



## EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 19 January 2022

Time: 1.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

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

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## AGENDA

### PART I

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

**2. MINUTES - 8 DECEMBER 2021**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 December 2021 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 12

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

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

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 24 November 2021

Community Select Committee – 30 November 2021

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 14 December 2021

Pages 13 – 30

**4. COVID-19 UPDATE**

To consider an update on the Covid-19 pandemic.

**5. FUTURE TOWN FUTURE TRANSPORT STRATEGY - 12 MONTH REVIEW**

To consider a 12 month review of the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.

Pages 31 – 44

**6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA): BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2022/23**

To consider the proposed final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2022/23 (including rent levels and service charges), for onward recommendation to Council.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

**7. DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2022/23**

To consider the Council's draft 2022/23 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax.  
Pages 45 – 148

**8. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2025/26**

To consider the Draft Capital Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26.  
[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

**9. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**10. 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.

**11. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 8 DECEMBER 2021**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 December 2021 for signature by the Chair.  
Pages 149 - 154

**12. 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, 19 January 2022 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 8 December 2021**

**Time: 1.00pm**

**Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

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

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 1.00pm  
End Time: 4.17pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rob Broom, Jackie Hollywell, Phil Bibby CC (observer) and Robin Parker CC (observer).

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 MINUTES - 17 NOVEMBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 November 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Minutes of the meetings of Select Committees be noted:

Community Select Committee – 3 November 2021

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 18 November 2021

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

Prior to the consideration of this item, the Chair announced the sad news of the recent death from Covid-19 of the Deputy Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council, Councillor Paul Clark. He had been a District Councillor for Hitchin for over 30 years and in May 2021 had been elected for the first time as a County Councillor. The Chair asked for the Executive's condolences to be conveyed to NHDC.

The Executive considered an overarching verbal update report from the Strategic Director (RP), assisted by the Senior Environmental Health & Licensing Manager, together with a short presentation from the Corporate Policy & Research Officer, providing information concerning the Omicron variant and the latest epidemiology

statistics relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following issues were raised by Members:

- The Corporate Policy & Research Officer undertook to chase up progress on the Mobile Vaccination Unit that was promised for the Bedwell Ward, and that, when dates were agreed, signage advising of the dates/locations be displayed in both the Bedwell and Rockingham Way Neighbourhood Centres;
- The Corporate Policy & Research Officer was asked to incorporate into the next Covid-19 update presentation to the Executive local figures as to who had received booster jabs compared with those who should have had a booster vaccination; and
- Officers were requested to publish a Briefing Note regarding the Omicron variant on the Council's website.

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

## **5 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - STATION GATEWAY**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Station Gateway Project.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that this project had received the support of the Stevenage Development Board (as per the Minutes of the Board tabled at the meeting). The project was compatible with the objectives of the Stevenage Area Action Plan for the Gateway area. The report asked for £6.5M worth of funds to be drawn down, of which £6M related to the construction of a new Multi-Storey Car Park on the Station North Car Park (see also Minute 6 below).

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration stated that the project would contribute to the desire for Stevenage to become a destination town, as well as addressing the Council's climate change objectives by reducing reliance on cars, and encouraging the use of trains and buses.

In response to a Member's question, the Assistant Director (Regeneration) advised that Legal & General (who owned Stevenage Leisure Park to the west of the railway line) were continuing their engagement with SBC regarding plans for redevelopment of the Leisure Park, although these plans were for the long term.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Station Gateway project be approved, and that authority be delegated to the Strategic Director (TP) to submit the project summary to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing Towns Fund team on behalf of the Council (acting as Accountable Body).

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **6 CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW STATION NORTH MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK AND CYCLE HUB AS PART OF A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE**

The Executive considered a report with regard to the proposed construction of a new Station North Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) and Cycle Hub as part of a Sustainable Transport Interchange.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that this project was interlinked to the Bus Interchange and Lytton Way highway works schemes. The new MSCP would provide a travel hub for motorists and cyclists, within easy reach of the Railway Station and Bus Interchange. The MSCP had been designed to ensure that there was sufficient capacity for electric vehicle (EV) parking/charging, both in the first instance and to take account of future increased EV usage.

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) added that there were a number of important factors to consider in association with the MSCP project, including the impact of current and future developments, utilising the current surface level car parks as part of the Regeneration Strategy, parking capacity and usage patterns, sustainability, design funding, and mitigation of the capacity and financial implications during the construction phase. Officers were on track to seek final approval to the scheme in February 2022, pending the outcome of the planning process.

At the Chair's request, the Strategic Director (CF) explained the proposed funding sources for the projects, as set out in Recommendation 2.2.1 of the report. The Chair drew attention to Recommendation 2.2.3 of the report, which outlined available options for mitigating any loss to parking capacity and income during the construction phase.

