

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 9 June 2021

Time: 1.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 243703

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

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

AGENDA

PART I

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2021

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 10 March 2021 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 16

3. MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

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

Overview & Scrutiny Committees - 17 March 2021

Pages 17 – 22

4. COVID-19 UPDATE

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

5. CO-OPERATIVE TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

To consider proposed new arrangements for ensuring that SBC tenants and residents have a range of opportunities to participate in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods, building on the development of the Co-operative Neighbourhood operating model.

Pages 23 – 68

6. LEISURE CONTRACT WORK PROGRAMME

To consider a proposal work programme to enable the Council to determine the strategic delivery of its leisure and cultural offer post-March 2023.

Pages 69 – 78

7. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE: QUARTER 4 2020/21

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

Pages 79 – 120

8. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

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

10. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 10 MARCH 2021

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 10 March 2021 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 121 - 124

11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 9 June 2021 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 10 March 2021

Time: 1.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

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

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

Start / End Start Time: 1.00pm
Time: End Time: 5.49pm

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

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations on interest.

2 **MINUTES - 10 FEBRUARY 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 10 February 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

The Executive considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2021 and 17 February 2021.

In relation to the Allotment holders issue raised at the 17 February meeting, the Chair asked that the information provided by the Green Spaces & Environmental Performance Manager be posted on the Council's website.

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

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 26 January 2021

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17 February 2021

4 **COVID-19 UPDATE**

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

Covid-19 Hertfordshire and Stevenage data; Stevenage confirmed cases; Young people case rates; the latest from the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum; Stevenage updates; and Budget updates (Business Support summary/support grants).

The following issues were raised during the presentation:

- As at 5 March 2021, 23,857 Stevenage residents had received the first dose of the Coronavirus vaccine. Officers were requested to report to the next meeting of the Coronavirus Emergency Committee with a breakdown of this figure by age group;
- The Local Resilience Forum had been asked to provide clarity of information in respect of the differing vaccination systems operated by large test centre and local GP surgeries, particularly in terms of the communication of dates for second doses of the vaccine;
- It was confirmed that there was a countywide publicity campaign reminding all residents about the importance of being vaccinated against Covid-19;
- Officers undertook to request information showing a breakdown between the number of Stevenage residents who had been vaccinated at The Robertson House Mass Vaccination Centre and those who had been vaccinated at the Local GP surgeries;
- It was clarified that SBC would be re-opening Play Areas in the town as soon as it was Covid-safe to do so (a decision which would be based on a sufficiently low R-rate regarding transmission of the virus); and
- The Chair requested officers to report to the next meeting of the Coronavirus Emergency Committee with detailed statistics regarding individuals who had received the £500 test and trace support payment if told to isolate because of Covid-19.

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

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

The Executive considered a report regarding the outcome of consultation on the draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and seeking approval to the adoption of the final version of the SPD.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that there had been 29 consultation responses on the draft SPD, as summarised in Appendix B to the report. Where appropriate, the SPD had been amended to reflect views/comments expressed by consultees. The main updates to the document following consultation were:

- Change to nomenclature i.e. The Biodiversity Metric 2.0, Natural England 2019 to account for ongoing upgrades in the future;
- Clarification of relationship of species information with regard to the Metric; and
- Removal of Maps at Figures 5 and 6.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration stated that, if adopted, the

SPD would help to advise and set out the steps that developers should follow in order to calculate the amount of compensation that needed to be provided. The final SPD document would form a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the outcomes of the draft Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation exercise be noted.
2. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD prior to its publication.
3. That the Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD be adopted as a material consideration for planning applications.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION

The Executive considered a report regarding the outcome of consultation on the draft SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and seeking approval to the adoption of the final version of the SPD.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that there had been 33 consultation responses on the draft SPD, as summarised in Appendix B to the report. Where appropriate, the SPD had been amended to reflect views/comments expressed by consultees. The main updates to the document following consultation were:

- Including more detail about Viability Assessments and Reviews;
- Including reference to the importance of cross-boundary infrastructure funding;
- Amending wording that could potentially have led to uncertainty about when Hertfordshire County Council might seek Section 106 contributions;
- Including more detail about the Stevenage Works partnership and the SPD's requirement for developers to provide apprenticeship and employment opportunities; and
- Including the use of Unilateral Agreements instead of S106 agreements where the drafting and agreeing of a S106 agreement would cause undue costs and delay to development.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration stated that, if adopted, the SPD would help to advise developers when they would be expected to provide infrastructure (or financial contributions in-lieu of on-site provision) in addition to paying a Community Infrastructure Levy charge. The final SPD document would

form a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications.

In response to a Member's question regarding viability studies, the Principal Planning Officer advised that the process was not skewed towards the acceptance at face value of land value figures provided by developers. By using a standardised methodology, the Council was able to obtain a value per square metre based on the existing use of the land, together with an element of uplift for a use of the land that could be permitted by planning permission, as well as a premium for landowners as to what they could rightfully expect to be paid should they wish to sell the land for development.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the outcomes of the draft SBC Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) consultation exercise be noted.
2. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the SBC Developer Contributions SPD prior to its publication.
3. That the SBC Developer Contributions SPD be adopted as a material consideration for planning applications.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Executive considered a report which provided an update on the Council's Housing First approach to accommodate rough sleepers, and options for implementing the Housing First approach for the 2021/22 financial year, for the purposes of assessing its viability beyond the current "protect directive" for the medium to long term.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People advised that the Housing First approach reflected the Council's aims, as stated within the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024, and would result in an improvement of the type of accommodation provided to applicants and a reduction in total costs, by preventing the need to continue to accommodate rough sleepers in bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Housing Operations Manager (Providing Homes) gave a slide presentation on the report. She commented that there were three re-housing pathways identified for rough sleeper applicants, subject to low, medium and high support needs. The Housing First provision would seek to provide 32 units/rooms to be managed by the Council - these units were owned by the Council and could be utilised to make best use of stock.

The Housing Operations Manager (Providing Homes) explained that, as the scheme

currently stood, it would be necessary to secure grant funding in order to meet operating costs. If the benefit recovery was lower and/or grant funding was not made available, the Council would either need to reallocate significant General Fund resources in order to fully deliver the Housing First Model or acknowledge that full implementation was not possible within existing resources. Officers would be approaching the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, as well as Hertfordshire County Council, to seek to secure the necessary grant funding for the scheme to be fully provided year on year.

The Executive supported an additional recommendation requesting the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People to draft a letter to the Housing Minister outlining SBC's plans and the requirement for further funding to support the delivery of a sustainable Housing First model over the medium to longer term, stating that whilst the Council was grateful for the funding already received that only allowed for the provision of this offer for 12 months, and even then this was subsidised, and stressing that further funding would be required to eradicate rough sleeping in Stevenage.

The Executive further supported an amendment to Recommendation 2.2.3 in the report pointed out by the Strategic Director (CF), in that the figure of £248,381.49 for funding of the scheme from the 2021/22 Covid finance settlement should read £214,540.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the support provided to homeless households during the Covid-19 restrictions, March – July 2020, November to December 2020 & the most recent national restrictions from January 2021 be noted.
2. That the additional bid submission to the Government “Rough Sleeper Initiative 4” of £341,381.49 to mitigate the cost of the Housing First model relating to the period 2021/2022 be noted.
3. That it be noted that Officers will continue to seek funding from Hertfordshire County Council and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to support the unfunded cost of the prevent directive.
4. That the on-going work to implement a Housing First model that mitigates the cost to the General Fund be noted.
5. That the allocation of the Government funding of £500,831, as set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 to the report, to support the homeless functions during 2020/21 and 2021/22, be approved.
6. That the Housing First Approach for rough sleepers, for up to the next 12 months, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be approved.
7. That the use of up to £214,540 from the 2021/22 Covid finance settlement funding, to fund the net cost to the General Fund (subject to the level of grant funding received, as set out in Paragraph 5.1.12 of the report) for 12 months, be approved.

8. That the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People be requested to draft a letter to the Housing Minister outlining SBC's plans and requirement for further funding to support a sustainable model over the medium to longer term, stating that whilst the Council is grateful for the funding already received that only allowed for the provision of this offer for 12 months, and even then this is subsidised, and stressing that further funding would be required to eradicate rough sleeping in Stevenage.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 8. To urge the Government to provide a longer-term sustainable funding solution for the housing of rough sleepers. Other Options considered: As contained in report.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

The Executive considered a report seeking endorsement of the proposed final Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024, for onward recommendation to Council.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Communities & Equalities advised that, following the Executive's comments expressed at its February 2021 meeting when the draft Community Safety Strategy was considered, the document had been revised to reflect concerns in relation to speeding vehicles.

The Executive supported an amendment to the Strategy proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Communities & Equalities. The amendment concerned the addition of the words "further promote" to the third objective in the Strategy so that it now read "promote reporting of hate crime and further promote equality in the community".

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the proposed final Community Safety Strategy (the Strategy) accompanying the report as Appendix A, and as amended, be approved, noting its focus on the work of the SoSafe partnership.
2. That the decision taken in 1. above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.
3. That, once the proposed Final Strategy has been recommended for adoption by the Executive and reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it be referred to Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules in the Council's Constitution.
4. That the Chief Executive, in his capacity as Chair of the SoSafe Partnership, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities, be authorised to make changes to the Strategy post consideration by the Executive.
5. That it be noted that implementation of the Strategy (once approved in

accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules) will be achieved through co-operative working with communities and key partners through the activities of the Joint Action Group and overseen by the Responsible Authorities Group.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

9 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER THREE 2020/21

The Executive considered a report highlighting the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for Quarter Three 2020/21.

The Chief Executive gave a slide presentation on the report. By way of introduction, he commented that in spite of Covid-19, the Council had generally maintained good progress in respect of its Future Town Future Council (FTFC) and Corporate Performance Indicators. However, a number of the PIs had been affected by the Covid-19 situation throughout the first three Quarters of 2020/21, a situation which was likely to remain for at least the remainder of that year.

The Chief Executive referred to a number of the performance highlights achieved by the Council during Quarter Three of 2020/21.

The Chief Executive advised that, of the 13 FTFC PIs, 7 were green; 1 was amber; 3 were red; and 2 were not available. In relation to the 41 Corporate PIs, 25 were green; 4 were amber; 7 were red; and 4 were not available. The amber, red and not available PIs were primarily due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief Executive went through the reasons for the amber, red and not available PIs, together with planned measures for their improvement, all as detailed in the report.

A Member pointed out that whilst Recommendation 2.7 in the report requested the endorsement of proposals to further improve website satisfaction, the report contained no such proposals. It was therefore agreed that this recommendation would be amended so that these proposals would be provided to Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members via a Briefing Note.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for Quarter Three 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
2. That the impacts of the Government Directive on the provision of accommodation for "rough sleepers" during the Covid-19 Pandemic are noted (Paragraphs 3.60 to 3.67 of the report).
3. That the impact of the Government Directive on evictions during the course of COVID-19, as well as the effects of the Pandemic generally, on the Council's

Housing Options Service (Paragraphs 3.68 to 3.72 of the report and considered further in the Housing First report elsewhere on the agenda for the meeting) be noted.

4. That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on rent collection rate be noted and action plans endorsed (Paragraphs 3.73 to 3.81 of the report).
5. That the impacts of COVID-19 on the Council's ability to deliver against the following key performance areas and, where appropriate the improvement actions outlined against them, as identified in the Paragraphs in the report outlined below, be noted:
 - Job Creation/New Business Start Up through the Business Technology Centre (Paragraphs 3.88 to 3.90);
 - Food establishment compliance checks (Paragraphs 3.91 to 3.92);
 - Letting of council garages (Paragraphs 3.95 to 3.99);
 - Collection of Council Tax (Paragraphs 3.105 to 3.106); and
 - Ability to identify and remove Housing Revenue Account/General Fund savings (Paragraphs 3.107 to 3.110).
6. That the level of void loss and how sheltered void properties and major works impact the void loss be noted, and improvement activities be endorsed (Paragraphs 3.82 to 3.87 of the report).
7. That the proposals to further improve website satisfaction be provided to Members of the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee by way of a Briefing Note.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 7. To provide Members with proposals for the improvement of website satisfaction.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

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

The Executive considered a report in respect of the 3rd Quarter General Fund and Housing Revenue Account monitoring report 2020/21.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that, in terms of the General Fund, budget monitoring had identified a £157,000 decrease in the projected outturn compared to the monitoring position at Quarter 2. This was broken down into a net £186,000 favourable impact on day to day operations (including costs avoided as a result of the COVID pandemic), which included:

- £51,000 increase in Development Income due to a rise in both monthly planning applications and Major applications which had been submitted, which attracted larger fees;

- £65,000 net underspend on staffing due to vacancies across the Council;
- £40,000 of deferred expenditure on the Residential and Star surveys, which had been delayed until 2021/22; and
- £40,000 reduced expenditure as the Aqua Park/Golf had had periods of closure, in line with restriction put in place through local and national lockdowns.

The Strategic Director (CF) commented that included within the above position was a request to carry forward £40,000 to fund the Commercial Officer post and a request to transfer £8,000 to the Income Equalisation Reserve in case the Bulky Waste pricing trial led to a reduction in income levels.

The Strategic Director (CF) explained that the COVID losses had increased by £194,000 since the position reported in February 2021, of which £165,000 related to a lower parking income projection due to the first ease in restrictions being 12 April 2021. The COVID funding had increased by £166,000 due to:

- £113,000 increase in Income guarantee scheme funding;
- £27,000 Housing Benefit one-off increase in admin subsidy ; and
- £26,000 Track and Trace admin costs.

The Strategic Director (CF) reported that the General Fund balances, as at 31 March 2021, and following the impact of the Quarter 3 movements, were projected to be £4.678Million.

In relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Strategic Director (CF) advised that the 3rd Quarter monitoring position highlighted an unspent budget of £786,000. However, there were requests to carry forward budgets totalling £834,000 into 2021/22 which meant that the net change in HRA balances was a decrease of £48,000. The carry forward requests included:

- £282,000 relating to the cost of decanting tenants to allow for the redevelopment of the Kenilworth site;
- £300,000 of building safety budget to implement the recently agreed legislation from the National Building safety review;
- £200,000 of electrical testing budget which was unspent as works had been curtailed in line with the National guidance during lockdowns; and
- £52,000 for project design fees in Housing Development.

The Strategic Director (CF) reported that the HRA balances, at 31 March 2021, and following the impact of the Quarter 3 movements, were projected to be £23.851Million.

It was **RESOLVED:**

General Fund

1. That the 2020/21 3rd Quarter General Fund projected net decrease in expenditure of £157,000, as summarised in Paragraph 4.4.4 of the report, be approved.

2. That the progress of the 2020/21 approved savings, growth bid and carry forwards be noted.
3. That the new carry forward requests of £40,000, as set out in Paragraph 4.2.15 of the report, be approved.
4. That the additional Covid losses and grants received, as set out in Section 4.4 of the report, be noted.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

5. That the 2020/21 3rd Quarter decrease in the net HRA surplus of £48,000, be approved.
6. That the progress of the 2020/21 approved savings, growth bids and carry forward requests be noted.
7. That the new carry forward requests of £834,000, as set out in Section 4.7 of the report, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

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

The Executive considered a report in respect of the 3rd Quarter Capital General Fund and Housing Revenue Account monitoring report 2020/21.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that the updated projected spend for the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme at Quarter 3 was £20.128Million, a decrease of £750,000, with a corresponding increase of £782,000 for 2021/22, giving a £18.182Million programme.

The Strategic Director (CF) explained that the £750,000 net decrease in capital expenditure for 2020/21 included £646,000 of slippage on project expenditure which would now be incurred in 2021/22:

- £427,000 of planned expenditure on IT projects;
- £118,000 of expenditure across Finance and Estates at the Depot, Business and Technology Centre and Community Centres; and
- £60,000 of expenditure across Arts and Leisure, Pin Green Play Centre and The Boathouse.

It was noted that the remaining £104,000 net underspend was partly due to underspends on works at the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre, Swim Centre, and Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre.

In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Strategic Director (CF)

reported that the updated projection for the 2020/21 HRA Capital Programme was £26.762Million, a budget decrease of £4.838Million since the position presented in the Final Capital Strategy report to Council in February 2021. There was an increased budget requirement of £4.487Million in 2021/22.

The Strategic Director (CF) explained that the £4.838Million budget reduction in 2020/21 was due to the following:

- £4.059Million on the Capital Programme for works to the existing stock. This was largely due to the impact of Covid restrictions, where works had been halted due to the National restrictions. These works were now due for completion in 2021/22. The projections were not completed until after the Capital Strategy had been published for the February 2021 Executive meeting;
- £350,000 for the New Development budget, which represented 3.5% of the overall budget of £9.9Million; and
- £429,000 of ICT expenditure related to the HRA.

The Strategic Director (CF) reported that, to date, there had been 20 right to buy sales with a further 7 forecast before the end of the financial year.

The Strategic Director (CF) commented that the Decent Homes Programme formed a large part of the ongoing investment programme of the HRA. The number of properties where works had been carried out to bring the property up to the decent homes standard in 2020/21 was 271 to the end of December 2020, against an in-year target of 327 to the same period. The target for the 2020/21 remained at 557 properties in total. Due to COVID restrictions, only essential works were being carried out within the housing stock, which had had an impact on achieving the 2020/21 target. If restrictions were lifted by the new financial year, the Service was looking to make up for the shortfall this year.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme net decrease in expenditure of £570,000, as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.2 of the report, be approved.
2. That the £232,000 growth for additional investment in vehicles, as detailed in Paragraph 4.2.3 of the report, be approved and added to the Capital Programme for 2021/22.
3. That the 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme net increase in expenditure of £728,000 (including the growth in 2. above), as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.2 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme slippage of £4.838Million, as summarised in Table Six and referred to in Section 4.6 of the report, be approved.
5. That the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme net increase in expenditure of £4.487Million, as summarised in Table Six and referred to in

Section 4.6 of the report, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

12 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

The Chair accepted the following items of urgent Part I business.

(i) Margaret Ashby

The Chair had the sad duty to report that Margaret Ashby, a well-known local historian, had passed away in the Lister Hospital on Monday, 8 March 2021. The Chair paid tribute to Margaret, and stated that she had written many excellent books chronicling the social history of Stevenage, and had also been a fervent environmental campaigner (including a member of Friends of Forster Country). She knew that Margaret would be sorely and sadly missed.

(ii) Town Deal

The Chair referred to the recent excellent news that Stevenage had been awarded Town Deal funding of £37.5Million by the Government following the approval of the Town Investment Plan submitted by the Stevenage Development Board. She commented that this Board, chaired independently by Adrian Hawkins OBE, comprised representatives from organisations including SBC, HCC and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, as well as other partnership bodies and local major businesses.

