paid any weekly contribution since the introduction of the charge or since they moved in.

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	We have clearly explained what the support charge covers and the reasons for charging The notification letters will offer customers the opportunity to discuss their concerns with staff and get support in applying for any relevant benefits.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Other – N/A please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?	None	Residents?	Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified the emergency alarm service and the support housing officer as the 2 nd and 3 rd most important priority associated with living in their property. In January 2018 we held drop in sessions at each scheme for residents to come and discuss the charge and for us to explain
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			what it is for. We had a lot of positive comments with the majority understanding the need to pay towards the service. Some residents recognised that housing associations had withdrawn the emergency service and scheme manager and didn't want it to happen to them. One person wanted to pay more.
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	The future viability of the support and alarm service in independent/flexicare living is reliant upon us being able to recover the cost of service provision where it is possible to do so. Results from the STAR survey support the value of the service from residents by them rating the emergency alarm and supported housing officer as their 2 nd and 3 rd priority (behind the repairs to their property).
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Review whether any elements of the independent living service should be eligible for housing benefit	This is to ensure fair charging of service.	Karen Long	June 2021	

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Jaine Cresser Assistant Director (Housing and Investment)
Date: 18/12/20

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