The following comments were made by Members:

- Officers were asked to give consideration to the re-instatement of the Fairlands Valley Showground "Park and Ride" bus service for the duration of the construction works on the new MSCP;
- In view of the ever-changing car parking landscape in the town, Officers were requested to add a new section to the SBC website showing visitors where to park in the Town Centre, which could be regularly updated as changes were brought about through the various stages of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme;
- Officers undertook to investigate and report back to Members on the provision of disabled parking spaces on the Station South Car Park whilst construction of the new MSCP was taking place on the Station North Car Park;
- Following conclusion of the planning process, officers were asked to report back to Members to update them on Hertfordshire County Council's comments with regard to any highway impacts of the proposed development; and
- The Assistant Director (Regeneration) was asked to give provide an overview of the project to the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the impact of new and existing redevelopments in the town centre and the impact it will have on car capacity and locations be noted.
2. That it be noted that an application for planning approval is being presented for submission for the MSCP and cycle hub facility.
3. That the emerging design for the MSCP, which can be refined during and after the planning process, be noted.
4. That it be noted that the total estimated budget for the scheme is £9.7M, with a target construction price of £8.9M.
5. That the decision-making gateway for the project be noted.
6. That it be noted that the revenue impact of any borrowing to fund the capital cost and any forecasted one-off income loss during construction are key financial considerations for the General Fund, and that authority will be sought from Council to delegate to Executive approval of the additional borrowing and change to the Treasury Management Strategy, subject to the revenue impacts falling within current Executive delegated limits.
7. That the proposed funding mechanism for the project be approved, subject to the Towns Fund approval process and funding being confirmed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) comprising:
  - £6M from the “Towns Fund”;
  - £200,000 from the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
  - £1.45M from the Marshgate land sale receipt, as set out in Resolution 8. below; and
  - £1.85M to £2.05M from prudential borrowing, subject to the net impact on the General Fund, as stated in Resolution 6. above.
8. That the use of £1.45M of capital funding from the Marshgate land sale receipt, which was ring-fenced for regeneration purposes in August 2021, be approved. This receipt was being generated from the sale of car park and as such part of the receipt is being requested to be used to replace parking in the town.
9. That the preparation of a report detailing the available options for mitigating any loss to parking capacity and income during the construction phase be approved, including (but not limited to):
  - “park & stride” at alternative sites;
  - utilisation of existing capacity in other car parks, with flexibility on tariff types;
  - enhanced maintenance in St. George’s Way Multi-Storey Car Park;
  - review of parking concession deals and where their parking is located; and
  - promotional campaign relating to the other parking facilities, improvements made, and the range of options available.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 2021/22**

The Executive received a presentation from the Chief Executive concerning the Quarter Two (July to September 2021) Corporate Performance report 2021/22.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) performance highlights in Quarter 2, under the headings of Transforming Our Town; More Social and Affordable Housing; Co-operative and Neighbourhoods; Making Your Money Count; and a Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town.

As at Quarter 2, the Chief Executive advised that, of the 46 Corporate Performance Indicators, 32 were at Green status; 1 was at Amber; 12 were at Red; and 1 was not available.

The Chief Executive referred to the focus on the Temporary & Emergency Accommodation; Voids/Repairs; Garage Voids; and Customer Services service areas, and set out the challenges faced by these areas, together with the proposed actions aimed at performance improvement.

Comments on the report made by Executive Members included the following:

- Paragraph 3.28 – Dunn Close garage conversion scheme: Officers were asked to ensure that, for enhanced security, the temporary lighting around the hoardings bounding this site was adjusted to be at a higher level than the existing;
- Paragraph 3.35 – Garage Improvement Programme: Officers were requested to publish details of the Programme on the Council’s website;
- Paragraphs 3.44 & 3.45 – Healthy Stevenage: the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People agreed to ensure that officers included updates from the Equalities Commission to the Healthy Stevenage Partnership on the health inequalities in minority communities;
- Paragraph 3.50 – Arts Projects: Officers were reminded to ensure that engagement with Ward Councillors took place regarding local arts projects in their areas;
- Paragraph 3.52 – Cycleways: it was confirmed that the wording should state “installation on a major cycleway” not “installation of a major cycleway”; and
- Paragraph 3.55 – Climate Change: it was confirmed that a new, refreshed Climate Change Citizens’ Panel would be established in the near future post consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration and the Leader.

The Executive debated the Quarter 2 position with regard to the key themes which were outlined in the report concerning Emergency & Temporary Accommodation, Voids/Repairs, Garage Voids and Customer Services. Members agreed an additional recommendation that a further detailed update concerning the proposed improvement activities for these service areas be included as part of the Quarter 3 Corporate Performance report to be submitted to the Executive in March 2022.