The Chair advised that the Town Investment Plan contained a variety of schemes, including regeneration, cultural/leisure and skills/employment projects, for which business cases would need to be developed in the next year in order to draw down the £37.5Million earmarked by the Government.

The Chair thanked Adrian Hawkins, together with fellow Board Members and the SBC Regeneration Team, for their exceptional work over the past year which had resulted in the successful award of funding for the Town. The award of this funding was well timed to support the ongoing Covid recovery efforts.

13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein

outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

14 FRAMEWORK FOR THE SUPPLY OF AGENCY WORKERS

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval to a Framework for the Provision of Agency Workers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation set out in the report, together with an additional recommendation proposed during the debate, be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report

15 SG1 ACCELERATION

The Executive considered a Part II report regarding an update on the progress of the SG1 project, and work carried out to review opportunities to accelerate the delivery of future phases of the project.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

16 APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR AT DUNN CLOSE

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking the appointment of a Principal Contractor for the Dunn Close development scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

17 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 17 March 2021

Time: 6.00 pm

Place: Virtual (Via Zoom)

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

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00 pm
End Time: 7.58 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Wednesday 17 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Executive meeting held on Wednesday 10 February 2021.

2. Minutes of the Executive – 10 February 2021

Noted.

3. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees.

Noted.

4. Covid-19 update

The Strategic Director (RP) advised that he provided an update on the latest Covid-19 position at the Executive meeting held on Wednesday 10 March 2021, and a detailed update was also provided to Coronavirus Executive Committee meeting held on Friday 26 February 2021. He advised Members that the vaccination figures were now available by age group.

The Council was closely monitoring Covid-19 cases rate and would re-open the Play Areas as soon as safe to do so. A decision which would be based on a sufficiently low case rate regarding transmission of the virus.

The Strategic Director (RP) to provide further information on Test and Trace Support Payments in the next Coronavirus Executive Committee.

In response to a question from a Member, the Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that the Council's Environmental Health Team was in regular contact with major retailers to improve safe shopping environment for residence. Covid-19 Marshalls were also working closing with the Police to monitor compliance across the Town.

The Committee noted the update.

5. The Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document: Adoption

In response to a question from a Member, the Principal Planning Officer advised Members that the consultation on draft impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SDP) was held between 30 November 2020 and 25 January 2021, meeting the requirement stipulated for SDP consultation in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) and England Regulation 2012.

The Community Safety Manager presented the Community Safety Strategy for 2021- 2024. She reported that this was the second time the Strategy considered by the Committee. She advised Members about the additional recommendation made by the Executive about hate crime and to promote equality in the community.

6. Developer contribution Supplementary Planning Document: Adoption

The Planning Policy Manager presented the report.

In response to a question from a Member, the Principal Planning Officer advised Members that the Council liaised closely with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on the Developer Contribution guide. If there is a need to seek contribution towards infrastructure, HCC would use this guide to consider appropriate contribution.

The Committee noted the report.

7. Housing First Approach – Stevenage Borough Council

The Assistant Director for Housing and Investment provided a report on Council's Housing First approach to accommodate rough sleepers, and options for implementing the Housing First approach for the 2021/22 financial year. She reported that the Housing First Approach had been outlined in reports to Executive in July 2020 and in December 2020, as a response on Covid-19 pandemic to rough sleepers in the Borough.

The Committee noted the report.

8. Community Safety Strategy 2021-2024

The Community Safety Manager presented the Community Safety Strategy for 2021- 2024. She reported that this was the second time the Strategy was being considered by the Committee. She advised Members about the additional recommendation made by the Executive about hate crime and promoting equality in the community.

9. Corporate Performance – Quarter Three 2020-21

The Strategic Director (TP) advised Members on Corporate Performance for Quarter three 2021-22. He informed Members about the challenges the Council faced by Covid-19 pandemic, which had direct impact on the performance in third quarter.

The Executive requested steps to be taken in order to enhance the Council's website, which would include further functionality and easy navigation.

The Committee noted the report.

10. 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring Report – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2020/21

The Strategic Director for Housing and Estate presented the report for the 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2020/21. She advised Members on the level of losses experienced by the Council increased in the 3rd Quarter.

The Committee noted the report.

11. 3rd Quarter Capital Monitoring Report – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2020/21

The Strategic Director for Housing and Estate advised Members on General Fund and Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21. She informed Members that the growth bid submitted for the vehicles after the Council budget was approved. She would ensure that overall growth information be included in the process for budget in the future.

The Committee noted the report.

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

Town Deal

The Strategic Director (TP) advised Members on the Town Deal funding of £37.5Million by the government following the Town investment Plan submitted in

October 2020 by the Stevenage Development Board. The proposal was submitted for £50Million for ten projects. The Government allocated £37.5Million with additional conditions to satisfy to secure drawdown of the funding for three of the projects. There were no projects rejected. Business cases would need to be made in the next 12 months to enable the drawdown of the funding earmarked by the government. Members praised the worked done by the Council for securing the funding.

5 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report on Review of Scrutiny arrangements and advised Members on the significant changes brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic in scrutiny arrangements, including the way Members currently meet and their use of hybrid meetings. He explained that a further review also provided the opportunity for Members to look at how scrutiny meetings could run in the future, post Covid-19.

Members noted the report with the following amendments:

- On paragraph 2.5.1, the typo should be corrected to “*incorporate fewer, SMART recommendations*”.
- Under Paragraph 2.3.1, the following fourth bullet point should be added.
 - *Where it had become necessary to broaden scrutiny (within reason), Scrutiny Members should ask additional questions.*

The

Committee agreed on a scoping document to review the Council’s Scrutiny arrangements in September 2021.

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

8 **PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

9 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

14. Framework for the Supply of Agency Workers

The Committed noted the report with additional recommendations proposed during the debate in the Executive meeting.

15. SG1 Acceleration

The Committee noted the updated on the SG1 project.

16. Appointment of Principal Contractor at Dunn Close

The Committee noted the appointment of Principal Contractor for the Dunn Close development scheme.

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

None.

11 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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Part I – Release to Press

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing, Health and Older People
Neighbourhoods & Cooperative Working
Date 9 June 2021



CO-OPERATIVE TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

KEY DECISION

Authors Jane Konopka | 2558

Lead Officers Rob Gregory | 2568

1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report proposes new arrangements for ensuring that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) tenants & residents have a range of opportunities to participate in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods. It builds on the development of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods operating model, responds to the Social Housing White Paper: 'a charter for social housing residents', and to the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) report into tenant scrutiny arrangements at SBC.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Executive:
 - 2.1.1 Approve a revised participation and engagement approach as outlined in this report, for Stevenage tenants and residents living in homes rented and leased from the Council.
 - 2.1.2 Note the development of Co-operative Neighbourhoods as the mechanism for delivering meaningful, local engagement opportunities and better relationships with residents that will also meet the specific service and legal requirements relating to the Council's housing portfolio.
 - 2.1.3 Approve an ongoing approach to tenant and resident participation based on 'engaging, listening and acting', reaching as many tenants and residents as possible to understand what is important to them in their neighbourhood.
 - 2.1.4 Approve the new co-operative customer scrutiny model for housing functions (Appendix 1)
 - 2.1.5 Approve the development of a new housing forum to create the opportunity for tenants, residents and councillors to engage in the strategic development of housing services.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Resident Involvement

3.1.1 When Stevenage Homes returned to SBC in 2012 the following structures were established:

Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)	Tenants' work together with senior members of staff and councillors. Meeting monthly basis with a responsibility for making strategic decisions on housing services such as budgets and housing business plans. Training opportunities provided
Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP)	Tenants agree which services to review from looking at SBC performance information. Reviews sought to improve services. Recommendations made to the HMAB and improvement plans agreed and monitored.
Resident Inspectors	Inspections carried out against service standards across housing services including empty homes, caretaking and grounds maintenance. They also link in and support the CSP work on reviews
Disability Advisory Panel	Involved in areas of housing services that impact on people with disabilities. Meeting monthly to discuss the various issues within relevant departments.
Housing Service Groups	Includes regular group meetings (such as Sheltered and Flexicare housing forum, Anti-Social Behaviour forum) or task and finish groups working on specific projects within a housing service when needed (such as Leaseholder Handbook Review group).
Customer Pool	A database of tenants' who have expressed an interest in being involved and the services that they are interested in being involved with.

3.1.2 As part of the Business Unit Review in 2019, with a focus on enabling co-operative working, tenant and resident participation functions merged into the new Community Development service. It was then identified that although there were a number of structures and mechanisms for tenant and resident participation which had been built over a period of years, the number and diversity of individual tenants and residents involved was limited. There were a number of reasons identified for this:

- Existing structures for customer scrutiny demanded a term of 3 years commitment from residents, with a significant time investment required to undertake scrutiny reviews. This was also identified as a challenge in recruiting new members to HMAB
- Digital platforms had not been developed or utilised to encourage a more diverse range of tenants and residents actively engaging with the Council in a more convenient manner
- Consultations had often been narrow in scope and did not broaden to consider wider neighbourhood issues for tenants and leaseholders.

3.2 A charter for social housing residents; Social Housing White Paper

3.2.1 Chapter 5 of the white paper, first published in November 2020, addresses the right of tenants and resident to 'have your voice heard by your landlord'. The key points call on landlords to learn from best practice and to offer a tailored and varied approach that enables residents to engage when and how they want to. The Government will also develop new opportunities and an empowerment programme for residents and there will be a review of professional training and development. Responding to these directives will require the Council to review and refresh its approach to tenant and resident involvement - exploring new and innovative methods of encouraging participation. This will include a focus on having a voice around safety in relation to the housing stock.

3.3 TPAS Review of SBC Scrutiny arrangements

- 3.3.1 In 2019 TPAS was commissioned to provide an external view on customer scrutiny arrangements at SBC (Appendix 2). The review looked at current processes and involved a session with the existing Customer Scrutiny Panel to review strengths and weaknesses. The review also sought to identify good resident involvement practice from elsewhere and to pilot new approaches in a Stevenage setting.
- 3.3.2 In January 2020, in collaboration with the Customer Scrutiny Panel and with support from TPAS a pilot “bootcamp” scrutiny event was held at the Ibis Hotel. The aim of this event was to concentrate a scrutiny session within the space of a few hours on a Saturday morning with an open invite to tenants and leaseholders who might want to take part. The theme selected was the new Gas Home MOT being introduced across the housing stock. Over 50 tenants and 10 leaseholders attended this event, many of whom had not engaged with the Council before. This approach was effective as it drew a diversity of tenants and residents voices, and saw a partnership approach in terms of facilitation from Housing and Community Development teams.
- 3.3.3 TPAS concluded their review in July 2020. This included a number of recommendations which were shared with the existing customer scrutiny panel members:
- SBC continue to undertake service reviews in a more dynamic manner and disband the existing customer scrutiny panel
 - Service areas for review to be identified by the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) or an appropriate steering group made up of residents and councillors
 - A minimum of two borough wide scrutiny bootcamps should be held each year and could be complimented by community-based activities (focus groups and pop-up events) and digital/online engagement (emails, surveys etc).

- Consider a digital platform for leaseholders to improve leaseholder input and satisfaction
- Consider developing a database of tenant and resident volunteers that captures how they would like to be involved and what service areas they are interested in
- Consider a review of HMAB
- Value engagement by evidencing and assessing activities and celebrating successes

3.4 Launch of Co-operative Neighbourhoods

3.4.1 The landscape for tenant and resident participation has also changed during the past twelve months due to the roll out of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods (CN) operating model which was launched in late summer 2020. CN aims to put residents at the heart of decision making by making services more responsive to the strengths, needs and aspirations of communities and localities. The neighbourhood-based teams will create localised engagement opportunities focussed on the communities' Council housing residents live in with the aim of preventing issues before they escalate and therefore reducing complaints and avoidable contact over time.

3.4.2 In 2019 the Council adopted a community engagement framework (Appendix 3). This has been further developed through Co-operative Neighbourhoods based on a 'ladder of participation'. This sees involvement falling under five headings: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, empowering.



3.4.3 Such an approach focusses on starting where the communities are and what is important to them. This principle should also be applied to residents living in Council housing.

3.5 A NEW STRATEGY FOR TENANT & RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

3.5.1 Co-operative Neighbourhoods is based on the idea that, by having staff more embedded in local neighbourhoods, engaging, listening and acting, the Council is better able to respond to the issues that are important to residents and to support ways of helping people help themselves. This approach, based on Co-operative Council values, will be at the centre of the new Co-operative Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy.

- 3.5.2 It is understood that tenants and residents are not all 'time rich' and that a variety of opportunities to encourage and enable engagement with the Council is essential. This may be by improving access to digital platforms, social media or through pop up events in community settings, but also by ensuring that daily face to face interactions between SBC and residents are as meaningful as possible. The Council will also find innovative ways to capture the interest of those voices that are not currently heard as well as they could be, such as Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, young people, families and those with complex needs. SBC will be more active in the community and better known as a result and will offer tenants and residents a variety of ways to have their voice heard. By doing so, the Council will also meet the legal requirements for Housing and support the Housing & Investment business plan.
- 3.5.3 Adopting a set of principles, consistent with a co-operative Council approach, will enable officers to make the most of their interactions with tenants and residents at the point of service delivery as well as through specifically arranged involvement events and activities. Principles will include:
- Involvement at street and neighbourhood level is likely to be the most valuable and productive
 - Whilst there is a place for structure, good human relationships are more important and pave the way for more formal participation as better relationships are formed
 - Encouraging and supporting tenants and residents to self-organise where they want to
 - Ensure staff input is productive, to build confidence enabling tenants and residents to act and hold the Council to account whilst also providing clear pathways to do so.
 - Plan engagement activities holistically that consider the needs and interests of the tenants and residents first
 - Combine participation with other plans, such as improving fire safety or reviewing the Council's major refurbishment contract

3.5.4 The proposals presented here should be considered as ‘next steps’ in a strategy which, by its nature, needs to be developed ‘with’ and not ‘for’ tenants and residents. However, by taking the steps proposed so far, the strategy will be built by reaching as many tenants and residents as possible to understand what is important to them in their neighbourhoods and in the relationship they have with the Council as their landlord. There are 6 key strands to the proposals for developing the strategy:

I. Participation based on the HRA Business Plan

The business plan will set out areas where the Council is undertaking work in neighbourhoods, such as the Major Refurbishment Contract programme. Existing arrangements which inform and consult tenants and residents on schemes can be enhanced to move up the ladder of participation to encompass involving, collaborating, and empowering. They can also be used as part of the co-operative customer scrutiny arrangements. Likewise, where the business plan highlights particular services that need to be reviewed, for example, services for older people, similar local arrangements can be put in place. As well as neighbourhood-based arrangements, opportunities for digital engagement will also be increased. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that the HRA Business Plan itself is formulated as a result of tenant and resident participation. There is an opportunity here to move from the HMAB model to a wider Housing Forum based approach which would provide housing management the opportunities to share and receive feedback on strategic plans for services with a wider group of residents and councillors

II. Participation through Co-operative Neighbourhoods

Priorities identified at a neighbourhood level, whether by tenants and residents, Councillors, council staff or partners will often require more engagement with others in the area. This may be in relation to problems that need resolving but could equally be about ideas that tenants and residents have for improving their neighbourhood. The strategy will ensure that that issues raised at neighbourhood level are either managed

as part of the day-to-day work of co-operative neighbourhoods teams, or there is a smooth flow from frontline co-operative working through to oversight by the Operational Board to ensure joined up work across teams and best use of resources.

III. New arrangements for scrutiny

Following the recommendation of the TPAS review, the following opportunities for tenants and residents to scrutinise housing management services will be adopted (Appendix 1):

- Resident Involvement Panels: Similar to the Gas Home M.O.T boot camp trialled in 2020 as a result of the Tpas review. Tenants and residents are brought together for a period of time to work with SBC Officers to find solutions to issues or to agree on new ways of working. CN teams work with their communities to ensure panels are representative. Scrutiny can be carried out within CN areas or town wide depending on the nature of the issue.
- As set out above in the section on the Business Plan, building on existing events designed to inform and consult, such as pre-contract meetings for block refurbishment, to enable tenants and residents to hold the Council to account for the work undertaken
- Online Discussion: tenants and residents can have their say via the website or social media platforms. This is shared with officers who will work with tenants and residents in an open and transparent way, providing information and allowing the services to be scrutinised. The digital approach will also make use of an App, provided by GROOP, which has been developed as a 'community management platform', piloted as part of the Covid-19 response within Communities and Neighbourhoods. The app will maintain details and connections with community volunteers, but additionally be able to 'case manage' calls and process requests for help. In the same way, volunteers will also be connected to each other. This will be further supported by the

customer pool questionnaire which has been updated and is available on the Council's website

- Pop Up Events: CN teams and housing staff will be present in community locations to talk to local people about what matters to them, to follow up on issues, and provide further information to enable scrutiny.
- Opportunities for existing CSP residents to join a steering group and help make decisions based on themes to scrutinise

IV. Make every contact count

Participation should not be just about specific events and structures but should also be about how the day to day contact that staff have with tenants and residents is used as opportunities to learn about what is important, how services need to be developed, and how people can be helped to help themselves. Staff in housing, customer services, communities and neighbourhoods and a range of other services can ensure that every contact is valued and that what tenants tell the council as part of day-to-day service delivery, or through conversations when out and about in the neighbourhood, is as important constructive as any form of participation.

V. Developing the strategy 'with' tenants and residents

Based on the approach set out above of engaging, listening and acting, reaching as many tenants and residents as possible to understand what is important to them in their neighbourhood, the strategy should constantly evolve in response to tenant and resident input and through learning what works well and what does not.

VI. Learning from best practice

The council will continue to learn from best practice in tenant participation, particularly from other landlords which share Stevenage's co-operative ethos, including those councils who are part of Co-operative Council's Innovation Network (CCIN). The strategy though should continue to develop approaches that are authentic and genuine, based on the

Council's values and the principle set out in this report rather than taking a tick-box approach to fitting with best practice frameworks.

3.6 The role of Co-operative Neighbourhoods (CN) teams

3.6.1 CN teams will support these principles and become the mechanism for delivering them by;

- Providing resources directly working in neighbourhoods enabling the council to build effective relationships with tenants and residents
- Providing a range of opportunities for tenants and residents to be involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods
- Supporting tenants and residents to develop their own activities and projects which help to make their neighbourhood a better place to live
- Working together with colleagues in Co-operative Neighbourhoods Teams to provide clear routes into other Council and partner services and solving issues in a timely way.

3.6.2 Furthermore, the council will improve its processes for meeting participation needs arising from CN teams by developing and maintaining a Corporate Engagement Plan that will capture all planned engagement activities across the Council as well as keeping abreast of what is going on externally. This will be very much a working document that will aim to:

- Help better resource engagement opportunities by sharing staff resources, joining up activities where appropriate and looking at where the council can add value by linking up with internal/external teams.
- Embed the key principles of the Community Involvement Framework (Appendix 3) by using them as a planning tool for tenant and resident engagement activities and consultations.

3.7 Measuring success

3.7.1 SBC will develop performance measures that reflect the outlined strategy to ensure it is meeting the requirements of the Housing White Paper and regulatory standards, including but not limited to:

- Evaluating the input of residents by tracking where they have had an impact and changes have been made – using the ‘ladder of participation’ to benchmark
- Case studies
- Tenant and resident involvement activity in neighbourhoods
- Problems resolved
- Tenant and resident feedback
- Improved performance
- STAR survey
- Resident satisfaction survey
- Landlord inspection by regulator

4, REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The proposals for developing participation opportunities, set out above, are recommended to ensure that engagement activities are more proactive and empowering, aiming to involve more tenants and residents than ever before. It aims to build relationships on a human and neighbourhood level, engaging people on the issues that are most important to them. They have been developed in this way to be consistent with the Council’s Co-operative Neighbourhoods operating model.

4.2 The approach will help to forge better, more productive links between tenants and residents, Councillors, staff and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Although tenant and resident participation is part of a broader community engagement strategy, it is important to acknowledge that there are elements which are specific to the relationship between the Council and the tenants and residents that live in the homes it owns and manages.

This Strategy will provide a framework to enable tenants and residents to get involved to a degree and in the areas in which they are most interested. As well as complementing the Council's Co-operative Neighbourhoods, the strategy also responds to both the Housing White Paper and to the recommendations in the TPAS report with regard to scrutiny arrangements.

- 4.3 With regards to the White Paper, there is little in the way of prescriptive detail. However, there is encouragement to pursue 'best practice' and the document referred to, 'Together with Tenants', supports an approach which is about 'more than compliance' with legislation, best practice or frameworks, but is 'about organisations developing a culture and an intent to build strong and trusting relationships with residents.' At the same time, by starting to develop a wider and deeper awareness of the participation opportunities now, the Council will put itself in a strong position to assure it is meeting its obligations to support tenants and residents having their voices heard. The Council's strategy will need to further develop as the statutory guidance is defined and specific expectations are set out.
- 4.4 The impact of Covid-19 during 2020 meant that both the Customer Scrutiny Panel and Housing Management Boards had to be suspended in a physical form. This also highlighted digital exclusion issues as alternative virtual meeting arrangements were not a possibility for a number of involved tenants and residents. The review was therefore paused in order to develop further options for broader community involvement.
- 4.5 The strategy also follows the recommendations of the TPAS review into scrutiny arrangements by replacing the existing Customer Scrutiny Panel with more dynamic arrangements, set out in this report, which will engage a much wider group of tenants and residents.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that instead of re-establishing existing meetings, customer scrutiny arrangements move to the new participatory model (see Appendix 1) and that the opportunity to evolve HMAB with a wider forum for strategic housing issues is developed over the coming months with

councillors, tenants and residents. At the same time a database will be developed for tenants and residents who wish to be involved at various levels.

- 4.7 The strategy represents a starting point to invigorate tenant and resident participation, drawing on the Council's own approach, work commissioned from TPAS, in response to the Housing White Paper and from a review of existing guidance and 'best practice'. As such, there are sound reasons for adopting this approach and it is not recommended that the existing structures are maintained as these no longer reflect the way tenant and resident involvement has developed. Therefore it will not enable the Council to meet the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper. It does not rule out alternative options suggested by continuous engagement with various 'best practice' examples, but they will form part of the ongoing evolution of the strategy, developed in partnership 'with' tenants and residents rather than 'for' them.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The development and changes to tenant and resident Involvement structures set out in this report will be cost neutral as it will be delivered through existing staffing and budgets.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The housing service responds to its legal obligation as set out by the Regulator for Social Housing. Current tenant and resident involvement arrangements are framed within the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017. This sets a clear expectation for social housing providers to ask tenants and residents how they would like to be involved in the management of their homes and to provide the appropriate scrutiny arrangements for tenants and residents to raise issues in relation to the management of their homes. The standard will be maintained through new

arrangements with more opportunities for different tenants and residents to get involved in the management of their homes in different ways.

- 5.2.2 The proposals outlined in this paper maintain and enhance the tenant and resident scrutiny arrangements for social housing tenants and leaseholders. Further legal implications will be reviewed and maintained in accordance with the Social Housing White Paper as statutory guidance is published.

5.3 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 Risks will be identified, tracked and monitored via the Operational Risk Register and reviewed by the Assistant Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods.
- 5.3.2 The development of a clear communications strategy in relation to opportunities to get involved will be vital to mitigating risks around tenant and resident awareness of a new model and approach.
- 5.3.3 There will also need to be careful consideration given to resourcing and facilitating engagement activities to ensure a range of residents can participate in the right way.

5.4 Policy Implications

- 5.4.1 Future development of policies will need to determine how they relate to and impact on tenant and resident involvement activities. It is envisaged that further policy development in relation to housing will be conducted through the participatory approach with tenants and residents outlined in this report.

5.5 Environmental Implications

- 5.5.1 Involving tenants and residents through Co-operative Neighbourhood working will be one of the means through which the Council will help residents to think about tackling climate change in their local environment. It is therefore anticipated, that there will be positive environmental implications, by building greater capacity for engagement and improved opportunities for conversations with tenants and residents on environmental issues which will enable them to support environmental based voluntary work in their local neighbourhood.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.6.1 Co-operative Neighbourhoods teams will provide the structures for delivering tenant and resident engagement. The Strategic and Operational leads will ensure engagement activities are planned with a joined up approach supported by Community Development Officers who will take responsibility for driving neighbourhood engagement.

5.8 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.8.1 With the Council having established an Equalities Commission, and following the strategy detailed in this report, SBC will develop a broad understanding of who is accessing its services by continually 'engaging, listening and acting'. When considering protected characteristics, it is clear the Council must ensure flexibility within its engagement processes, taking into account potential barriers to engagement. These include but are not limited to:

- Language
- Digital access; including those with IT but limited capability to use it or affordability issues (to access data/WIFI services etc.)
- Disability
- Organisational mistrust

By ensuring a variety of engagement opportunities, minority communities will be better placed to get involved. Through the Council's Youth Council, play service, and sport and leisure teams, engagement with young people can be tailored to reach specific communities as well as a broad range of younger residents. The Equalities Commission will also explore the views of BAME communities within the town, through a continuous listening exercise to produce guidance for SBC in meeting its tenants and resident's needs. The council must also consider the more complex needs of its tenants and residents, intersectionality means many living with a protected characteristic will be living with more than one, in these cases SBC needs to ensure its engagement is flexible enough to be able to provide access to the more vulnerable in the community.

5.9 Service Delivery Implications

5.9.1 These are set out in the report. The approach sits within the new neighbourhood operating model and will provide a housing focus to community involvement as part of these arrangements.

5.10 Community Safety Implications

5.10.1 It is anticipated that the Co-operative Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy will have positive implications for community safety, with a focus on community engagement and strengthening relationships, providing early help, prevention and improved partnership working. Community Safety Officers are assigned to neighbourhood areas through Co-operative Neighbourhoods working practices which also provide an operational link to the Police.

5.11 Information Technology Implications

5.11.1 There will be a need for fast and effective IT support and new hardware/software considerations to assist the model. In the first instance there will be a need for technology that is able to connect teams remotely and to collect neighbourhood information in a way that is visible to all. Moving forward there will be a need to investigate how IT can help teams to have a full picture of what is happening across all services and IT platforms.

5.11.2 The importance of the right digital platforms for engagement will be vital to ensuring those who wish to participate digitally can do effectively.

5.12 Safeguarding Children Implications

5.12.1 In addition, safeguarding considerations will follow the SBC policy with relevant frontline staff and responsible officers identified for continuous professional development and training opportunities. Youth engagement protocols will also be reviewed and strengthened to ensure compliance across the Council's youth work provision as this area is enhanced through better engagement opportunities with Stevenage's young people.

5.13 Other Corporate Implications

5.13.1 The development and progression of tenant and resident participation needs to be managed in tandem with other parts of the Council's transformation agenda and will help to build the right customer insight to better shape the delivery of Council services.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

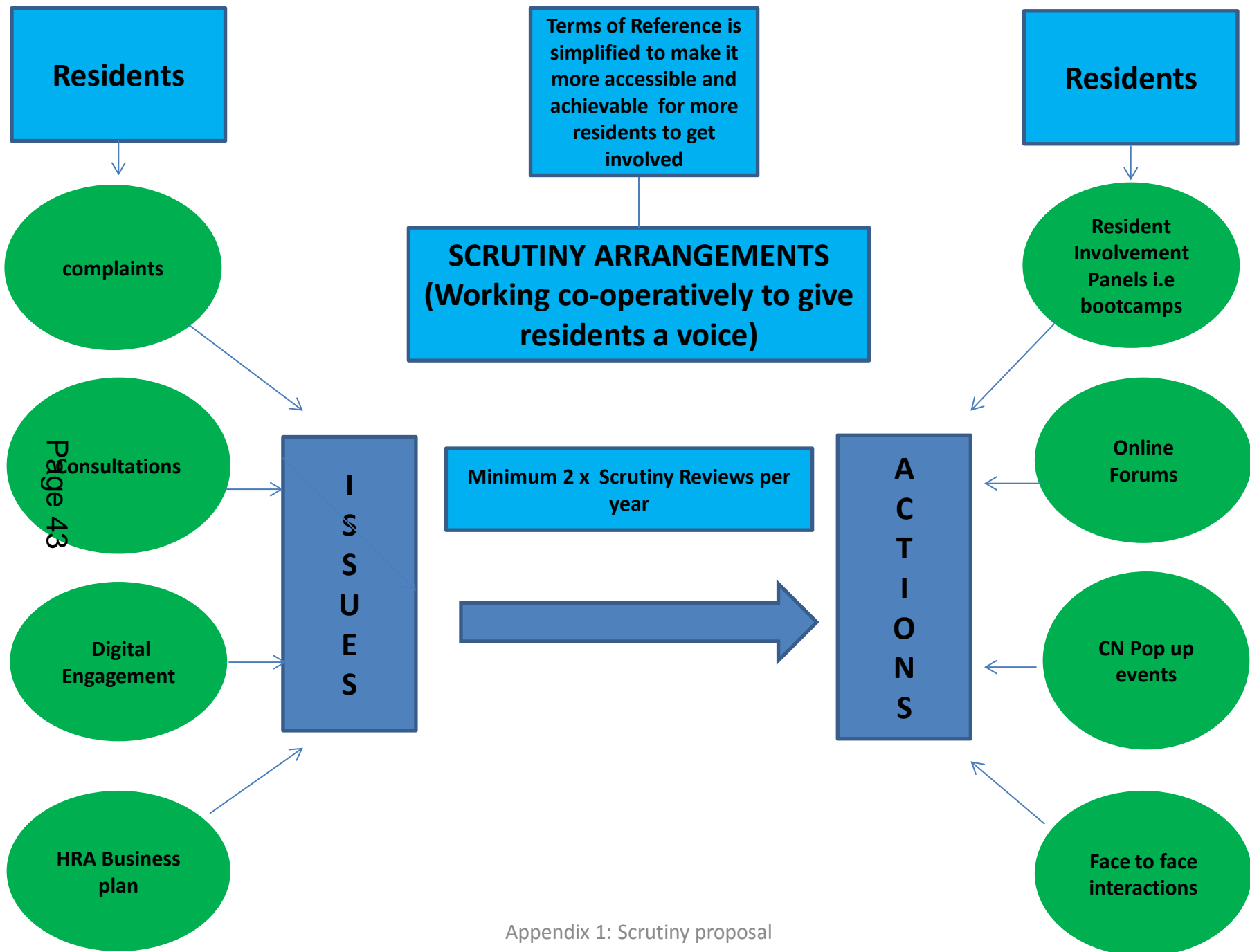
All documents that have been used in compiling this report, may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

None

APPENDICES

- 1 Proposed Scrutiny Arrangements for Housing Tenants and Residents
- 2 TPAS Resident Involvement Review
- 3 Community Involvement Framework
- 4 Glossary of Terms

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Residents raise concerns through a variety of channels. How can we work with them to resolve them?

- Resident Involvement Panels: Similar to the Gas Home M.O.T boot camp trialled in 2020 as a result of the TPAS review, residents are brought together for a period of time to work with SBC Officers to find solutions to issues or to agree on new ways of working. CN teams work with their communities to ensure panels are representative. Scrutiny can be carried out within CN areas or more town wide depending on its nature,

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Online Discussion: residents can have their say via the website or social media platforms and digital forums – this is shared with officers to inform and work with residents to action and may lead to scrutiny of a service.

- CN Pop Up Events: CN teams are present in community locations to talk to local people about what matters to them
- Face to Face Interactions: Every day conversations/concerns are recorded and used as intel to action additional support when necessary. This may result in scrutiny of a service or an issue that is unique to a particular location/group of residents.

The above methods of engaging compliment each other and should all be considered when developing council service in partnership with residents.

Resident Involvement Review

Stevenage Borough Council

July 2020



Introduction

Tpas was asked to provide Stevenage BC with options for delivering scrutiny that would comply with the regulatory requirements and reflect good practice within the housing sector.

Tpas has a significant bank of resources related to resident-led scrutiny including:

- Training and development modules (including accredited learning options)
- Accreditation Products for organisations who deliver excellent scrutiny functions
- Resident-led Scrutiny Toolkits
- Case Studies from more than 200 resident-led scrutiny models and our accredited client organisations
- Published guides and policy papers
- Extensive range of model templates and examples of Scrutiny safeguards, policy documents and resources, evidence gathering tools
- Scrutiny 'How to ...' Guides
- Access to Scrutiny Lounge events and networks which offers scrutiny members the opportunity to meet with other scrutiny groups, share experiences, approaches and establish contacts. The network operates nationally on-line, regionally and locally through meeting events hosted by landlords

Tpas used all these resources to support the development of Stevenage BC scrutiny development.

Background

Stevenage BC currently have a formal centralised scrutiny group and the Housing Management Advisory Board.

The Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) currently comprises of six residents, one of whom is a leaseholder. There are four members who regularly attend meetings, one member has not been at meetings for a while due to ill health and the sixth member does not have access to a computer or the internet so unless someone rings him to tell him about meetings, he doesn't know about them and cannot be expected to attend.

Last year, the CSP lost its long serving Chair, and has been struggling to recruit new members.



The CSP holds three different types of meeting:

- The first type of meeting is the CSP General meetings, which take place every three months. Staff attend these meetings to update CSP members on what they have been doing and to report progress on implementing agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny activities.
- The second type of meetings are performance meetings, which take place every six weeks. Senior staff attend these meetings to go through the KPIs. The CSP then selects two service areas that are underperforming to scrutinise.
- The third type of meetings are small sub-groups of the CSP that carry out the review of the service area(s) selected and take place at least monthly.
- Support from staff is effectively in place throughout the scrutiny process

It is clear that the current formal scrutiny format is volunteer time and staff intensive. What is unclear is the impact that the scrutiny reviews have on services as indicated by members of the CSP. It is also unclear how the work of the CSP is publicised to the wider resident body.

1 Why is Scrutiny important?

Resident-led scrutiny is an important part of the business of any housing organisation. Well run, it can be a critical part of business where residents provide feedback and scrutiny in the same way as more commercial organisations such as supermarkets work, testing with customers how they are doing.

Scrutiny helps the housing organisation to understand when it might need to develop new policies, strategies and change the way they deliver services and plays an **important** role in monitoring performance. By holding the housing organisation to account it ensures that services respond to the needs of the local community and are efficient, cost effective and easy to use.

Challenge is important and no matter what format it takes, organisations need to listen to what residents are saying and make it an integral part of any review or change in services. Residents want the best from their landlords and will want to work constructively to help achieve this through a range of methods.

2 The Regulatory Framework

The Regulator for Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard 2017 provides a clear framework for social landlords.



Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- *the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities*
- *the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards*
- *the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved*
- *the management of their homes, where applicable*
- *the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made*
- *agreeing local offers for service delivery*

Registered providers shall support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including by:

- *supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.*
- *supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them.*
- *the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets.*
- *providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.*
- *registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.*
- *where registered providers are proposing a change in landlord for one or more of their tenants or a significant change in their management arrangements, they shall consult with affected tenants in a fair, timely, appropriate and effective manner. Registered providers shall set out the proposals clearly and in an appropriate amount of detail and shall set out any actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term. Registered providers must be able to demonstrate to affected tenants how they have taken the outcome of the consultation into account when reaching a decision.*



- *registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.*

3 Tpas National Standards

The key principles that Tpas recommends a landlord should have in place to ensure effective scrutiny are:

- *There is a good relationship with senior management and the Council / Board and there is clarity about the role of scrutiny within the organisation and its governance arrangements.*
- *Work with the overall tenant engagement framework, thus holding the organisation to account through collaborative and supportive yet independent tenant led scrutiny.*
- *Constructively challenge on areas for improvements, using available and commissioned performance information.*
- *Identify what the organisation does well and celebrate this success.*
- *Drive business performance with a positive organisational approach to listening and acting on constructive challenge.*
- *Produce clearly identified and measured outcomes and impacts. (e.g. improvements to services, better value for money, increased transparency).*
- *Be valued (by Council or Board) as tenant led scrutiny provides research, insight and feedback direct from customers they may not get to hear.*
- *Be a key part of the business improvement process, and part of the self-assessment and value for money framework.*
- *Make sure that tenants have an influencing role that is proactive, evidenced based and leads to positive business improvements.*
- *Support the overall organisational approach to tenant engagement and empowerment.*

Tpas has produced a set of national standards that allows landlords to assess their own resident engagement against best practice across six main themes:

1. *Engagement Strategy; build the right foundations for effective engagement.*
2. *Resources for Engagement; Identify the right support to enable effective engagement.*
3. *Information and Insight; Commit to gathering, using and providing the right information.*



4. *Influence and Scrutiny; Create appropriate and effective levels of influence and scrutiny to drive business performance.*
5. *Community Engagement; Use a range of methods for effective wider community engagement.*
6. *Valuing Engagement; Measure the effects of your engagement so that it adds value to your organisation, stakeholders, communities and individuals.*

4 Options for Stevenage BC to deliver scrutiny

Formal Scrutiny

A Scrutiny Panel is the most commonly used arrangement in place by social landlords. It is resident-led and made up of up to ten tenants and leaseholders and supported by the landlord's staff. It will be formal in that it has Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct and will usually be part of the landlord's governance structure. This is important as it confers status and influence. Ideally, it will report directly into a Board or equivalent and be chaired by a resident.