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 Two 2021/22, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
2. That the continued impacts of Covid-19 on the Housing Options service and actions to recover performance be noted (Paragraphs 3.72 to 3.77 of the report).
3. That performance challenges relating to housing voids be noted and actions to improve performance be endorsed (Paragraphs 3.78 to 3.84 of the report).
4. That the challenges related to garages with asbestos and the letting of council garages, and the planned measures to improve performance, be monitored and endorsed (Paragraphs 3.85 to 3.92 of the report).
5. That challenges within the Customer Service Centre (including Complaints and Website) be noted and improvement plans endorsed (Paragraphs 3.93 to 3.114 of the report).
6. That the Executive Action Tracker, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.
7. That a further detailed update concerning the proposed improvement activities for the Emergency & Temporary Accommodation, Voids/Repairs, Garage Voids, Repairs and Customer Services service areas be included as part of the Quarter 3 Corporate Performance report to be submitted to the Executive in March 2022.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 7. To more closely monitor the performance measures attributable to these service areas.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **8 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2022/23**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the proposed Council Tax Base for 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the Council Tax Base for 2022/23, after making allowances for a collection rate of 98.25%, was 28,003.7 equivalent “Band D” properties (the comparative figure for 2021/22 was 27,733.8).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the expected increase in Council Tax support (CTS) cases expected and accounted for in the 2021/22 tax base did not materialise, and the caseload at 22 November 2021 was only 5,515, of which 3,472 were working age. The 2021/22 tax base assumed numbers would rise up to 3,940 for those of working age by 31 March 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that the increased council tax income



collectable by SBC in 2022/23 was estimated to be £59,532. The tax collection rate had remained unchanged in the 2022/23 calculation, despite council tax being 0.8% below target collection rate, which equated to £48,938 in lost income. The tax base was going to be higher as a result of lower CTS in 2021/22, and it was envisaged that collection rates should improve in 2022/23.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2022/23 will be 28,502.5 equivalent "Band D" properties, reduced to 28,003.7 equivalent "Band D" properties after making allowances for a 98.52% collection rate.
2. That the 2022/23 Council Tax Base be approved, subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2022/23. The Executive approved the CTS Scheme at its meeting on 20 October 2021 for recommendation to Council.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **9 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA): DRAFT HRA BUDGET 2022/23; HRA MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2025/26; AND HRA BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2021**

The Executive considered a report on the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2022/23; the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26; and HRA Business Plan Review 2021.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the increase in rents was based on September 2021 CPI+1% as set by legislation, which resulted in a 4.1% increase for 2022/23. This, however, should be considered in the context of a low increase in 2021/22, as CPI was only 0.5%, and 4 years of rent reductions between 2016/17 - 2019/20. Social rents would be an average £103.07 per week, LSSO weekly rents would be £120.33 and Affordable £167.57. This generated £2.1Million of rental income for the HRA.

In respect of the draft HRA budget, the Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that this was projected to be £3.2Million, as set out in the table in Paragraph 4.7.1 of the report, which contains £1.4Million of growth pressures, as detailed in Section 4.9 and which included the HRA's share of Transformation costs for next year of £270,000. Of all the growth, only £179,000 was being treated currently as on-going, while the costs were reviewed ahead of the 30 year HRA Business Plan refresh. Accordingly, the growth had been limited to up to October 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that the 2022/23 year end HRA balances were projected to be £29.7Million, but there was a need to build relatively high balances into the HRA in order to pay back loans taken out for the self-financing agreement with the Government. The latest projected balances for the

HRA versus those projected in the last HRA Business Plan showed that by 2025/26 there was a small gap of £364,000. The minimum level of balances would be assessed for the final budget report, (but was £2.9Million last year) and in the short term balances were higher due to the need to repay debt.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People added that comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week showed that a three-bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 131% (2021/22,133%) more per week than an SBC council home and 30% more than the affordable let properties(2021/22, 32%).

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People advised that Section 4.11.2 of the report set out the financial risks and challenges facing the HRA which included decarbonisation, Housing White paper and Fire Safety Act, all of which would result in what were currently unknown costs being incurred by the HRA. A further update concerning funding these items would be presented as part of the review the HRA Business Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People updated the Executive on the activities of the Housing Development Team. Since its inception, 300 new homes had been delivered by the Council's in-house Development Team, with 298 more in construction. The chart in Paragraph 4.1.4 of the report showed that SBC would have more properties projected in the HRA in 2022/23 (8,058) since 2014/15 (8,137).

Members noted that a review of the HRA 30 year Business Plan would take place in Summer 2022.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) confirmed that the situation with regard to the numbers of Right to Buy applications was kept under regular review.