The underlying ethos will be of co-regulation i.e. that residents and officers will work together in a collaborative way to scrutinise services and performance through Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and service reviews. The Panel will choose the areas it wishes to scrutinise. How service review choices are decided can be through a number of activities i.e. tenant call for action; performance dips; legal requirements to review; services about to go to procurement and board/officer request to review, but the final decision will rest with the Panel.

The Panel will request reports and information from officers. It will usually produce a scoping report to agree a timeframe, information required and which Panel members will be involved. The Chair may divide up tasks amongst Panel members to spread the workload and in some cases commission other involved structures within the organisation to carry out exercises that investigate how the service is currently delivered e.g. Mystery Shoppers/telephone survey calling. They may agree to meet less frequently during this period to concentrate on their tasks before agreeing the final report.

Reports may be chosen by Panel members through the studying of KPIs, formal complaints, feedback from residents, customer insight and profiling information or surveys such as STAR. Benchmarking is a clear part of scrutiny to draw on comparisons is one of the most effective things organisations can do to **improve their operations and address VFM.**

The report will have a series of recommendations and be agreed by the Panel and given to the landlord's officers to review. They will formally respond within a given timeframe



with their responses to each point. They will state whether they agree or not (giving a clear reason why not) on each recommendation, what action will be taken, which officer or department is responsible for actioning and a timeframe for completion. The landlord should provide regular updates on the progress including reasons for any deviation from the recommendations.

Recruitment to the Panel should be formalised by an application form to ensure that residents volunteer knowing the requirements of the role but it is important that there is a cross-section of residents reflecting tenure, diversity and geographical location. There should be some form of annual review of the Panel to assess its effectiveness and also for individual members to assess their contribution and address any training needs.

Training is important, particularly on the roles and responsibilities for members, how a Panel undertakes scrutiny, Chairing skills and working as part of a team. It may be useful to have a Board champion who takes responsibility for ensuring any top level issues are addressed and that the Panel and in particular the Chair are fully supported.

Most landlords will cover expenses for residents to attend panels and may make rewards such as vouchers or a Christmas meal in recognition of their efforts. Provision of IT equipment is also useful for those without their own resources

The landlord and Scrutiny Panel should work together to communicate information to all residents on the work they have been doing. This is to ensure hard to reach residents become aware of its work and also to encourage potential new members.

Tpas has produced a guide called “**Nine Steps to Scrutiny**” that highlights best practice in the sector for social landlords and how they can achieve the best outcomes from their scrutiny panels (see attached).

Pros of a formal scrutiny panel:

A panel has status and if properly constituted, supported and trained can have a real impact on the way an organisation responds to the voice of residents.

- Relatively cheap to run once initial set up costs have been factored in.
- Residents feel listened to and that they have influence on decisions being made.
- There is a good deal of best practice available nationally to help shape the best structure for each organisation.
- Less easy to assess value-for-money of a Panel.
- Compliant with the Tpas National Tenant Engagement Standards and the Regulator for Social Housing’s Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard.



Cons of a formal scrutiny panel:

- Can be seen as a “talking shop” where residents achieve little in the way of outcomes.
- Some residents see them as not being independent of the landlord.
- Can be too formal for some residents.
- Can be reflective of a small number of like-minded residents.
- Often have a lack of diversity.
- Can exclude hard-to-reach residents.
- Often held in one location at times where working residents find it hard to attend.
- Residents need to fully understand the requirements of the role.
- Fatigue can set in if meetings or reviews too onerous or complex leading to a drop-off in numbers.
- Less easy to set up for a small landlord.
- Needs to be in addition to wider community engagement activities.

Task and Finish Groups

An alternative to a formal Scrutiny Panel is a Task and Finish Group (T&FG). These give residents the opportunity to improve services by giving views on a specific topic over a short period of time (usually up to three months).

The concept is similar but membership is more fluid and rather than have set meetings with a permanent membership, the landlord will choose a subject for review. This will be advertised or communicated to all residents or through targeted contact using complaints or those who have expressed an interest in getting involved.

Once the group has been selected or self-selected, they will agree responsibilities and a short timeframe. The review will be undertaken using mainly online tools and perhaps short onsite visits, for example on voids or estate management.

Pros of T&FG

- T&FG can be popular with residents who do not wish to commit to a long period of time that is usually associated with Scrutiny Panels.
- Do not suffer from meeting fatigue.
- Short timeframes usually mean good energy from the groups and quick outcomes.
- A number of reviews can be achieved in a short timeframe.
- They attract residents who have a particular interest or expertise in a subject.



- Can be useful for those less able to physically attend meetings by making good use of online facilities to carry out the work.
- They are cost effective.
- They attract a wider range of residents who are interested in reviewing the business of their landlord.
- Can suit smaller organisations.

Cons of T&FG

- Talented and experienced residents commit to a short-timeframe only which means a constant recruitment process is needed.
- Can have less influence corporately than a Scrutiny Panel if there is no direct link to Board/Committees.
- Can be harder to administrate with a constantly changing group of residents.
- Generally compliant with the Tpas and RSH standards but only if the outcomes of reviews are discussed, agreed and acted at a strategic level.
- Little chance of introducing benchmarking activities

Pop Ups

This form of engagement tends to be smaller, ad-hoc and local. It can be centred around an estate with a particular issue such as addressing concerns raised by residents on grounds maintenance, cleaning or parking.

The landlord can use this as a quick and effective way to tackle dissatisfaction by speaking directly with residents and contractors. It helps break down barriers and develop trust if the landlord acts quickly.

They can be a relaxed and fun way to engage with residents particularly if run with activities for children.

Pros of Pop Ups

- Quick and easy to set up.
- Addresses resident or staff concerns about housing issues at a local level.
- Staff can tack on other subjects to test resident views whilst they are in one location.
- Residents do not need to commit to more than a couple of hours of their time.
- Can be delivered at short notice.
- A landlord can cover a wide area of their housing stock quickly and easily



Cons of Pop Ups

- They only address small and specific topics in a locality.
- Can be difficult to obtain structured feedback if not properly managed.
- They can only form one part of an overall resident engagement strategy.
- Senior managers and/or Board may not be informed of results.
- Less easy for residents with disabilities to be involved.
- As a stand-alone form of engagement, they do not comply with the Tpas or RSH standards.

Bootcamps

Bootcamps are run along similar lines to T&F Groups but are usually run by an independent facilitator. The subjects of service for scrutiny are usually chosen through a survey of residents asking them to choose from a selection of topics. Those residents interested are asked to apply to be part of the event/s with an aim to achieve a diverse representation.

Topic events are held usually over two days with an online option available where possible to allow ideas and views to be expressed by residents unable to physically attend.

The first day usually consists of outlining the process looking at the identified key questions and receiving the presentations from relevant staff. The independent facilitator plays a key role in opening up discussion from residents and staff and encouraging less vocal residents to participate.

The second day is spent reviewing any additional data and the combined staff/resident groups work on recommendations and suggestions based on a series of questions. These recommendations are collated and then compiled into a report agreed by the residents. The report is then sent to the landlord's senior management team for review, comment and action and the residents informed of the report outcome including timeframe and responsible officers.

Pros of a Bootcamp

- They are cost effective in terms of resources needed.
- Reports are produced quickly and a number of reviews can be completed over a year
- Recruitment of residents is easier than formal groups because of the self selecting nature of the group.
- There is a better chance of a wider representation of residents in terms of diversity and geography.



- Residents are in control of the subjects for review.
- They are less formal and more interactive than Scrutiny Panels
- Provided the reports are presented and actioned at Board or SMT level, they are compliant with the Tpas and RSH standards.
- Facilitator can provide benchmarking examples

Cons of a Bootcamp

- They can be more work for officers to administer if the turnover of residents is high.
- They tend to suit simpler topics for reviews because of the shorter timeframe.

The Council held a very successful scrutiny bootcamp event looking at the Gas Service and the introduction of an MOT Service in January this year. The event was held at the Ibis hotel, with six members of staff and five CSP members in attendance to run the event and help facilitate table discussions. An invitation was sent out to all residents and approximately 50 tenants and ten leaseholders came to the event, many of whom had not been involved with the Council before.

The bootcamp consisted of two presentations, each followed by a table discussion, and a final session where each table put forward their top two recommendations for service improvements. These recommendations were discussed and either agreed or disagreed at the time. The flipchart paper from each table, with all of the recommendations from both discussions, were collected and later collated into a table. Attendees were informed that they would receive a copy of the table and would be able to see which recommendations had been agreed, who the responsible member of staff for each agreed recommendation was and the deadline for implementation of any agreed recommendations.

Organisations are changing the ways in which they work with their tenants to more task and finish / bootcamp approaches; one off focus groups; the use of social media platforms. Some organisations are establishing central databases of tenants who want to be involved. Taking this approach increases the likelihood of a more diverse group of tenants being involved, with a greater spread of experiences.

The organisations that have created a centralised database of interested volunteers have included gathering information around the following:-

- ✓ What service areas are volunteers interested in e.g repairs, leaseholders, asb, complaints etc
- ✓ Preferred methods for involvement e.g. scrutiny bootcamp events, on-line surveys, focus groups, tenant inspectors, mystery shoppers, one off meetings, questionnaires and surveys,
- ✓ Preferred methods of communication, face to face, on line, via telephone , text, meetings etc



This information can be gathered through a variety of means including:

- a questionnaire both on-line and paper;
- through front line staff asking them as part of their other meetings with people;
- in sheltered schemes through their wardens;
- through any calls to the organisation utilising a quick telephone survey to gather info through contact centre.

Staff could be given a target to get people onto the database.

This database can also be utilised to find out what the priorities are of the general tenant community and this intelligence can then be used to prioritise involvement work annually. This centralised database can also be used by the scrutiny framework to establish wider priorities for scrutiny reviews etc.

Moving to this type of model ensures that the organisation has a 'pool' of people willing to get involved in a lot of different ways. It's really important when talking to tenants and leaseholders and asking for this information that there is a consistent, clear and transparent message – it's about tenants getting involved in the ways that suit them and it's not all about face to face meetings.

Tenants on the database are then contacted as and when an opportunity develops. This approach has several benefits for organisations including:

Benefits

- It enables the organisation to consult a far wider and representative group of tenants and leaseholders for their views and getting involved
- It enables the organisation to target directly, those who may be interested in a particular area of concern / priorities
- A large proportion of involvement will be more task and finish type involvement rather than meetings for meetings sake.
- It is a more value for money approach to involvement that is targeted for both volunteers and the organisations needs

Alternative for Housing Management Advisory Board

The HMAB is a high-level forum made up of council tenants and leaseholders, Councillors and staff. They work with the Council's Executive and other committees and the HMAB acts in an advisory role on housing related decisions, considers housing related policy and strategic decisions along with regular scrutiny reviews. The Board's role is wide-ranging including development of strategies, budgets and business plans and reviewing KPIs.

The makeup is designed to reflect a cross section of decision makers and service users and provides a forum for important strategic decisions to be reviewed.

However, there are a number of aspects of this arrangement that may suggest an alternative is required. Set out below are the pros and cons for the HMAB.



Pros of the HMAB

- It represents a good cross-section of those involved in providing or receiving services from Stevenage BC.
- It has influence because of the Councillors who make up to five of the Board.
- The areas of review are high-level and business critical.
- It provides a formal link between the Council and residents.
- Residents will have a forum that can represent their views and opinions.

Cons of the HMAB

- There is a duplication of work of Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP).
- There is a conflict of interest as Councillors sit on the HMAB and at full council therefore “mark their own work”.
- There is a conflict of interest as a member of CSP sits on the HMAB.
- The term of office up to eight years is too long for members.
- The quorum is set high and runs the risk of having meetings unable to complete the business set.
- The HMAB is burdensome for officers to administer in terms of paperwork, reports, agenda, minutes and attendance.
- It is likely to be costly in terms of staff time.
- It makes recommendations only rather than making decisions.
- It is unclear where the HMAB sits in the governance structure of Stevenage BC .

The HMAB has a role that appears to duplicate a number of the functions that would be expected to be carried out by the Council members and by officers. A more streamlined approach to decision making and scrutiny could be set up with the SMT having responsibility for the following:

- Business planning
- Budgets
- Investment in housing
- HRA
- Delivering of all housing services

This leaves Councillors to fulfil their primary role as overall decision makers giving a clear demarcation of responsibility.

There is still a role for the HMAB which could include:

- To take an independent view of Stevenage’s performance against agreed standards and targets and report to Full Council on a quarterly basis.



- To contribute to setting standards and targets as part of any reviews.
- To have regard to a range of information/sources (as appropriate) including, but not limited to:
 - Performance Indicators
 - Outcomes from Community Engagement activities
 - Tenants and Residents Associations
 - Satisfaction Surveys
 - Customer complaints
- To use an evidence-based approach to identify areas for resident scrutiny and commission this through Stevenage's scrutiny arrangements.
- To monitor the progress of scrutiny work against agreed timescales.
- To consider resident scrutiny findings and recommendations and agree these with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Housing Executive Team ahead of reporting to Full Council.

If there is a desire to do so, the HMAB could continue to work in a briefing and advisory capacity, but it is recommended that the frequency of monthly meetings is reduced significantly.

5 Recommendations

Scrutiny

- Following the success of the scrutiny bootcamp event in January, Tpas recommends that Stevenage BC continue to undertake service reviews in this manner and disbands the Customer Scrutiny Panel on completion of the Gas Contract review.
- Service areas for review through scrutiny bootcamps to be identified by the HMAB (see below).
- A minimum of two Borough wide scrutiny bootcamps should be held each year and could be complemented by community based activities (focus groups and pop-up events) and digital / on-line engagement (emails, surveys etc).

Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)

- Tpas recommends that the HMAB undertake the role as set out above.
- Tpas would recommend that the make-up of this group is 9 residents (tenants, shared owners and leaseholders) and 3 councillors. The membership should be limited to a maximum of 12 people.
 - The term of office for residents should be limited to 3 years, however members who step down at the end of their term of office may be re-selected, but should be considered alongside other suitable applicants through a fair and transparent appointment process.
 - The HMAB should be accountable to tenants and residents for the work it undertakes in carrying out performance review and commissioning scrutiny



bootcamps (two a year). It should be supported to do this through the SBC website, newsletters and social media.

- The HMAB should make a quarterly report to Full Council – this may prompt action and /or require a response. The HMAB will agree findings and recommendations from any scrutiny it has commissioned with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Housing Executive Team before presentation to Full Council.
- Assistant Directors for Housing, Investment and Repairs should attend the meetings to support then HMAB in its role, as and when required.

Leaseholder Involvement

- It was clear from the leaseholders that attended the Scrutiny Bootcamp event in January that they want to engage with Stevenage BC but may struggle to do so due to work or family commitments. Stevenage BC should consider a digital platform for leaseholders to improve leaseholder input and satisfaction.

Database of Involved Volunteers

- Stevenage BC should consider developing a database of resident volunteers that captures how residents would like to be involved and what service areas they are interested in.

Valuing Engagement

Stevenage BC needs to:

- look at how it can evidence that engagement is planned, monitored and measured and has clear aims, objectives and outcomes.
- work with stakeholders to track outcomes and evaluate achievements through engagement.
- involve tenants and communities in performance monitoring, learning from and improving performance through effective challenge.
- demonstrate that Engagement activities result in changes for the benefit of the organisation, tenants, leaseholders and communities
- develop an impact assessment approach to establish some of the benefits and impacts of their engagement activities. ‘You said you did’ approach is great to communicate achievements to a wider network of residents. You could also use Facebook, Twitter and other departmental communication channels.
- work with the Housing Management Advisory Board to set outcomes and measures each year – using quantitative and qualitative research
- consider when objective setting what is to be achieved and how the achievements will improve social, environmental and economic value - how to measure and evidence that your intervention has led to improvements. How to capture non -intervention improvements too?



Celebrating Engagement

- Promote engagement achievements through a variety of mechanisms to the wider resident base to aid recruitment – this could be in a communications plan with measurable actions that can be monitored – most volunteers give up if they cannot see clearly what has changed as a result of their involvement.

Communication & Feedback

- Whatever the resident engagement activity, Stevenage BC must be openly and honestly communicating with its residents and communities. They will want to know what has happened to the feedback, opinions and views they have given you
- We recommend that wherever there is a change in circumstances or a need to review services:
 - Robust engagement activities are carried out with those it affects. This could include fun-days, door knocking, Chip and Chat events, Focus Groups, Surveys etc.
 - Be clear as to why you are there and what you are looking for from those engaged.
 - Closing the loop of consultation by returning to say what has happened as a result, is essential in all activities to build and retain trust. Future activities and the view of Stevenage BC as a caring and listening organisation will be determined in these exchanges.
 - Be clear about activities and only engage when you have a clear objective or there is a specified need.

As Stevenage has had some success with a wider community-driven approach, it is hoped the recommendations within this report can be considered for their way forward in developing a more comprehensive resident involvement and scrutiny method that suits residents and the organisation.

Community Involvement Framework: Short Guide

Working together to grow, develop and lead
the aspirations for our town.



About this summary

The following summary provides practical tips on how to engage with local communities. It can also be used to support our partners in other public agencies to work more cooperatively, and businesses and commercial partners who supply the council with goods and services.

The summary should be read in conjunction with the Council's Community Involvement Framework, which was approved and adopted by Executive in 2019. The framework sets out in detail how Stevenage Borough Council will engage with its local communities.

[Framework](#)

Engaging, involving and empowering communities helps to ensure that we are working more effectively, by addressing the things that really matter to local people. Embedding engagement in our day-to-day work leads to better results and brings about real improvements to people's lives. It also means that we don't need to spend money further down the line correcting the things we got wrong.

The Coronavirus pandemic has shown how impactful communities and services can be when they work together. Maintaining and strengthening our commitment to engagement will help our communities to build the resilience they need, now and into the future.

Who should use this document?

We all need to engage people in the work that we do, which is why everyone employed by the Council should read, and then continue to refer to, this document. People in different business units already do a lot of work engaging with local communities. The Council's Cooperative Neighbourhood Programme brings these plans together so that we can build upon and accelerate this work. There will be other times when the council engages on a thematic or issues basis. This may mean that the council aims to involve residents beyond the needs of their immediate neighbourhood. The same principles should apply.