The Executive supported an additional recommendation proposed by the Leader that the Executive Portfolio Holders for Resources and Housing, Health & Older People be requested to write a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing setting out the Council's concerns and uncertainties over the funding of its HRA Budget, including Climate Change/decarbonisation implications, new fire/building safety regulations, increased cost of Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing, the steep rise in the cost of construction materials, and the continuing pressures caused by the Covid pandemic, and that this letter be copied to the Local Government Association and District Councils Network.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the HRA rent on dwellings be increased, week commencing 4 April 2022, by 4.1% which is an average increase of £4.06 for social rents, £6.60 for affordable rents and £4.74 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year), calculated using the rent formula, CPI + 1% in line with the Government's rent policy, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report.
2. That draft 2022/23 HRA budget, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be

approved, noting that this may be subject to change as a result of any consultation and the finalisation of recharges from the General Fund.

3. That it be noted that the final HRA rent setting budget for 2022/23 be presented to the Executive on 21 January 2022 and Council on 26 January 2022.
4. That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted, and their views fed back into the 2022/23 budget setting process.
5. That for modelling purposes, unless specified, fees and charges increases are in line with inflation.
6. That for modelling purposes, the updated inflation assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved.
7. That the Capital Programme assumptions contained within the report be approved for the existing programme and new build properties and incorporated into the 2022/23 budget.
8. That borrowing to fund capital projects in 2022/23 of £15.7M be approved, and that future years be considered annually in line with anticipated expenditure.
9. That the minimum level of balances for the HRA Business Plan, set as a minimum of £3Million, be noted.
10. That the reserve of £3.4Million, to mitigate against future interest rate volatility and a reserve to accommodate future debt repayment, be noted.
11. That, if material changes to forecasts are required following further Government announcements, the Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) be requested to revise the Medium Term Financial Strategy and re-present it to the Executive for approval.
12. That Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategies and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.
13. That the Executive Portfolio Holders for Resources and Housing, Health & Older People be requested to write a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing setting out the Council's concerns and uncertainties over the funding of its HRA Budget, including Climate Change/decarbonisation implications, new fire/building safety regulations, increased cost of Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) borrowing, the steep rise in the cost of construction materials, and the continuing pressures caused by the Covid pandemic, and that this letter be copied to the Local Government Association and District Councils Network

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 13. To bring to the Government's attention the continuing challenges faced by the Council as the owner of its Housing Stock.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

**10 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

**11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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

**12 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 17 NOVEMBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 17 November 2021 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

**13 MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2022/23**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed Making Your Money Count options for 2022/23 regarding the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report, together with an amendment to Recommendation 2.12 and one additional Recommendation, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

**14 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

Omicron Covid-19 variant

The Chair accepted as an urgent item of Part II business an update from the Senior Environmental Health and Licensing Manager on the Covid-19 Omicron variant.

**CHAIR**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 24 November 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Adrian Brown, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, Chris Howells, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.55pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Wendy Kerby.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 MINUTES - 26 OCTOBER 2021

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

#### 3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

##### 2. Minutes of the Executive – 20 October 2021

Noted.

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

Noted.

##### 4. Covid-19 Update

Officers gave an update on the latest position:

- The Vaccination Centre at Robertson House was administering boosters on a daily basis;
- The number of complaints received by the Environmental Health Team about non-mask wearing by customers in retail outlets had been relatively low;

- A mobile vaccination unit would be in the Bedwell Ward for two consecutive Saturdays in December. In response to a number of questions, Officers confirmed that this was due to the lower take up of the vaccination in the Ward but could potentially be rolled out to other areas. Officers would confirm the details when they were available.

## **5. Towns Fund Business Cases – Tranche 1**

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) recapped the decisions taken by Executive on 17 November 2021 in relation to the Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Project and the Marshgate Biotech/Life Science Centre Project. The following comments/questions were raised:

- Councillor Bibby CC advised that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was in agreement to the Gunnels Wood Road project. He confirmed that any major infrastructure improvements made by HCC would be subject to public consultation.
- In relation to the Marshgate project and the loss of car parking spaces, it was suggested that the alternative option of the St Georges Multi Storey Car Park was not viewed by residents as the safest or easiest place to park so any improvements that could be made to this car park would be welcomed;
- A Member asked how the design of the Gunnels Wood Road roundabout was different to the existing one and what advantages there were to the new design. The Assistant Director advised that the County Council was responsible for the design of the roundabout but the aim was to increase the capacity of vehicles and to improve options for sustainable transport in the area. The more detailed design options would be dealt with at a future stage. It was suggested that Members could be involved in the design process;
- The remaining 7 Town's Fund Business Cases would be submitted to Members at the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and through the approval process by the beginning of March 2022;
- In relation to the Marshgate scheme there had been comments in the local media that the new use of the proposed building was out of character with the Town Centre. Officers advised that this was an exciting proposal and was consistent with the Town Centre framework which was trying to create mixed use developments in the Town with the added bonus of additional footfall in the Town Centre. There were also benefits for the staff working at the business in terms of transport links and the town centre location.
- In relation to the Gunnels Wood Roundabout the Assistant Director agreed to put a briefing note together with the process regarding potential schemes with County Council colleagues and circulate to all Members
- The increasing loss of surface car parking spaces was a concern for Members. Officers advised that current capacity in the Town Centre was more than adequate for the demand for parking spaces. The loss of the surface car parks was to aid the regeneration plans and a core principle of the Local Plan and Regeneration Framework. Improvements would be considered to make the multi storey car park to make it a more attractive

place to park. There were also plans for a new multi storey car park on the railway station north site and an update would be provided to Members in due course.

- In response to a question, Officers confirmed that there would be a programme of communications published shortly to direct shoppers to the available car parks in the Town.

#### **6. 2021/22 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review**

The following comments/questions were raised:

- A Member asked if the potential rise in interest rates or rise in the rate of inflation would make any difference to the Council's Treasury management projections? Officers advised that there would be no difference to those fixed term investments that were held by the Council and that any new borrowing would be taken at the best rate available although it was reiterated that rates did fluctuate all the time. Rates were also tracked constantly and forecasts for the coming year monitored.
- Seven deposits were due to mature shortly. A Member asked how far in advance officers looked for potential new investments. Officers advised that were spread across a number of Investment Companies and that where rates had the potential to be a bit more volatile, the Council would likely look nearer the time to invest.
- Officers advised that they worked within the principles of the Treasury Management Strategy and any breach of this would be reported to the Audit Committee followed by Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Council.

#### **7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter General Fund and HRA Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22**

The following comments/questions were raised:

- Officers reported significant budget pressures due to the rise in levels of homelessness and also a loss in skip income. The loss in skip income was in part due to the lack of HGV drivers and the prioritisation of the refuse collection/recycling service. The pricing structure for skip hire was also currently under review by the Council's Commercial Manager.

#### **8. Urgent Part I Business – Community Renewal Fund**

Noted.

#### **4 VOID LOSS PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Service Delivery Manager, Stevenage Direct Services and the Housing Operations Manager on Repairs and Void Loss.

Officers informed the Committee that voids were properties for which there was a current rent account but no tenancy existed and as a result there was a loss of income to the Council. The focus for officers was to reduce this void loss. Historically resources had been modelled on having approximately 40 void properties per month. However this had risen to 3 times this amount over the course of the pandemic.

Members were advised of the current void process:

- Pre-void and termination – before the property is returned to the Council (Housing and Investment Team);
- Void works (Repairs and Voids Team);
- Inspection and Letting (Housing and Investment Team)

Officers advised that the significant increase in voids was not unique to SBC but that delays in repairs due to material shortages, challenges in recruitment and retention and the appointment of a new electrical supplier had exacerbated the increased numbers.

It was noted that some hard to let properties were now beginning to be let, particularly in the Independent Living Schemes.

Officers advised of a programme of actions to be taken, including:

- An increase in the recruitment of project officers in the Repairs and Voids service;
- Support being given from other teams within the Housing Service;
- Officers working closely with suppliers to seek to reduce material delays;
- A thorough review of the programme of tenancy audits to ensure they were as robust as they can be.

The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

Members asked if there were specific targets outlined in the Action Plan. Officers advised that there were overarching actions, as a result of process mapping. Detailed forecast targets would be set and submitted to Members as part of the quarterly performance reports to Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to material delays Officers advised that they were working closely with the procured suppliers to mitigate this although the suppliers had experienced similar problems with materials and staff recruitment.

In relation to the increase in the amount of voids, Officers advised that reasons for this included a number of tenants having passed away, a backlog due to essential lettings only being carried out and the suspension of the Choice Based Lettings scheme during the Pandemic and particularly the lock down periods, some clients requiring additional time to move with a multi agency approach being needed.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that hard to let properties were being



looked at for re-purposing for possible emergency accommodation.

Following a further question from a Member, Officers also confirmed that there were systems in place to ensure any concerns about tenants raised by housing officers or contractors were reported back appropriately.

The Chair then welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People to the meeting. The Portfolio Holder advised that she had been working with officers on this issue and assured Members that the process for bringing void properties back into use was being reviewed to ensure houses were handed over in good time and in good condition.

In response to a question regarding how the Council would be informed that a property was likely to become a void, Officers informed the Committee that tenants were obliged to give 28 days notice as the standard notice period.

Also, in terms of temporary accommodation, officers were working to ensure that as far as possible forecasting was undertaken for properties coming back to the Council.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and answers.

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

None.

**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 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

**8 PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

8. Part II Decisions of the Executive

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

None.