Sharing good practice

The document will also support colleagues to share their best practice on how to engage and involve local people in the things we do. Taking decisions with local people, and not for local people, enables us to get more things right. It also helps us to build the trust needed to take forward a cooperative way of working.

The five steps to engagement

These are informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering. Some areas of work will have different starting points when beginning the engagement process dependent upon the work already undertaken with local communities. For example, a simple press

release asking people to complete a survey might only go as far as informing and consulting, however, if we support local people to use the findings to design and deliver new services, then we have started to move towards collaboration and empowerment.

Joining-up

Practicing good engagement will help to drive forward a number of interconnected strategies and plans. These include our work on Cooperative Neighbourhoods, Equalities, Climate Change, and Community Wealth Building. Our work in these areas will have a more lasting impact if we work cooperatively.

Good community involvement is at the heart of the way we design and operate services at Stevenage. Housing services embed resident involvement in day to day operations. Regeneration and Housing Development engages with residents on proposals for future development and across a number of service areas such as Parks and the Stevenage Museum, local residents volunteer to help deliver some of our services.

Further Information

To discuss any ideas or seek further guidance please e-mail:

community.development@stevenage.gov.uk

DRAFT

Putting Involvement into Practice

Engagement Steps	Examples (for illustration only)	Some things to think about
Informing	<p>The Council is about to introduce a new maintenance service for tenants living in social housing. The council promotes this across social media, however, recognising that not everyone has access to this, the service is also promoted through more traditional media, and supplemented by direct mail. Local charities are contacted so that they can update their systems and inform customers without IT.</p>	<p>How can you ensure that your information is reaching all parts of the Community?</p> <p>How do you reach people who do not use social media? For example, during a lockdown? Or those who do not link with council social media feeds?</p> <p>Who can help you to promote your information? For example, charities working with BAME communities.</p>
Consulting	<p>Following the launch of the new maintenance service for tenants, a local Neighbourhood Team suggests that a similar service might also help people on low incomes who live in private accommodation. As a result, a survey was issued to establish levels of interest and potential demand. To ensure a representative sample, the Council worked with local charities to support responses from vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Have you made clear why you are consulting and who you want to respond?</p> <p>Have you identified and then removed barriers to responding for certain groups?</p> <p>Do you know what will happen after you have consulted including how you will provide feedback?</p>
Involving	<p>The survey of tenants also asked residents to put forward ideas for their neighbourhood. One theme that emerged from this was a desire to do something about a green space that had fallen into disrepair. The Neighbourhood Team set up an engagement day in the area and invited those who had responded to the survey. They also engaged passers-by. An interactive zone invited people to draw their plans for the area and to join a working group.</p>	<p>Have you provided opportunities for a broad range of people to become involved?</p> <p>Are you clear on why you are involving people, and can you explain why you are doing this?</p> <p>Have you removed barriers to involvement? For example, by holding events in community venues.</p>

Collaborating	The working group to re-design the green space was facilitated by an officer from Environmental Services, alongside their colleague from Community Development, who supported residents to gain skills in chairing meetings. The group established an action plan for the area with two key objectives. These were to improve and maintain the area, and to utilise their skills to help vulnerable tenants in private housing to maintain their gardens.	<p>Are the roles and responsibilities between all parties clearly understood? For example, is there a main point of contact for the Council?</p> <p>Have the group been supported to undertake a SWOT analysis of their plans?</p> <p>Are measures in place to ensure that the working group continues to be representative of its wider community?</p>
Empowering	A colleague from Housing Services introduced the group to the contractor for the new maintenance service. They offered to mentor the group as part of their commitment to social value. With this support, the group developed a business plan for their two main activities, which included providing volunteering opportunities for their neighbours who are long term unemployed. To take their work to the next level, the group were supported to access a funding workshop organised by a local charitable foundation.	<p>Does the group have enough capacity to implement its ideas?</p> <p>If capacity is an issue, has the group been supported to identify its development needs?</p> <p>How will the group retain its accountability to local people? For example, will it have an on-going relationship with the local Neighbourhood Team?</p>

Some of the benefits of engagement based upon the above examples

- Facilitates join-up between departments and with external agencies, such as contractors and charities.
- Helps to identify the things that really matter to local people and to put in place more lasting solutions.
- Supports contractors to achieve social value that directly benefits local communities.
- Adds to community wealth building, with people and groups reinvesting their resources in the local area.
- Reduces carbon footprint by addressing local priorities with local solutions.

Housing Resident Involvement Strategy – Glossary of terms:

- SBC – Stevenage Borough Council
- TPAS – Tenants Participatory Advice Service
- HMAB – Housing Management Advisory Board
- CSP – Customer Scrutiny Panel
- BAME – Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic
- CCIN – Co-operative Council’s Innovation Network

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Meeting Executive

Portfolio Area Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture

Date 9 June 2021



LEISURE CONTRACT WORK PROGRAMME

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report provides the background to the current Leisure Management contract which is due to finish at the end of March 2023.
- 1.2 This report also outlines a proposed work programme to enable the Council to determine the strategic delivery of its leisure and cultural offer post March 2023.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive approves the progression of the Leisure Work Programme as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 That Executive approves the undertaking of an options appraisal to determine future leisure management options when the current leisure contract expires.
- 2.3 That Executive requests a future report outlining leisure management options in order to determine a preferred management model.
- 2.4 That Executive approves the setting up of a Project Team and Programme Board to manage the options appraisal and subsequent procurement process.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Stevenage Leisure Ltd has, since its formation (by the council) in 1998, delivered leisure services for the Council. The current contract was awarded in 2009 and is due to end in 2023. The contract covers four leisure facilities. These are; Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre, Stevenage Swimming Centre, Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre, Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre.
- 3.2 The nature of leisure contracts has changed significantly in recent years, with more emphasis on commercial delivery and a focus on revenue generation for local authorities. There is also a growing recognition by Sport England and Public Health, in the role that good quality public leisure provision plays in supporting community wellbeing and the wider determinants of health.
- 3.3 Currently the Council does not receive contract income (as a lot of later leisure procurements do), and instead requires a management fee payable to SLL. In addition the construction of the current contract may no longer deliver the outcomes required in today's leisure market. Industry experts ascertain that a new modern leisure contract could deliver greater value for money for the Council and wider social value for local residents reflecting industry best practice.
- 3.4 The end of the current contract in March 2023 gives the Council an opportunity to define future arrangements that are more closely aligned with the Council's strategic priorities, whilst providing additional flexibility to meet the changing needs of the market and either reduce the costs to the Council or provide a revenue stream for the General Fund.
- 3.5 There is also a linked aspiration to create 21st century leisure and cultural facilities as part of the wider Town Centre regeneration. There are further opportunities for the development of a new wet and dry leisure facility in addition to the relocation of the town's Museum, which both have potentially Towns Fund part funding, subject to business cases being approved and match funding identified.
- 3.6 In spite of the impact on health and wellbeing leisure and cultural provision remains a discretionary service for local councils. The Council will need to ensure that any future service need can be within the financial constraints of the General fund Medium Term Financial Strategy. Future Council leisure and cultural provision will not only need to be sustainable and meet the Council's priorities but also must be affordable.
- 3.7 The Council is not responsible for all elements of culture, leisure and wellbeing service delivery in Stevenage and the wider offer provided by voluntary, private and other government organisations is integral to the wellbeing of the town's residents. The Council does, however, have a unique place-shaping and enabling role to support local delivery and help drive, support and mobilise other providers and stakeholders within the sector.
- 3.8 There is, therefore, a once in a generation opportunity to revisit and reset the wider vision for leisure and culture in Stevenage and progress the Future Town, Future Council ambitions. This will provide a clear policy direction for a number of key work streams linked to this project and will inform the Council's approach to place-shaping and wellbeing.

- 3.9 The Council acknowledges the benefits of using a clear framework to support its strategic approach and to achieve this it will draw on the Sport England Strategic Outcomes Planning Guidance as a framework.
- 3.10 The underpinning principles of this project will also support the Council's strategic *Future Town Future Council* objectives:
- *Town Centre Regeneration*
 - *Connected to our Customers*
 - *Co-operative Neighbourhood Management*
 - *Be a financially resilient Council with enough resource to deliver our priorities*
 - *Become a smart Council with improved performance*
 - *Define Stevenage as a Place of Choice*

In the context of a future leisure programme, the Council's cultural strategy and health and wellbeing strategy within the Future Town, Future Council Place of Choice theme detail the strategic objectives to meet future community needs. It is through this theme that the programme is being framed.

- 3.11 However there are challenges in the current leisure market and considerations relating to a future leisure and cultural offer for the town are progressing at a time when the leisure and cultural sectors have been significantly impacted by Covid-19. Nationally, bodies such as the District Council Network forecast a net loss across district leisure provision of £325million in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20. This impact has been felt locally by SLL and the Stevenage contract. Whilst the re-opening of facilities over recent months has seen a steady return of customers, the medium to longer-term remains uncertain. Some predications suggest that it may take the sector up to two years to return to pre-Covid usage levels. The ongoing impact of Covid-19 will need to be monitored as part of a future leisure programme and will have some influence on the opportunities available to the Council as the process progresses.
- 3.12 Stevenage is part of a National Leisure Recovery Fund project called Moving Communities. This is being developed as a data gathering programme to assist recovery across England and will be used to benchmark performance of leisure facilities across different family groups. This will enable the Council to provide robust and validated information during any market engagement and procurement processes. It will also gage market conditions in the leisure sector to assess the strength of the leisure provider market.
- 3.13 The current context for leisure and culture provides an opportunity to frame both a future vision for the offer the Council and other partners might deliver across the town and the ways in which this offer is delivered.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The end of the current leisure contract in 2023 means that the Council will need to formulate a plan for the operation of the four existing facilities beyond that point.
- 4.2 Officers consider, given the background and current context that the council should give wider consideration to the mix of facilities that form part of its leisure offer, rather than purely re-tendering on a like for like contract. This may include other leisure assets such as pavilions, Ridlins Athletics Stadium, outdoor sports and open space leisure assets as part of these considerations. Such an approach would support a coherent vision for leisure and could drive best value and further efficiencies.
- 4.3 Despite the difficulties in the current market a contract extension with the current provider is not being recommended at present, as this does not deliver best value given that other options have not been explored.
- 4.4 Given the wider strategic ambitions for health, wellbeing and culture and a vision for new leisure and cultural facilities as part of Town Centre regeneration it is proposed to consider future delivery through a wider focus on place-shaping. A leisure work programme has therefore been devised to enable the Council to determine its future leisure and cultural offer.
- 4.5 Such a programme will give the Council an opportunity to define the long term future service delivery for residents whilst being flexible enough to be able to adapt to future changing demands of the local market.
- 4.6 The programme will work to the following principles:
1. Ensuring the Council has a clear vision for health and wellbeing maximising its delivery of, sports, leisure, arts and culture informed by insight to support its policy position.
 2. Ensuring the Council meets the health and wellbeing needs and the aspirations of the local population.
 3. Ensuring the Council achieves best value for the successful delivery of leisure facilities and services.
 4. Ensuring the Council maximises opportunities to increase income as part of its Co-operative Insourcing and Commercialisation Strategy and deliver an affordable cost envelope for the General Fund.
 5. Ensuring future management arrangements reflect the Co-operative Council ambitions and provide excellent services and social value through their delivery.
- 4.7 The project stages will include the following:
1. Identify a clear, needs led 'vision', priorities and local strategic outcomes for the council's health, wellbeing, sports, leisure, arts culture and community outreach services and the town's physical assets.

2. Consider and define what elements of culture, arts leisure, community, sports and wellbeing should be included within a leisure management contract.
 3. Evaluate opportunity for a new leisure build and the impact this would have on the leisure management contract
 4. Undertake a management options appraisal - Comparing the relative advantages, and disadvantages of management options including; in house, Local Authority Trading Company (and the relevant legal entities that this may form, i.e. CIC, CLG, CLS, Mutual) and open market procurement.
- 4.8 There are a number of established management approaches used for the delivery of sport and leisure services. There are several factors to be considered in assessing the appropriateness of a particular approach (or approaches) to establish the right balance for Stevenage. These will include affordability, deliverability, the level of democratic control and sustainability. All of these factors will form part of an options appraisal.
- 4.9 There are a range of management approaches currently available to councils in England to manage sport, physical activity and leisure services. These include:
1. Competitive procurement – usually resulting in the appointment of a multi-site operator or sometimes a local Not for Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) trust where there is one operating in an authority area. This accounts for over 60% of local authorities in England.
 2. Direct commissioning to a Local Charitable NPDO Trust usually serving one authority.
 3. Setting up a Local Authority Trading Company (a company wholly owned by the Council).
 4. Direct commissioning through in-house management.
 5. Through a Joint Venture Company (a formal partnership with a third party).
 6. Through asset transfer (the transfer of a facility to another body or group to deliver the services directly).
- 4.10 As part of such a process the Council should determine what facilities and services should be within the Leisure Management contract and consider and evaluate the best procurement route options and agree a procurement strategy.
- 4.11 In many instances it may be appropriate for a combination of management approaches to deliver a service – for example an outsourced leisure management contract for defined core leisure facilities, in-house direct delivery for particular functions or partnering arrangements for the delivery of community-based provision. These opportunities will need to be fully explored through an options appraisal.

- 4.12 An options appraisal will provide a transparent framework for the Council to select the most appropriate management approach(es), to meet the strategic needs and provide best value on behalf of the town's residents.
- 4.13 Through such an appraisal it is recommended that the Council also determines the time-frame or contract term e.g. 5, 10, 15, 25 years and in addition considers the asset stock condition and any subsequent capital funding requirements. This helps to frame realistic expectations before going out to market or framing internal investment.
- 4.14 In order to progress the work programme effectively it is proposed that an officer project team is established and a programme board is created, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture. This will help to ensure that the leisure programme is delivered on time and within the principles set out in this report. To support this programme, given the size and scope of the project, leisure procurement expertise is being commissioned to provide external support to the process.
- 4.15 It is proposed to launch this process with a wider community and stakeholder visioning exercise to help frame the future aspirations for leisure for the town.
- 4.16 The results from the visioning exercise will help to inform an options appraisal to be considered by members before a commissioning process begins.
- 4.17 A timetable outlining key milestones is outlined below:

PROGRAMME TIMELINE

Appoint project consultants to develop options appraisal	June 2021
Vision and Strategic priorities - Stevenage Sport and Leisure Summit – A stakeholder summit to assess future aspirations for sport and leisure in Stevenage	June 2021
Vision and Strategic Priorities – wider strategic context, stakeholder engagement, development of Vision and strategic priorities	July 2021
Establish Project Board	July 2021
Executive Paper – Options Appraisal and Preferred Management Options	September 2021
Executive- Approval to Proceed	September 2021
Finalise capital investment requirements	November 2021
Pre-procurement Strategy	December 2021
Develop tender documents	February 2022
Write and issue contract specification Executive- Approval to Proceed with Formal Procurement	March 2022
Evaluate submitted tenders completion	October 2022

Award contract	Nov/Dec 2022
Contract mobilisation December 2022 to April 2023	

- 4.18 Subject to Executive approval the visioning exercise and options appraisal will commence over the summer period with an Executive report outlining management options presented at the September 2021 meeting.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The options appraisal process will identify and forecast future revenue implications and capital costs for the Council's leisure assets linked to the options outlined in the report. This will result in a core element of the viability of leisure options considered. Any future leisure provision will need to be delivered within the constraints of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and any options recommended will need to be affordable in the longer term.
- 5.2.1 The options appraisal will also help to provide business modelling for any new facilities developed as part of the Town Centre regeneration programme. This will form a core element of the viability assessment of leisure options considered.

Legal Implications

- 5.3.1 There are no direct legal implications as a consequence of this report. Detailed consideration of the legal implications will be required in due course once the options appraisal has been completed and options for future service delivery identified.
- 5.4.1 Future management options will need to be considered with due regard to procurement legislation relating to local authority leisure provision.

Risk Implications

- 5.5.1 A risk register is being developed as part of the programme. Resources have been identified to provide the capacity to support the options appraisal process in accordance with the programme timeline. The delivery of the work programme will need to be adequately managed to ensure key milestones are met in order to meet the overall ambition to implement a future operating model from April 2023. This will be monitored through the programme board.
- 5.6.1 The impact of Covid-19 on the existing leisure contract and the future leisure market will continue to be monitored as there remains some uncertainty of the timescale for the full recovery of the leisure and cultural sector. Further outbreaks or lockdowns could further jeopardise the sector and the range of options available to the Council in the timeframe. This will be built into the options appraisal.

Planning Implications

- 5.7.1 The options appraisal may identify planning implications regarding current facilities usage and planning conditions. These issues will be fully identified as part of this process.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.8.1 Future leisure management options will need to take into account climate change implications and should positively contribute to meeting the Council's climate change strategy. A more co-ordinated leisure offer across the town, including the use of open space assets will help to encourage physical activity and encourage walking and cycling and reduce carbon emissions.
- 5.9.1 Capital investment in any existing and new facilities will also consider energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions and more environmentally friendly design.

Human Resources Implications

- 5.10.1 Human resource considerations will need to be considered depending on the options appraisal developed and whether preferred options have a direct impact on Council staff or take into account TUPE arrangements for staff employed via the existing leisure contract.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.11.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment will accompany the options appraisal to ensure that protected characteristic groups are not disproportionately impacted by any proposed operating models and that health inequalities are further tackled through a future leisure offer.
- 5.12.1 The visioning and stakeholder engagement exercise will be developed in a way that will capture a range of resident voices, from existing sport and leisure stakeholders but also from residents who may or may not use existing facilities. Data and insight from current operations will also help to identify lower levels of engagement from particular sections of the community.

Service Delivery Implications

- 5.13.1 The process will identify the future options for the delivery of the Council's leisure and cultural offer. This will span services in Communities and Neighbourhoods and Stevenage Direct Services. The engagement of both of these service areas in the project team will be key to aligning service planning and future service design.

Safeguarding Children Implications

- 5.14.1 The voice of children and young people will be captured as part of this process. This will be led by the Council's play and wellbeing service and the community development team utilising existing safeguarding procedures and engagement methodology.