**10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Matt Creasey, John Duncan, Alex Farquharson, Liz Harrington and Claire Parris.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 06:00 pm  
End Time: 07:38 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Booth, Myla Arceno and Simon Speller.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 3 NOVEMBER 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of Community Select Committee meeting held on Wednesday 3 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS PRESENTATION**

The Committee received a presentation from the Neighbourhood Wardens Team regarding their work through the pandemic. The presentation covered a range of areas and issues including Covid marshalling, food hub, vaccination centres, litter picking and hedge pruning, stewarding and anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Wardens Team provided the following key updates regarding their work during the pandemic:

- The Team helped people at the food hub who were shielding or vulnerable with the delivery of their grocery shopping and other essentials. Helping up to 20 deliveries a day including weekend and bank holidays.
- The Team distributed free 850 hand sanitisers and 15,000 masks in shopping areas, churches, schools and other organisations and charities. The project was funded through Councillors' Local Community Budget.
- The Team helped at the Robertson House Vaccination Centre by directing the public at the car park to the appropriate sites for their vaccine appointments.
- During the winter phase of the pandemic 2021, the Team provided support to the Stevenage Helps phone line by directing people to charities, food banks, provided information on vaccines and organised appointments for the Citizen

Advice Bureau. The process also attracted about 20 volunteers which could be used for future community projects.

- The Team's dedicated foot patrols covered parks and open spaces, town centre and play areas to advise members of the public on how to stay safe and Covid compliant.
- After the lockdown restrictions were lifted, the Team provided support in regards to stewarding the open cinema in the Town Centre to assure members of the public on Covid safety.
- The Team supported the Dene Lane Path Clearance project in Bandle Hill, working with young offenders on litter picking and hedge pruning as part of the offenders Community Payback Scheme.
- Roebuck Wood litter picking was carried out in partnership with the year 6 students of Roebuck Junior School, and they collected 32 bags of rubbish.
- The Team installed new shrub beds and repaired old ones in Peartree and Shephall, and carried out neighbourhood garden improvement works in Martins Wood, and also helped with the grass cutting in Siddons Road Square.
- The Team organised and carried out a litter pick project in Meadway Park in partnership with Woolenwick Junior School.
- The Team planted 9 new trees in Hampson Park Orchard with the financial support from the Councillor's Local Community Budget.
- An Older People's Day was organised and provided a good opportunity for networking.
- The Team helped with tackling anti-social behaviour in partnership with other officers of the Council and the Police. The Neighbourhood Wardens worked closely with officers from Environmental Health, Planning and Enforcement, Parking Services and Community Safety.
- The Neighbourhood Wardens dealt with the fly tipping, littering, Commercial Waste, Household waste issues, dog fouling and abandoned cars and illegal parking often by polite conflict resolution tactics.
- The Team built working relationships with the stakeholders in the community, and worked in partnership with Haven First, which helped residents with their CV and interview techniques to get them back to work.
- The Team had reported over 400 environmental issues to relevant departments, and worked closely with the elected Members of the Council.

A Member commented that they hold the service in very high regard, and are delighted to see that the service is no longer dependent on New Homes Bonus funding. The service is deemed integral to SBC ambitions to connect officers, members and our neighbourhood communities together.

In response to a series question from Members, the Team provided the following answers:

- Some of the fixed term Neighbourhood Wardens were currently contracted till March 2022.
- The Neighbourhood Wardens work in partnership with the Police on matters of fly tipping and inconsiderate parking.
- The service operates 7 days a week with flexible shifts for staff.

- The Team expected to expand the scope of their projects in the future.

The Chair thanked the Neighbourhood Wardens for their hard work during the pandemic and their presentation and advised that some time ago Members had requested this session with the Neighbourhood Wardens and at the time there had been some staff turnover but the service was settled now and Members were keen to support the long term funding and move towards more fixed term contracts of the Wardens.

The Chair was concerned that the Wardens were receiving requests for their services from a wide range of agencies including internal and external partners so this need to be monitored to make sure that it was manageable.

#### 4 **DAMP AND MOULD UPDATE & PRESENTATION**

The Investment Programme Manager provided a report in relation to damp, condensation and mould in Council properties. He advised Members that the Council was continuing to deal with the damp and mould cases during the Covid 19 pandemic. The tools that the Council had previously used for dealing with the damp and mould had been, in his opinion, too simplistic. He explained that better and improved ventilations were needed, and fans alone were not enough and that there was a need to have specialist contractors in place to carry out required works.

He advised Members that the Council had entered into a 12 month framework agreement with Quality Eradication Services Today (QEST) to deal with the damp and mould in the Council properties, and was in discussion with the QEST to carry out further works when needed as result of their work on damp and mould. Also Mouldex, a specialist ventilation and mould treatment company was brought on board, which helped reduce the cost of fans by approximately 45%. In addition QEST were now looking at providing decorating following works with 15 colour choices, and can also supply thermal wall paper with a thermal plaster material to help mitigate against future issues.

The number of enquiries received had been reduced. In November 2020 a total of 59 enquiries were received compared to November 2021 where only 28 enquires occurred. The current strategy was proving effective.

The Investment Programme Manager informed Members that his Team had developed skills and confidence to identify issues causing damp and mould in the Council's housing stocks. They also developed strong interdepartmental relationship with other teams which had helped with the access issues, supporting tenants with mental health and other vulnerabilities that had helped to resolve cases across departments.

In response to a series of questions and suggestions from Members, the Investment Programme Manager advised the Committee on the following key issues:

- The backlog had been cleared and cases were coming through but these were fewer than would be expected at this time of the year.

- He was currently working on the new electronic feedback form, which only had three questions for customers to answer.
- Any complicated case would be reviewed again after six months.
- Both QEST and Mouldex provided a weekly report for their work.
- A leaflet would also be dropped in the surrounding neighbourhoods when work is done in a particular area.

Members agreed that the leaflet should contain clear contact information for the department and also be included in the tenancy agreement. The Investment Manager would circulate the final version to Members before publication. Members agreed with the Chair, that they were keen to see red indicators shown in the report be addressed.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- That the Committee supported the current approach which was in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Report.
- That the Committee continued to support the Team to deliver on its promise to tackle damp and mould issues by ensuring that sufficient funding was available.
- That the Committee would provide feedback on the draft Mould Leaflet for the final version.

## 5 **EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE**

The Committee received a report on possible recommendations for the New Towns Heritage Centre. Member agreed on the following recommendations:

- Linked to the recommendation for 'museum's without walls', contact should be made with other new towns for a joint proposal to City Design Group regarding the development of digital maps relating to a number of local authority areas to secure a better deal.
- Stevenage had a large number of Twentieth Century architecture in the Town Centre, so it should be recommended that there be an approach to the Twentieth Century Society for funding.
- The Council should approach English Heritage as part of Stevenage's Cultural Heritage linking the Fairlands Valley Farmhouse to its pre-new town's history and heritage.

The Strategic Director advised Members that the Council could explore external funding streams to help further develop its museum website presence.

It was **RESOLVED** that, with the additions and amendments made at the meeting the Committee supported the emerging recommendations.

## 6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 14 December 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice Chair), Myla Arceno, Adrian Brown, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, Chris Howells, Wendy Kerby, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 06:00 pm  
End Time: 07:42 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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 24 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**2. Minutes of the Executive – 20 October 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 8 December 2021. He provided the following key update to the Committee:

- He informed Members that it was unlikely to have the Mobile Vaccination Unit that was promised for the Bedwell Ward before the Christmas. However, officers would chase up the progress in the New Year.

- Officers would also seek to incorporate local data on the update of booster vaccinations amongst those who are eligible.
- Officers to publish a briefing note regarding the Covid 19 Omicron variant on the Council's Website.

In response to a question from a Member, the Strategic Director (RP) advised Members that the Council's Business Continuity Team would continue to monitor staff sickness and would encourage working from home for those who are able to.

## **5 & 6. Towns Fund Business Case – Station Gateway and Construction of A New Station North Multi-Storey Car Park and Cycle Hub As Part Of A Sustainable Transport Interchange**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Towns Fund Business Case of Station Gateway. The Station Gateway project incorporated the delivery of Multi Storey Car Park and cycle hub, which would be linked to the bus, railway and wider sustainable transport interchange. The project had received the support of the Stevenage Development Board and also included funding for longer-term master-planning of the area

The Council allocated £6.5M funds, of which £6M related to the construction of new Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) and £0.5M of which be reserved for the feasibility and masterplanning works as part of the first phase of works in the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area.

The following key updates were provided during the presentation:

- The MSCP would include disabled parking, electric vehicle charging and accessibility would be key consideration of the project.
- There would be 622 spaces, including 30 Blue Badge spaces.
- Provision of up to 25% EV charging bays with an EV infrastructure provided for 50% of the MSCP capacity to be enabled for future EV charging requirements.
- The project would also deliver a secure bicycle hub for approximately 80 bikes and 3 accessible bikes.
- The building would have metal cladding design providing natural ventilation.

In response to a question from a Member, the Assistant Director for Housing and Investment advised that on many occasion the station car parks were full, and that there was a need for a new car park, and it would be safe for anyone to use it including shoppers and commuters. The Assistant Director also confirmed the work on the design of the car park, that it would be subject to consultation through the planning application process, and would be considered by the Planning and Development Committee in due course.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- That the Towns Fund Business Case be noted.
- That the construction of a new MSCP and Cycle hub as part of the sustainable transport interchange be noted.