Other Corporate Implications

- 5.15.1 The Council has already defined key ambitions relating to health and wellbeing in the production of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-22. The Council's future leisure arrangements will relate to these ambitions to improve community health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.
- 5.16.1 The Council has also outlined cultural ambitions in the Stevenage Re-imagined Cultural Strategy 2018-2028. These ambitions relate to an improved Theatre and Museum offer and further cultural development throughout the town. Future management arrangements will also reflect these ambitions.
- 5.17.1 The announcement of the £37.5million Towns Fund for Stevenage in March 2021 means that future leisure management arrangements will need to reflect the opportunity to create new town centre leisure and cultural facilities. The alignment of these programmes will be critical as part of these overarching considerations.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

None

APPENDICES

None

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date 9 June 2021



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER FOUR 2020/21

KEY DECISION

Authors Chloe Norton | 2501
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter four 2020/21.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for quarter four 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That the impacts of COVID-19 on the Council's ability to deliver against the following key performance areas and, where appropriate the improvement actions outlined against them, as identified in the paragraphs outlined below, be noted:

- Number of households in emergency/temporary accommodation (para 3.69 to 3.76)
- Homelessness preventions (para 3.77 to 3.81)
- Job Creation through the Business Technology Centre (para 3.102 to 3.104)
- Food establishment compliance checks (3.105 to 3.107)
- Letting of council garages (para 3.109 to 3.115)
- Collection of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (para 3.122 to 3.123)
- Ability to identify and remove HRA/GF savings (para 3.124 to 3.128)
- Ability to mobilise the Decent Homes programme (para 3.95 to 3.93)
- Amount of residual waste collected per household (para 3.108)

2.3 That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on the rent collection rate are noted and continuing delivery of the income action plan is endorsed (para 3.82 to 3.91).

2.4 That the level of void loss, and the way in which this is impacted by sheltered and major works void property re-let times, is noted, and improvement activities are endorsed (para 3.94 to 3.101).

2.5 That the proposals to further improve website satisfaction are endorsed (para 3.116 to 3.121).

3 BACKGROUND

Future Town Future Council Programme

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

Future town future council



Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

- 3.2 At the Council meeting on 24 February 2021, Council agreed to continue with the current Co-operative Corporate Plan beyond the original 5 year term, subject to further review in Autumn 2022.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 8 July 2020, the Executive agreed both the deliverables for each of the FTFC programmes and the town and Council's recovery plans, which have very strong synergies. Progress against the agreed actions is summarised within this report.

Customer, Place and Transformation and Support

- 3.4 In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across all Council services is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement.
- 3.5 A complete set of performance measures aligned to both service delivery and the FTFC programme delivery is attached as Appendix One. Summaries of performance measure results are outlined at paragraph 3.65.
- 3.6 Towards the end of Quarter 4 2019/20, Covid-19 began to impact on both FTFC programme activities and on council services. Covid-19 impacts on performance are highlighted throughout this report.

COVID-19

- 3.7 Given the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's Directors have provided an overview of current performance. The effects of the pandemic have required the Council to adapt services to provide support for residents and to manage the impacts of the pandemic, for example to scale up the Stevenage Helps and the Local Outbreak teams, including creating a local track and trace team during the most recent lockdown period, support vaccination efforts and maintain critical service delivery. Council teams have reprioritised workloads to address particular challenges, for example, to deliver £16Million of business grants and £21Million of business rate reliefs and a range of grants, and to work with commercial tenants using a Covid-19 policy to help them pay their rents.
- 3.8 The pandemic has had significant impacts on residents and businesses in the town, which is reflected in areas of increasing demand or pressures in different service areas such as homelessness support and advice, Council Tax and Housing Benefits, income and rents, and the capacity of Environmental Health team who have played a leading role in Local Outbreak Management. In addition, as with similar organisations, Directors expect there to be high demand for particular services such as homelessness, non-essential repairs and works to properties, following the third national lockdown. A plan is being developed for implementation during 2021/22.
- 3.9 SBC teams are focussed and engaged on delivery of the agreed priorities, from creating new social and affordable housing, to driving forward the

regeneration of the town centre, cooperative neighbourhoods and wealth building.

Future Town, Future Council Programme progress update

- 3.10 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes for 2020/21 is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.11 Programme delivery updates for the FTFC Programmes together with an outline of any focused activity being implemented to keep the programmes on track are set out in the following paragraphs.

External Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes

Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.12 Since the holding direction was lifted on the planning application decision for SG1 in January 2021, developer Mace has continued to work on the new programme for the development.
- 3.13 Following the announcement of the Budget in March 2021, the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (STIP) was successful in securing funding of £37.5million from Central Government. The STIP will now move in to stage 2, the creation of business cases. The project team have been working together to complete the programme of business cases by 24th March 2022.
- 3.14 Letters were circulated to businesses on Queensway South and surrounding residents regarding the demolition of the former police station site, providing a robust frequently asked questions supplement and offering virtual consultation sessions. The consultation took place on 18th March 2021 and was positively received.
- 3.15 Discussions have continued to take place with the lead project sponsors to progress the hub project. An accelerated delivery report was presented to the Executive in March 2021, which was approved by the committee. Work is now underway to mobilise the programme.
- 3.16 The construction of the physical site is now well established for the bus interchange. Further discussions are taking place with the contractor and Hertfordshire County Council in relation to public realm and highway works to Lytton Way respectively.
- 3.17 Physical works to the Town Square and North Block have been completed this quarter. The North Block building has been handed over and a lease has been signed with a tenant who is now fitting out the space, with anticipation to open late summer 2021. The works to the public realm have also been completed.

- 3.18 The tender for the design works for the multi-storey car park (MSCP) was underway at the end of the quarter with the closing date in Quarter 1 2021/22.
- 3.19 The Queensway North scheme is progressing well with construction to the residential units due for completion during Quarter 1. The project includes working with retail agents to secure tenants for the new retail units.

Housing Development Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.20 Work is continuing on the North Road site. Three reservations on plots had already been made at the end of the quarter, and the estate agents continue to receive regular enquiries from interested buyers.
- 3.21 The social rent schemes at Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have continued to progress this quarter. At Shephall Way the scheme received building control sign off in early April, with final snagging work carried out before letting. At Symonds Green, the brickwork, blockwork and enhanced insulation is continuing on the first floor in preparation with work due to start on the second floor shortly.
- 3.22 Work at Kenilworth Close has continued this quarter. At the Malvern Close site brick and block work has progressed and it is anticipated roof works will commence in Quarter 1. At the main site, work is progressing with foundations being poured.
- 3.23 Following positive feedback on the pre-application for the Brent Court site, the Housing Development team are developing a plan to enable meaningful consultation with local residents, which will commence in Quarter 1. A pre-application has now been submitted for Shephall View to planning services, highways and the local flood authority and plans are also being developed for public consultation. Design work will continue, being influenced by comments from these processes. Submission for planning for both schemes is now expected in Quarter 2, subject to the feedback received from consultation with residents and relevant statutory consultees.
- 3.24 Work to progress and refine the masterplan for the Oval continues with the current design team and is due to be complete in Quarter 3 2021/22. The team are developing a regeneration document that demonstrates the vision for the area. As well as this, the team will be examining the feasibility and ordering of the phased delivery and will provide a guide on architectural styles, materials and design. Soft market testing with retailers has shown strong interest as well as identifying funding avenues from Homes England.
- 3.25 The Wholly Owned Company (WOC) report received Full Council approval in February, and work is now underway with a project team in order take the necessary steps to progress this to be functional in Quarter 3 2021/22. A draft governance document and various service level agreements (SLA) between

the WOC and internal support departments have been written which are currently being reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose.

- 3.26 Three open market acquisitions (OMA) have completed this quarter, with a further two properties in the pipeline. Works will now take place to make the acquisitions ready to be let.

Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.27 The neighbourhood improvements programme has delivered some projects this quarter, but difficulties with community engagement continue to be experienced due to the pandemic. Projects that have progressed include art installations, putting in place heart defibrillators in the community and targeted work in areas highlighted by the local communities.
- 3.28 Work on the Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model has progressed this quarter. The Strategic Board for the CNM programme met in January to agree the strategic direction of the new operating model and revised milestones. It was agreed that programme management support would be provided by restructuring of the former Co-operative Neighbourhood Manager post to create a Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme Manager. This post was successfully appointed to and the post holder joined the team in April 2021.
- 3.29 The Community Engagement Strategy is being shared with the Housing and Investment service and an engagement proposal form is in draft format to support this. The Community Development team are also planning to produce a guide of 'How to Develop a Community Plan' which will include a list of the bespoke engagement tools currently used by the Council and work in conjunction with the engagement strategy.
- 3.30 The Estates team continue to progress the Locality Reviews process including consideration of the long term sustainability of the Council's Community Centre assets. This includes the medium and long term benefit realisation of the Hub and Spoke model outlined as part of the Community Centre Review.
- 3.31 The Co-operative Council Innovation Network (CCIN) Policy Lab group met to re-scope its remit in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been agreed to reframe the lab to develop the model of neighbourhood working and community networks to build new models of collaboration in local communities. A conversation is currently being pursued with the CCIN about sourcing a provider to undertake this work. A final report will be produced for the CCIN in September 2021.
- 3.32 Improvement works to the Council's garages has continued to progress this quarter. Work to refurbish 140 garages at a cost of £300k is near completion which has included new roofs, fascias and guttering, new doors and repairs to the hardstand areas. The Council has already seen void rates fall from 45.5%

to 25.3% across the refurbished sites and another 17 garages have been reserved for new tenants.

- 3.33 Garage sites that have been sold for redevelopment have generated £200k for the Council, which will be re-invested to fund improvement work to the Council's remaining garages.

Excellent Council Homes Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.34 The flatblock refurbishment programme continues to be impacted by the pandemic, but contractors and Council staff have worked to ensure adherence to government guidance. Throughout Quarter 4 work has continued steadily to external and internal areas and Council teams have continued to work closely with contractors to mitigate potential issues should the contract period need to be extended, owing to the pandemic. Phases one and two of the programme are complete and officers have worked with contractors to finalise the accounts to provide necessary information for billing. Phase three is in progress.
- 3.35 The lift refurbishment programme continued at good pace throughout Quarter 4. Lifts at Truro Court, Norman Court and Grosvenor Court have been completed and works will begin at Pitt Court in Quarter 1.
- 3.36 Concept designs have been reviewed for the Sprinkler project during Quarter 4, queries have been issued by the fire safety and Construction Design Management (CDM) consultants and amendments have been made. Queries relating to the design have delayed the Building Control application, however it was due to be issued early in Quarter 1. The scope of work has been agreed and communications are being prepared to advise residents of what works are included in addition to the sprinkler system. Council teams have also been briefed in preparation for the works to begin.
- 3.37 The Rapid project, that looks to streamline back office databases for better use for staff when onsite, has continued to progress steadily. The caretaking app is now in use and fortnightly meetings take place with the team to resolve any user issues. Amendments have been made to the flat block inspection & tenancy form and scoping sessions for the Housing Options forms are ongoing.
- 3.38 Progress has also been made with the 'Chatbots' project. Testing and feedback is currently underway, and will inform a more detailed business case. This is a pilot piece of work with the Connected To Our Customers programme to determine whether Chatbots might offer sufficient cost-benefit for a full implementation, by encouraging online transactions and reducing use of other more expensive channels. This will not eliminate the use of customer communication and support will remain in place via CSC channels, but may provide a quicker response for those who want it.

Connected to our Customers Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.39 The Website Accessibility Monitoring team at the Cabinet Office chose the Council's website from a random sample of Councils to be monitored in Quarter 4. They tested a selection of pages and checked that the accessibility statement was compliant. The website accessibility statement is compliant. The website is now at 96.6% accessibility and is continually monitored and issues addressed as they arise. Work also continues to make PDFs accessible.
- 3.40 Development to the digital platform, used for online customer transactions, has continued, which will act as an enabler for future projects. Elements of this are now in final stages of testing and should be available for customers shortly. Training on the platform has also been rolled out to the wider members of the team which will improve team resilience and capability.

Place of Choice Programme

Programme Delivery Updates

Climate Change

- 3.41 A wide range of consultation has been undertaken with residents, and a focussed meeting of a citizens panel. Key points and recommendations have been incorporated into the Climate Change Action Plan and Communications and Collaborations (C&C) Plan. Future engagement will come through the C&C Plan in 2021, showing how we can best engage, educate and collaborate with our residents and businesses to support each other to reduce our carbon outputs.
- 3.42 Work has continued to progress the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions and working towards Stevenage wide net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Working with partners across Hertfordshire we have identified 4 key areas; Water, Carbon reduction, Transport and Biodiversity for which detailed Action Plans are nearing completion. As a Council we have adopted a Biodiversity Supplementary Document (SPD), and Sustainable Transport SPD for Planning and our work on a new low carbon bus station is progressing at pace. We have reduced our carbon outputs by over 560,000 Kg by switching to a zero carbon electricity provider and are working up a carbon costs plan for 2021/22 with a full update planned to be reported to the Executive in September 2021.

Community Safety

- 3.43 Work to update the Community Safety strategy and action plan continued this quarter. Following consultation with residents and partners the draft Community Safety Strategy has been finalised. Approval of The Community Safety Strategy will be sought at full Council in July 2021.

- 3.44 The council has led conversations with other districts across Hertfordshire to protect and sustain the support for young people around substance misuse and offending, which was due to end in March 2021. From April 2021 Stevenage will deliver the scheme through the No More Service across the county for an initial period of 6 months. Recruitment is underway for Youth Worker positions and the council is in dialogue with the PCC and other funders to look to extending the service. Alongside Survivors Against Domestic Abuse, the No More Service is now being recognised as a Stevenage service that can be commissioned by others to support community safety efforts.

Community Wealth Building

- 3.45 A meeting took place with the Lottery regarding the potential for a Community Wealth Building application. In particular, this would help to take forward themes linked to cooperative and social economy growth and employment and skills.
- 3.46 The Government launched its Community Renewal Fund, which aims to support the transition from EU programmes to the UK Social Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). Stevenage is not a priority area for the fund, which should form part of the rationale for preparing an application to the Lottery. Nevertheless, work has already been undertaken with the Growth Board that will help the Council and partners to prepare for the UKSPF, which is expected to be launched in April 2022.

Healthy Stevenage

- 3.47 The Young People's Healthy Hub (YPHH) hosted their first Community Kitchen online to 8 families in partnership with Stevenage FC Foundation. A dedicated counselling service for young people 11-16 years old was launched during Children's Mental Health Week in February 2021 with a mixture of online and face-to face delivery by Mind in Mid Herts. The YPHH also hosted its first online summit with a welcome address from the youth mayor and portfolio holder for children, young people, leisure and culture. Workshops were delivered by partners including Herts Mind Network, BeeZee Bodies, Fit Kidz, CGL Spectrum and others.
- 3.48 The second virtual consultation by the Stevenage Dementia Involvement Group was held in February 2021. Recommendations from National Institute for Health research ARC & University of Hertfordshire (UoH) initial reports have been disseminated and are in development, including a new dementia friendly walk for Stevenage residents.

Stevenage Re-Imagined

- 3.49 Planned cultural engagement and installation programmes have continued throughout quarter four, despite the pandemic. This included continued work on the COVID Cobra project and on both the St Nicholas and The Oval arts programmes. Also new funds were obtained for underpass artwork from St Nicholas councillors and the Youth Mayor.

- 3.50 Junction 7 Creatives will occupy 17a Town Square, with a public opening following the elections.

Sustainable Transport

- 3.51 The Council has an approved Future Town Future Transport Strategy, with a number of projects underway to deliver the strategy. In support of this strategy, Stevenage has been provisionally accepted into Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Travel Town (STT) programme, and we understand HCC aim to have Action Plans for STT towns developed this summer, for review and consideration by HCC and relevant Borough and District Councils.
- 3.52 The Emerging Parking Strategy was presented to the Executive who approved a period of public consultation prior to adoption. A consultation strategy has been developed for significant engagement after the May elections, with a target to consider consultation responses during autumn in time to formally adopt the Strategy at a meeting of the Executive in December 2021.
- 3.53 In February the emerging Stevenage Connections Area Action Plan was presented to the Executive who approved a period of public consultation on the document. The final document will become part of the Development Plan for Stevenage and will guide how the area around the Rail Station can provide a welcoming gateway to the town, support sustainable transport, promote a more efficient use of the land, enabling connections with the cultural and heritage offer of the town and growing areas of the economy, and greater connections to the Leisure Park and Town Centre to the west and east respectively.
- 3.54 Consultation has been undertaken related to potential improvements for cycling and walking on North Road. This is being funded by the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund (tranche 2) and was put forward by HCC (as Local Highways Authority) on our behalf due to the strategic importance of improvements here, as identified in our recently published Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Further meetings with HCC and the Department for Transport are expected in Quarter 1 with confirmation of the scheme and funding expected later in summer 2021.
- 3.55 The Council's Future Town, Future Transport Strategy underwent a 12 month review. An overview of progress with the schemes contained in the strategy was presented to numerous Council Committees including the Executive who agreed to progress with the Strategy in January 2021.

Enabling Future Town, Future Council Programmes

Financial Security Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.56 The HRA and General Fund revenue budgets were approved at the January and February Council Meetings respectively.

- 3.57 The Fees & Charges for the General Fund were largely implemented in February 2021 with the exception of garage and market fees and the HRA options will be implemented in April 2021.
- 3.58 The Council's Commercialisation & Insourcing strategy was agreed by the Executive in August 2020, and regular updates are given to the newly formed Commercial and Investment Executive Committee. The strategy is focussed on ideas to find savings to contribute to the one year budget package. A consultant has been engaged with the Strategic Leadership Team to focus on ideas to find savings/generate income, and the outcome from this work will be fed into the subsequent work of the strategy.
- 3.59 Work is underway to consider options and concepts for the future transformation of the organisation and a report is due to be presented at the Executive meeting in July. This will help to deliver the Council's Financial Security programme in future years, and also assess opportunities to enhance customer experiences.

Employer of Choice Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.60 Activities throughout Quarter 4 focused on supporting the Council's response to COVID-19 and the associated recovery planning, which has resulted in the temporary pausing of some elements of the Employer of Choice Programme. The programme has continued to focus upon future ways of working, through learning lessons about how our workforce is working differently during the COVID-19 response.
- 3.61 Extensive work was undertaken to develop a new Workforce and Organisational Development strategy during Quarter 2, including consultation and engagement with SLT, staff, trade union and Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) engagement. The strategy was presented and approved by the Executive in Quarter 3, and rollout of the specific strands of the strategy have taken place during Quarter 4. Examples of activity include a staff focus group for BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) employees discussing their experience of SBC as an employer within the Inclusion and Wellbeing theme and rollout of the new remote working policy and remote working ICT kit to those expected to continue to work remotely in line with the ways of working theme. Work to implement and embed the Workforce and Organisational Development strategy will continue into 2021/2022.
- 3.62 Additionally the re-tender of current agency supply framework concluded in March 2021 with a report presented to the Executive.
- 3.63 Further work to digitalise HR processes took place during Quarter 4, with the procurement starting for an applicant tracking system for use during the Council recruitment process and further developments to the core HR and payroll system.

Performing at our Peak Programme

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.64 Enhancements have been made to the risk and performance modules of the InPhase performance management system during Quarter 4. However, there has been insufficient capacity to undertake further development work in relation to this programme due to resource being diverted to Resilience activities associated with the response to Covid-19. As a result, the main focus of the corporate performance/governance function has continued to be on 'business as usual' activity.

Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement

- 3.65 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme and the Customer, Place and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix One. The overview of these results for April 2020 to March 2021 are outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
53	31	6	12	4*

* (Explanations in paras 3.129 to 3.132) CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC, ECHFL5: Repairs satisfaction missing, FS3 & 4 % of savings identified for 3 year target

- 3.66 In comparison to Quarter 3 2020/21 the position is:

- 1 less green measure
- 1 more amber measure
- 2 more red measures
- 2 less missing measures
- Of the 12 red measures, 8 of them are COVID-19 related

- 3.67 A summary of areas for improvement for April 2020 to March 2021 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support.

Spotlights and Areas for Improvement

- 3.68 The measures below were reported to be at red or amber status for Quarter 4.

Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

NI156: Number of Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

- March 2021 target 120
- March 2021 actual 184 (red)

- 3.69 There are a large number of clients residing within hotel accommodation due to the ongoing and prolonged demands that have been placed upon the Housing Options Team and high levels of homelessness presentations.
- 3.70 It is unlikely that the numbers of applicants placed in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation will substantially reduce whilst we remain in a period of national restrictions and continue to see a constant flow of approaches to the Housing Options team. Also the Council may not see any real reduction in homelessness presentations if the national eviction ban is lifted in the near future.
- 3.71 The impact of COVID-19 has meant that applicants are spending longer periods of time in temporary accommodation. The Providing Homes team continue to work hard to move applicants out of hotel accommodation and into the Council's own stock, which is being utilised for temporary accommodation. The amount of temporary accommodation has increased by 36 units in 2020/21 and is due to increase further in the coming weeks.
- 3.72 Further to this the team are continuing to prioritise all moves for those owed a duty in Temporary Accommodation, through the Housing Register and in the Private Rented Sector.
- 3.73 The Council is continuing to source accommodation at pace. The Housing Supply team have rehoused 27 rough sleepers within the private rented sector this financial year and this work is continuing.
- 3.74 Key officers meet frequently to review B&B spend, monitor B&B usage and to agree what actions are being taken to reduce this. Housing Benefit submissions are continuing and payments are steadily coming through. Improvements are being made to the way that this data is reported and analysed.
- 3.75 The Housing First project team were successful in their proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding which totals approximately £1.3million for accommodation, support, security and Severe Weather Emergency Provision. The service is actively co-operating with MHCLG to apply for new funding streams to improve and expand the Housing First model in order to relieve pressure on temporary accommodation and provide safe, secure accommodation with included support networks for these clients.
- 3.76 The team will be submitting an application for the Ministry of Justice funding bid to assist prison leavers in the Private Rented Sector. The team have also placed a bid for a second round of Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding for Housing First properties and officers and await the outcome in June. The team have also applied for funding from; the Rough Sleeper Initiative to cover security costs and staff and are awaiting the outcome.

Homelessness Preventions

BV213: Homelessness Preventions

- March 2021 target 360 preventions

- March 2021 actual 262 preventions (red)

- 3.77 The caseload at the end of Quarter 4 was 543, a decrease of 7 on the total for the previous quarter. This includes those who are seeking housing advice, but who may not currently be threatened with homelessness. The service has had capacity challenges during this quarter relating to sickness and vacancies. The capacity issues coupled with the difficult Private Rent Sector (PRS) market have meant that preventions remain lower than targeted. This will take time to improve.
- 3.78 The Council is recruiting additional staff to provide the capacity to catch up on casework and strive to assist with achieving preventions for a backlog of cases that built up during lockdown. This should also assist to ease the numbers in emergency/temporary accommodation.
- 3.79 The demand for the service continues to remain high following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act on 3rd April 2018. Approaches from customers to the service are detailed in the table below:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Approaches to the service (total)	1314	1571	1514
Approaches to the service (average per week)	25	30	29

- 3.80 There have been fewer preventions this financial year in comparison to last. However this is due to the ban on evictions meaning that there is not the turnaround in stock that there otherwise would have been. It has been harder to find accommodation that is affordable for applicants, taking into consideration the challenges in the employment market during the pandemic.
- 3.81 As evictions resume, this is expected to impact on service delivery and demand in two respects: on the one hand, overall homeless demand is expected to increase, putting more pressure on the service; on the other hand, the private rented sector itself is likely to ease, providing more options for supporting customers in finding suitable accommodation.

Rent Collection

BV66a: Rent Collection Rate

- March 2021 target 98.6%
- March 2021 actual 97.8% (red)

- 3.82 Income collection for end of year (Q4) is 97.81%. Performance is below the set target due to a number of unprecedented challenges throughout the financial year that have had a direct impact on income collection and arrears recovery.
- 3.83 The number of UC cases since end of March 2020 has continued to increase and stood at 1650 as at end of March 2021. Of these accounts 705 are in arrears totalling £469,457.58, which equates to 58% of the overall gross arrears. The income team are experiencing increasing levels of highly complex cases.
- 3.84 It is projected that more tenants are likely to migrate to full-service UC over the next 12 months; however this projection could be increased further dependent on the impact of the post-lockdown furlough process ending. Work to mitigate the impact will continue focusing on sustaining income collection and arrears recovery and tenancy sustainment.
- 3.85 There has been an increase in the number of tenants that have been affected and are furloughed, on job retention schemes or made redundant. Please see the table below:

	No of Cases	No in Arrears	Total Arrears
Furloughed	191	137	£103,967.13
Retention	57	44	£30,130.91
Redundancy	25	20	£16,140.05
Total	273	201	£150,238.09

- 3.86 Although Government suspension of legal proceedings in court was lifted at the end of August 2020 and the team have resumed taking cases to court, there are delays in obtaining hearing dates. This has resulted in a large backlog of cases which has an impact on arrears recovery.
- 3.87 The Government ban on eviction action has been in place since March 2020. This has been extended numerous times through subsequent lockdowns and was due to end at the end of this month. It has now been extended until May 31st with restrictions tapering off from June. This has had an impact on the level of arrears. There are 15 cases at the eviction stage with arrears totalling £26,855. In past years the team have collected an average of £50,000 from cases escalating to the eviction stage. With the eviction ban in place last year, it was not possible to collect more income this way.
- 3.88 The combined insecurity of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased financial pressure has seen some of our tenants opting for permanent debt solutions and so far there are 4 cases in the process of obtaining Debt Relief Orders (DRO) with arrears totalling £11,220.

- 3.89 Emergency (EA) and Temporary Accommodation (TA) arrears remain high. The total number of cases is 184, of those 100 are in arrears totalling £51,971, this is a reduction of 21% since Quarter 3. The team continue to experience high levels of homeless presentations as confirmed by the suite of indicators for Homelessness.
- 3.90 The service is now in the second year of the income recovery action plan and work to mitigate the long term impact of Universal Credit as well as the economic consequences of COVID-19 is underway. The team have delivered on most actions and this has resulted in a reduced level of current tenant arrears of £807,441 at the end of March 2021, compared to a peak of £1,249,042 in August 2020.
- 3.91 The Income Services team's collective and individual effort will be directed towards sustaining income collection to expected levels and tenancy sustainment, whilst supporting those tenants experiencing financial challenges. This will be closely monitored to ensure continuous improvements in collection of all income streams under the service is maximised.

Decent Homes

ECHFL1: % of homes maintained as decent

- March 2021 target 70.1%
- March 2021 actual 68.8% (amber)

- 3.92 The Investment team did not achieve the target for this quarter as there has been a delay on mobilising the Decent Homes Programme due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The variance of 1.3% equates to 104 homes.
- 3.93 The team expect that the shortfall of properties will be picked up in the new financial year now that the contract is underway.

Void Loss, Voids Sheltered & Voids Sheltered Major Works

VoidLoss1: Void Loss in year (£)

- March 2021 target £319,245
- March 2021 actual £409,224 (red)

VoidsSheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids

- March 2021 target 70 days
- March 2021 actual 123.6 days (red)

Voids ShelteredMW: The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids

- March 2021 target 70 days
- March 2021 actual 105 days (red)

- 3.94 Void Loss has remained red this quarter and was 28% above the target at the end of the financial year. This situation has been closely monitored throughout the year, but with the influx of Independent Living and Flexicare properties becoming void as a direct result of the Covid19 pandemic, the figure has been heavily affected, as these are the slowest properties to re-let.
- 3.95 The largest single contributing factor to rent loss at this time is the historic list of properties awaiting letting. At the end of this quarter there were 78 properties awaiting letting and 87% of these properties were sheltered/ independent living homes. This list accumulated approximately £28,000 of rent loss per month by the end of the quarter, a much higher level than would be expected in normal circumstances.
- 3.96 In terms of re-let times, the turnaround performance for the repairs element of these KPI's has been favourable compared to target yet again, owing in part to the flexibility and resilience shown by the Voids team and also the utilisation of responsive operatives when lockdown restrictions reduced. The key performance indicator however continues to be significantly affected by the time taken to let these properties once repair works are completed and, this has been heavily restricted as a result of the pandemic. The situation has been compounded by the restrictions to viewings and lettings during this period, although these have slightly eased in recent months.
- 3.97 Of the 14 Standard Sheltered properties let in Quarter 4, 10 took over 100 days to re-let (key to key) including 4 properties that took 388, 385, 238 and 224 days to let respectively; each of these properties had their repairs completed approximately 10 days under target. These properties accumulated £34,530.42 of void rent loss between them, broken down into £4,290.28 of rent loss whilst the property was with Repairs, and £30,240.14 after the property was ready to let.
- 3.98 There were 2 Major Work Sheltered Voids let in Quarter 4 with an average turnaround time of 157.5 days, the repairs elements on these properties took an average of 36 days which is 23 days under target.
- 3.99 During 2020/21 53% of lettings were over target. Further analysis of the reasons for the delay in letting homes indicates that delays to the turnaround time once a property is ready to let, are often due to our customers' inability to move quickly owing to them having higher support needs. During the last financial year the evidence shows 39% of properties were let at between 7-20 days and 8% were let at 20 days plus.
- 3.100 An officer working group is in place and has been tasked with reducing void loss and improving turnaround times for both standard sheltered voids and major works sheltered voids.
- 3.101 Following an informal review in March 2021 the Lettings Team now forms part of the Housing Supply Team and work is underway to review and improve void turnaround and lettings processes to ensure void turnaround targets are met in the future.

Jobs Created through the Business Technology Centre

BTC1a: New jobs created through the BTC (ytd)

- March 2021 target 60
- March 2021 actual 33 (red)

- 3.102 The jobs created through the Business Technology Centre (BTC) during 2020/21 did not meet the target; however the team still managed to create 33 jobs during challenging economic circumstances, including 11 in Quarter 4.
- 3.103 The target output for jobs created for the whole of 2020/21 was 60 and for new businesses was 24. These figures relate to a funding agreement between the council and EEDA (East of England Development Agency) for the second phase, to support an extension at the BTC. EEDA are no longer in existence and responsibility now lies with Homes England. The agreement ceases November 2022.
- 3.104 The latest quarterly return has been steady at the BTC, with some businesses outgrowing the BTC and moving on, but also downsizing or moving to work from home. The BTC has also seen start-ups and new businesses take up space at the centre through this period. It should be noted that during the pandemic the BTC has achieved its target for new business start-up this financial year.

Food Establishment Compliance

NI184: Food Establishments in the Area Broadly Compliant with Food Hygiene Law

- March 2021 target 95%
- March 2021 actual 82% (red)

- 3.105 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) gave the greenlight for a partial return to a 'business as usual' inspection programme during Quarter 4.
- 3.106 Officers prioritised COVID-19 response work during the early weeks of the quarter in response to a rise in the Incidence Rate locally; additional resources were secured and the inspection programme stepped up during the second half of the quarter.
- 3.107 Inspections have resumed of premises that are trading. A number of new food businesses have registered with the authority, but are not necessarily trading; we are unable to inspect if the business is not operating. Officers have resumed visits to premises to inspect and ensure compliance with food hygiene legislation, prioritising high risk activities over premises which are outstanding by due-date or newly-registered.

Household Waste and Recycling

NI191: Residual household waste per household

- March 2021, target 520kg,

March 2021, estimate 542 kg (amber)

- 3.108 The Quarter 4 figure for residual household waste is currently estimated because the actual figure is reported from an outside source and will not be available until June. Volumes of household waste during the first three quarters of 2020/21 were 8-10% higher than in 2019/20, due to more people being at home during the pandemic. The estimated figure is therefore based on last year's figure for the same period + 10%.

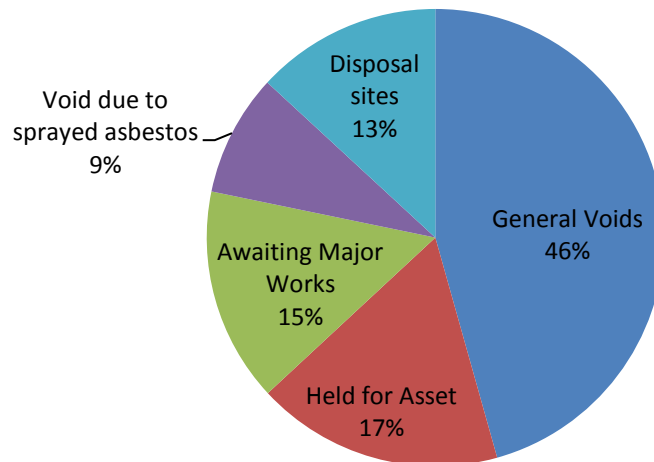
Garage Voids

CNM2g: Garage Voids as a Percentage of Stock

- March 2021 target 15.38%
- March 2021 actual 16.01% (amber)

- 3.109 Following the rent increase notification and communication around the transition to 52 week per year charging, the garages team have received 67 garage terminations this quarter. There is provision in place to re-let these assets as quickly as possible.
- 3.110 The new Choice Based Lettings scheme will go live by July 2021 and the team will be communicating the process change to applicants currently on the waiting list. A communications plan is in place to then actively promote the new scheme to the residents in Stevenage along with a more detailed communications piece about other garage news which will focus on information on asbestos, repairs and garage improvement. It is anticipated that introducing Choice Based Lettings will mean that more residents will accept low demand garages through the online provision and will allow the garages team more time to focus on the high demand void list with a view to converting them into lettings.
- 3.111 Void garages account for 1,046 of 6,537 of total residential garages. The breakdown of void residential garages can be seen below:

Void Residential Garages



3.112 Asbestos issues have taken 346 garages out of circulation and this has impacted on the voids rate as many tenants have requested a garage transfer. There continues to be a slow return of garages that have been sent out for pre-asbestos inspections however this is being addressed. There are 4 areas of Stevenage where the garages are being actively inspected for asbestos (Broadwater, Shephall, Old Town and Bedwell) and this has made it difficult for the garages team to be able to make any offers for voids located within these wards.

3.113 The Garages team have identified some initiatives around how voids can be reduced and income can be increased during the next financial year (articulated in the Garages Service Plan 21/22), these include:

- Identifying an increase in charges for low demand garages that have been refurbished and are now deemed to be of high demand.
- Requesting garages back in high demand areas, where the tenant no longer lives, and offering them a garage in a lower demand area.
- A differentiated marketing and lettings plan, based on the type of garage and data around the demand.

3.114 With regards to the Garage Improvement Programme (GIP), most void garages have been let in 2 large garage sites where refurbishment work has been completed. The 3rd site was completed in Quarter 4, and will be offered out to applicants during Quarter 1 of 2021/22. Of the 10 sites which started in January, 2 are nearing completion. A further 11 sites were approved at the March GIP board and are being programmed in with the Council's contractor - Wates.

3.115 Through the programme KPIs there is a target for at least 20 garage offers per week with a 50% acceptance rate. At this time the average monthly

acceptance rate is 51.06% for Quarter 4. With the rent being credited back to those garage accounts showing in arrears due to asbestos, a true reflection of arrears can be seen, which shows there has been a positive decrease to £47,464 following end of financial year communications.

Website Satisfaction

WebSat1: Customer Satisfaction with Council website (-1 negative score, 0 neutral score, +1 positive score)

Govmetrics is a benchmarking tool used across approximately 70 local authorities to measure customer satisfaction. The measure is the average rating users give (1 being a smiley face, 0 being neutral face, -1 being a negative face). So a score of above 0 means that the website received more positive than negative ratings. For example:

- 1 green and 1 amber response would total 1, so the average score we use as a performance measure would be 0.5
- 3 green, 1 amber and 1 red score a total of 2, so the measure would be 0.25.

- March 2021 target 0.16
- March 2021 actual -0.08 (red)

3.116 Customers rated the website pages 1740 times in 2020/21 through the Govmetric tool, which equated to once in every 3,200 visits on average. Approximately a third of the time they provided further written feedback. The vast majority of feedback is anonymous (86%), but when a customer does provide their contact details then Customer Services or the web team will reply directly or else it will be passed to the right service to respond as appropriate. In many cases the team are able to point people in the right direction, ask if a particular website improvement would help them, or else request more detail so the team can follow up.

3.117 The website was used considerably more during 2020/21 than 2019/20, with a staggering 5.5million page views, compared to 3.2million the previous year. Customers have had a wider and different range of needs compared to previously, and have increasingly gone online to find what they need and communicate with the council.

3.118 Fluctuations in the website customer satisfaction score can happen as a result of a relatively low volume of feedback on any particular topic. Accordingly the team also look at the trends across the website, as well as any overall score. Looking across 2020/2021, areas of high satisfaction on the website included bin collection changes for bank holidays, positive responses to the Council providing free meals to children in October half-term, homelessness support and the SADA service. In Quarter 4, further positive feedback included the responses to webpages explaining the different waste and recycling containers.

3.119 In Quarter 4, key areas of low satisfaction included allotment prices, housing repairs and council housing. This suggests that as with other Councils, part of the website customer feedback also relates to customer perception of the service itself, topic or policy, in addition to website functionality. We have reviewed feedback on these areas of lower satisfaction. In relation to Council Tax, some customers reported difficulty of communicating a change of address. This is being considered in a review of our Revenues and Benefits content with our Shared Service partner. Following earlier feedback, we have made further steps to help make the 'contact us' information more visible for key service areas such as Waste, Repairs and Council Tax, and have received other comments from customers seeking a year of collection dates for Waste and Recycling online.

3.120 Online payments received the most comments of any part of the website, and across 2020/21 were of average satisfaction, compared to having been one of the highest rated elements in 19/20. This was due to several periods of supplier reliability issues that led to the payment system not working, and a specific issue with a parking contractor meaning online PCN payments were unavailable for several weeks.

3.121 Further actions being undertaken to strengthen the website include:

- Putting in place additional customer testing of the website after the pre-elections period
- Identifying ways to improve reliability of online payments
- Working with portfolio holder to establish a member working group to consider key website topics in more detail
- Looking at ways to increase the proportion of customers that provide feedback on our website

Council Tax

BV9: % Council Tax Collected

- March 2021 target 96.8%
- March 2021 actual 95.1% (amber)

BV10: % of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority

- March 2021 target 99%
- March 2021 achieved 97.8% (amber)

3.122 As of March 2021, the council has agreed alternative council tax payment arrangements with 6,260 households to support them through the COVID pandemic, these arrangements included offering delaying payment and extending instalments. The council has awarded £545K of Hardship funding with the remaining 30% of the grant retained to support residents over the coming months.

3.123 SBC has supported its local business through the pandemic by administering the Retail & Hospitality funding and the Local Restrictions Support grants as well as one off top up payments and the Additional Restrictions grant.

GF/HRA Savings

FS1A: % GF approved savings removed from GF for current year

- March 2021 target 92%
- March 2021 actual 67% (red)

FS2A: % HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year

- March 2021 target 91%
- March 2021 actual 40% (red)

3.124 There has been a reduction in the 2020/21 savings/income generation achievable due to the impacts of Covid-19.

3.125 £794K of General Fund savings were proposed for 2020/21 of which £272K have not been achieved. £113K of this relates to fees and charges increases which have not been implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the majority related to parking services. Other savings not achieved include £58K of income generation from commercial leases, £50K of additional income generation from revised parking proposals, £15K relating to a finance SLA for the WOC which was developed and approved later than anticipated and £10K due to a delayed Business Unit review for Stevenage Direct Services.

3.126 £400K of HRA savings were proposed for 2020/21 of which £238K have not been achieved. The undelivered savings include £100K due to delays to a reconfiguration of the Housing Repairs Function, £48K due to the reconfiguration of Out of Hours & Standby Arrangements which has not been achieved as subcontractors have been required to undertake out of hours works, £40K for an anticipated revenue contribution from HCC for the Blackwell Close scheme which has not been realised as a capital contribution was made instead, £26K for the HRA's share of parking related income and £21K savings anticipated from the final stages of the Business Unit review.

3.127 Normally, a three year view of savings is proposed as part of the Budget Setting process (MTFS) and agreed by Members to ensure that there are sufficient options in the pipeline to deliver a sustainable budget.

3.128 However due to considerable uncertainty about the future year impacts of Covid-19, Brexit and any recession on the Council's budgets, along with the financial pressures this has had and will continue to have on the Council's services, a one year budget setting approach is being taken for 2021/22. Due to this decision the team are unable to report on the measures, FS3: % of GF savings identified for 3 year target, and also, FS4: % of HRA savings identified for 3 year target.

Missing Measures

3.129 There is no data for Quarter 4 for the measures below.

Finance Measures

FS3: % of GF savings identified to meet three year target

FS4: % of HRA savings identified to meet three year target

3.130 These measures will not be reported until 2021/22 (para 3.128). The savings targets have been changed to one year rather than three years due to the impacts of COVID-19.

Repairs Measures

ECHFL5: % of repairs service customers satisfied

3.131 The Repairs Team are unable to provide data for this measure for Quarter 4. This is due to a fault with the Cloud Dialogues SMS system, which is used for satisfaction surveys. The team are in talks with the supplier and they are trying to work through the issue with them.

CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)

3.132 As reported in Quarter 3, the Customer Services team have implemented a new system in the CSC. There have been issues with the reporting capabilities of this system and this is now being developed, with a view to reporting a re-baselined measure, which will take and account of new processes in Customer Services, from Quarter 1 2021/22.

Next Quarter Focus

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

3.134 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at March 2021, the improvement activities outlined below have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Continue to monitor satisfaction with the new Council website after introduction of the new site and address issues based upon customer feedback (para 3.116 to 3.121)
- Continuing to implement recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation use caused by COVID-19 (paragraphs 3.69 to 3.76)
- Continuing to implement Housing First plans to assist with Homelessness Preventions (para 3.77 to 3.81)
- Continuing to implement recovery plans for Rent Collection (para 3.82 to 3.91)

- Continuing to implement plans and improve processes for Void loss, Sheltered Voids and Sheltered Major Works Voids (para 3.94 to 3.101)
- Continuing to work with/follow advice from WENTA about BTC job creation and new business start-up (para 3.102 to 3.104)
- Ensuring that compliance checks for food establishments resume and checks for high risk establishments continue (para 3.105 to 3.107)
- Monitor the level of residual waste per household (para 3.108)
- Ensuring that issues with the letting of council garages are recognised and performance is monitored closely. Implement plans to improve the process of garages lettings (paragraphs 3.109 to 3.115)
- Ensuring that improvement plans for collection of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates are in place (para 3.122 to 3.123)
- Ensuring that General Fund and HRA savings are closely monitored (para 3.124 to 3.128)

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

3.136 A Member session on the IT strategy is being arranged.

3.137 The Senior Leadership Team will also continue to closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on performance across all service areas during 2021/22. This will help to establish the level of impact and inform where activity and resources need to be allocated.

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

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

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

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

4.3 A number of areas have been identified in section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement or COVID-19 recovery is required and outline

plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

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

5.2 Legal Implications

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

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

5.4 Risk Implications

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

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

5.5 Other Corporate implications

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS








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












APPENDICES

- Appendix One: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix Two: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2020/21

Executive Report Appendix One

Key to Performance Status Symbols

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

Customers												
Measure Name		Target -1 Year	Actual -1 Year	Target -3 Quarter	Actual -3 Quarter	Target -2 Quarter	Actual -2 Quarter	Target -1 Quarter	Actual -1 Quarter	Target - Current Quarter	Actual - Current Quarter	Current Quarter
CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population	Communities and Neighbourhood					5.70	6.03	5.70	5.64	5.70	5.31	
CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Communities and Neighbourhood	28.00	5.38	33.00	6.80	8.00	10.40	12.00	10.33	8.00	8.19	
NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Communities and Neighbourhood	28.00	7.90	35.00	8.24	10.00	15.30	7.00	8.15	11.00	7.41	
BV213: Homelessness preventions	Housing and Investment	270.0	428.0	360.0	525.0	90.0	67.0	180.0	151.0	270.0	219.0	
BV66a: Rent collection rate	Housing and Investment	97.8%	97.3%	98.7%	98.5%	93.6%	90.2%	96.3%	93.4%	97.8%	96.4%	
ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent	Housing and Investment	81.5%	81.5%	76.1%	75.1%	75.1%	75.2%	76.5%	76.7%	78.8%	78.5%	
ECHFL-EW: Percentage of tenants satisfied with external works completed (for the current quarter)	Housing and Investment	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	
ECHFL-IW: Percentage of tenants satisfied with internal works completed (for the current quarter)	Housing and Investment	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	80.0%	100.0%	
NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end qtr	Housing and Investment	75.00	89.00	75.00	175.00	120.00	182.00	120.00	150.00	120.00	166.00	
Void loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Housing and Investment	239,856	271,198	319,245	343,051	82,767	87,350	164,594	184,550	239,856	289,844	
Voids Sheltered MW - The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids	Housing and Investment	70.00	49.00	70.00	136.50	70.00	0.00	70.00	127.00	70.00	98.00	

Part 10

Future Town, Future Council

EoCrec: Time to recruit		45.00	46.00	45.00	46.00	42.00	51.00	47.00		46.00	45.00	★
FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Finance and Estates	92.00%	92.00%	92.00%	92.00%	98.00%	77.00%	92.00%	77.00%	92.00%	67.00%	▲
FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Finance and Estates	91.00%	92.00%	91.00%	91.00%	91.00%	45.00%	91.00%	30.00%	91.00%	40.00%	▲
Compl4: Percentage of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially (Housing)	Housing and Investment	40.00%	24.71%	40.00%	27.73%	40.00%	27.27%	40.00%	36.11%	40.00%	30.95%	☆
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Housing Development	212.00	216.00	225.00	238.00	240.00	239.00	242.00	243.00	242.00	244.00	★
CTOC1: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline		95.00%	94.94%	95.00%	93.90%	95.00%	99.65%	95.00%	99.86%	95.00%	92.31%	★
EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service		90.0%	89.7%	90.0%	89.7%	90.0%	96.0%	90.0%	96.0%	90.0%	96.0%	☆
WebSat1: Customer satisfaction with Council website	Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Transformation	0.15	0.26	0.20	0.16	0.22	0.22	0.30	0.15	0.26	-0.08	▲
FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target	Finance and Estates	47.4%	69.6%	69.9%	69.9%	10.0%	10.0%	30.0%	0.0%	50.0%		?
FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target	Finance and Estates	33.5%	79.3%	46.3%	79.3%	2.5%	2.5%	30.0%	0.0%	50.0%		?
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.		2.3%	2.1%	2.3%	1.9%	2.1%	2.2%	1.9%		2.1%	4.0%	☆
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted		90.0%	98.2%	90.0%	95.3%	85.0%	87.6%	85.0%	85.2%	85.0%	86.0%	★
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock		12.00%	14.74%	12.00%	15.38%	10.79%	14.93%	11.58%	15.38%	14.74%	15.69%	🟡

Place												
VoidsGN: The time taken to relet standard general needs voids	Housing and Investment	32.00	35.62	32.00	24.71	32.00	25.20	32.00	29.05	32.00	30.52	★
VoidsGNMW - The time taken to relet major works general needs voids	Housing and Investment	65.00	58.36	65.00	59.39	65.00	60.86	65.00	49.30	65.00	57.07	☆
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Planning and Regulation	15.00	13.00	15.00	25.00	15.00	7.00	15.00	5.00	15.00	10.00	▲
BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Planning and Regulation	5.00	14.00	5.00	23.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	4.00	6.00	7.00	☆
ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Planning and Regulation	92.50	95.93	92.50	96.88	92.50	92.24	92.50	100.00	92.50	91.00	★
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Planning and Regulation	60.0%	100.0%	60.0%	66.7%	60.0%	100.0%	60.0%	100.0%	60.0%	100.0%	☆
NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Planning and Regulation	65.0%	100.0%	65.0%	68.2%	65.0%	96.2%	65.0%	90.0%	65.0%	83.3%	☆
NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Planning and Regulation	80.0%	98.8%	80.0%	91.7%	80.0%	93.7%	80.0%	86.6%	80.0%	93.0%	★
NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law	Planning and Regulation	95.0%	97.0%	95.0%	96.0%	95.0%	90.7%	95.0%	92.9%	95.0%	90.6%	🟡
ECHFL5: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Stevenage Direct Services	90.00%	93.01%	90.00%	92.72%	90.00%	94.01%	90.00%		90.00%		?
ECH-Rep3: Percentage repairs appointment made and kept	Stevenage Direct Services	95.00%	99.35%	95.00%	97.91%	95.00%	98.25%	95.00%	95.63%	95.00%	97.95%	★
ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Stevenage Direct Services	87.50%	99.11%	87.50%	96.76%	87.50%	98.84%	87.50%	98.83%	87.50%	98.83%	☆
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Stevenage Direct Services	380.00	365.00	520.00	493.00	150.00	130.00	275.00	267.00	399.00	399.00	★
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Stevenage Direct Services	41.0%	37.0%	40.0%	40.0%	55.0%	44.0%	42.0%	41.2%	40.0%	39.0%	★
Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Stevenage Direct Services	245.30	218.46	327.07	277.58	81.77	56.86	163.54	110.45	245.30	170.96	☆
Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Stevenage Direct Services	1.00	1.01	1.00	1.13	1.00	0.30	1.00	0.32	1.00	0.28	☆
Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Stevenage Direct Services	5.00	2.66	5.00	3.76	5.00	1.14	5.00	2.46	5.00	3.27	☆
Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Stevenage Direct Services	20.00	6.90	20.00	10.74	20.00	2.95	20.00	6.90	20.00	16.32	☆

Transformation and Support

Pe1: Total Human Capital - measures Workforce Stability	Corporate Services and Transformation	85.0%	85.9%	85.0%	86.0%	85.9%	86.9%	85.0%		85.9%		?
Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of total workforce	Corporate Services and Transformation	12.0%	11.4%	11.0%	11.9%	13.2%	9.4%	12.8%		11.4%		?
Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Corporate Services and Transformation	8.00	9.56	8.00	9.87	9.49	8.19	9.80	7.79	9.56	7.09	☆
Pe6: Appraisal completion to meet corporate deadlines	Corporate Services and Transformation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	★
CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Transformation	8.0%	15.1%	8.0%	15.9%	7.2%	2.6%	10.4%	5.8%	15.1%	7.6%	★
CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)	Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Transformation	65.00%	62.10%	65.00%	61.40%	62.90%		61.80%		62.10%		?
Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Transformation	40.0%	23.1%	40.0%	25.0%	40.0%	28.6%	40.0%	33.3%	40.0%	33.3%	☆
BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Finance and Estates	89.0%	89.8%	99.0%	98.9%	36.0%	34.2%	61.0%	66.0%	89.0%	91.8%	☆
BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Finance and Estates	88.0%	87.5%	96.8%	96.0%	33.0%	32.6%	61.0%	59.9%	88.0%	87.0%	🟡
NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	Finance and Estates	10.00	8.60	10.00	5.98	12.00	9.42	12.00	7.44	10.00	7.20	☆

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Appendix Two

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

External Facing Programmes

1. Stevenage Centre Town Centre Regeneration Programme

1.1. Programme Outcomes

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme.
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance.

1.2. Programme Overview

1.3. Regeneration of the town centre is the Council's number one priority and was the priority most often placed in residents' 'top three' in the town-wide survey undertaken in 2017. The Council wants to make Stevenage a destination of choice through delivering a new vibrant town centre, with quality shopping, office and leisure facilities.

1.4. The Council officially announced the appointment of Mace as the development partner for the first phase of town centre regeneration (SG1) in February 2018. This ambitious scheme will bring £350million of private investment into the town centre. It will see the area covering the Council (Daneshill House) offices, the Plaza, bus station and some of the adjacent car parks redeveloped with new shops, bars and restaurants, homes, new public spaces, and a central public sector hub accommodating the Council offices, a library, exhibition space, and health services

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

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

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

2. Housing Development Programme

2.1. Programme Outcomes

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

2.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

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

- Exploring the viability of other potential areas of development across the town including opportunities to work in partnership with other providers.
- Continuing to work with partners to enable the delivery of additional affordable homes.
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to deliver homes outside the HRA.

3. Excellent Council Homes Programme

3.1. Programme Outcomes

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

3.2. Programme Overview

3.3. The Council's aim is to provide high quality, efficient and effective housing services. The Council has committed through the Excellent Council Homes programme to transform its housing services to better meet the needs of its customers.

3.4. The programme comprises five main themes:

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

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

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

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

4. Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management Programme

4.1. Programme Outcomes

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

4.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

5. Connected to our Customers Programme

5.1. Programme Outcomes

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

5.2. Programme Overview

5.3. The 'Connected to our Customers' programme aims to improve the accessibility of Council services and the customer experience. It will enhance the way residents can access Council services through increasing the use of digital options, whilst ensuring that officers continue to spend time with those customers who require additional assistance.

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

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

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

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

6. Place of Choice Programme

6.1. Programme Outcomes

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

6.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

Healthy Stevenage

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

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

Community Safety

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

Stevenage Re-Imagined

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

Community Wealth Building

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

Climate Change

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

Sustainable Transport

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

Biodiversity

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

Internal Facing Programmes

7. Financial Security Programme

7.1. Programme Outcomes

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

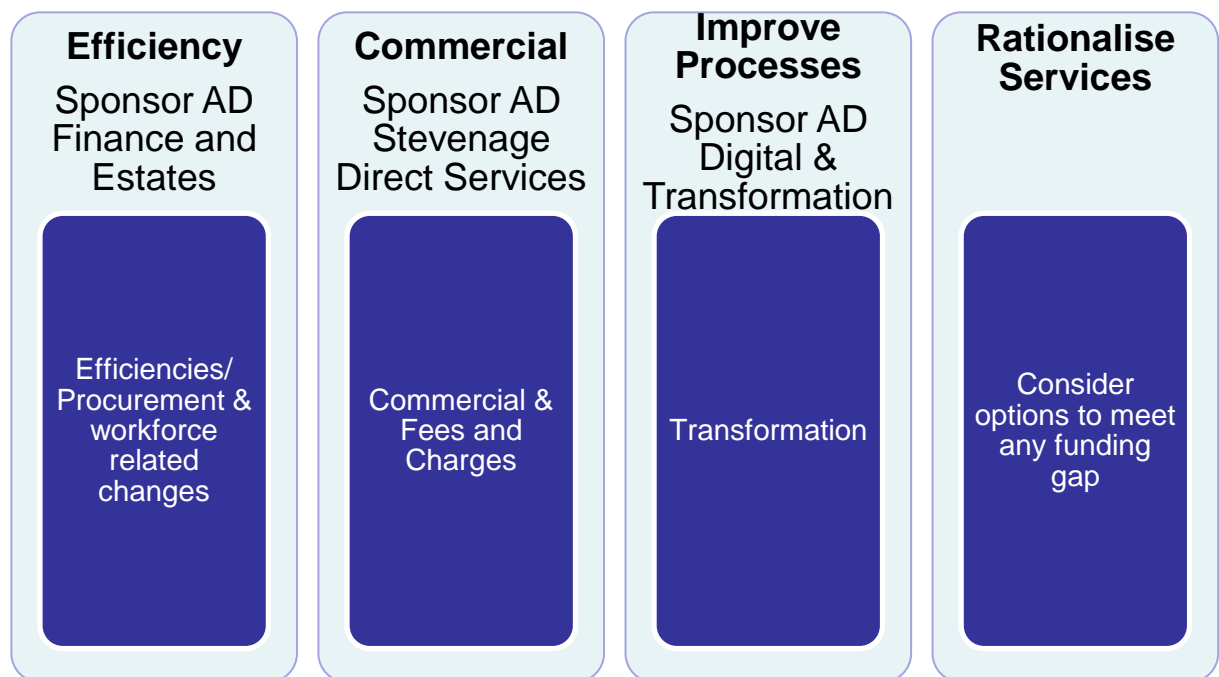


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

7.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

8. Employer of Choice Programme

8.1. Programme Outcomes

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

8.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

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

communication, workforce inclusion and diversity and workforce development.

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

9. Performing at our Peak Programme

9.1. Programme Outcomes

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

9.2. Programme Overview

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

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

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

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

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