## **7. Corporate Performance – Quarter 2 2021/22**

The Chief Executive provided a presentation in relation to the Corporate Performance Quarter 2 2021/22 to Executive meeting on 8 December 2021. The Strategic Director (RP) highlighted the following issues that were raised in the Executive meeting:

- The Future Town Future Council performance was highlighted.
- The Council's focus on the Temporary and Emergency Accommodation, Voids/Repairs, and Customer Services service areas.
- A number of comments were made at the Executive including commends on the Dunn Close garage Scheme. Officers were asked to ensure that security were enhanced and the temporary lighting around the hoarding bounding this site was adjusted to be at a higher level than the existing levels.
- Officers were asked to publish details of the Garage improvement programme on the Council's website.
- Executive requested to ensure that engagement with Ward Councillors took place regarding local arts projects in their area.
- In relation to the Climate Change, it was confirmed that a new refreshed Climate Change Citizens' Panel would be established in the near future post consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration and the Leader.

Overview and Scrutiny Members made the following comments:

- Concern was expressed regarding the way the communications with the original Climate Change Citizen's Panel had been conducted and needed to be improved for the next iteration. In addition, concern was expressed about the current engagement with young people on this issue, the Council needing to be more proactive about working with young people on climate change
- A Member requested that the list in the Appendix to the report be made clearer, and to provide the unit of measurement for different indicators.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Performance Quarter 2 2021/22 be noted.

## **8. Council Tax Base 2022/23**

The Executive approved the Council Tax Base for 2022/23. The Strategic Director (CF) advised Members that it was a requirement by law to set the Tax Base and inform the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Hertfordshire County Council of their share of the Council Tax.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council Tax Base 2022/23 be noted.

## **9. Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Draft HRA Budget 2022/23; HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 - 2025/26; and HRA Business Plan Review 2021**

The Executive considered a report on the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2022/23; the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 – 2025/26; and HRA Business Plan Review 2021.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised Members that the rent policy was set up by the government, which was CPI+1% increase in 2022/23. The CPI inflation increase was based on the September index which was 3.1%, this meant the increase for 2022/23 for the Council's housing stock was 4.1%.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Draft HRA Budget 2022/23; HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 - 2025/26; and HRA Business Plan Review 2021 be noted.

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

None.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

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

7. Part II minutes – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

8. Part II Decisions of the Executive.

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

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Economy, Enterprise and Transport  
**Date** 19 January 2022



## FUTURE TOWN, FUTURE TRANSPORT STRATEGY– 12 MONTH REVIEW

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Lewis Claridge | 2158  
**Lead Officer** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257  
**Contact Officer** Lewis Claridge | 2158

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on progress of the projects included within the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy (adopted October 2019).
- 1.2 To make Members aware that the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy will be reviewed on a quarterly as a key strategy within the Future Town, Future Council Corporate Plan monitoring reports.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive note the progress with projects included within the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy.
- 2.2 That Executive note that the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy will continue to be included within the quarterly Future Town, Future Council monitoring reports.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In October 2019, the Council adopted Future Town, Future Transport (FTFT), a transport strategy for Stevenage. FTFT outlines the Council's approach to sustainable transport. It establishes the key local transport issues and opportunities that exist in Stevenage and sets out a vision and a series of objectives for what will be delivered in the future. The strategy focuses around four key themes:
- 1) Connectivity
  - 2) Living Streets
  - 3) Active and Healthy Travel
  - 4) Green Travel
- 3.2 The benefits of sustainable transport are numerous. Amongst many other benefits, the reduction in vehicle emissions will improve air quality and help with the fight against climate change; the use of active transport will increase the health and well-being of residents; the reduced domination of cars will improve the environment of our destinations and residential streets; and the use of alternate forms of transport could help individuals save considerable amounts of money. The changes to work and leisure patterns caused by Covid-19 have reinforced the importance of active and sustainable transport.
- 3.3 The substantive element of FTFT is a list of identified future transportation projects which provides for co-ordinated action by a range of agencies and institutions for all forms of transportation that are used in the town: car, train, bus, cycling and walking.
- 3.4 Some FTFT schemes are outside the control of the Council, and many require third party funding from a range of sources including, but not limited to, Hertfordshire County Council, housing developers, central government and public transport providers. The Council therefore plays an important lobbying role in addition to delivering its own schemes to deliver a complementary range of projects that will drive a long-term shift towards sustainable transportation.
- 3.5 FTFT was the Council's first Transport Strategy, building on a range of other transport-related documents, including the Mobility Strategy and Cycling Strategy, as well as other documents such as the Local Plan (adopted May 2019) and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which contain sections on transportation.
- 3.6 The Executive, on adoption of the FTFT, requested for the strategy to be reviewed 12 months after its adoption.
- 3.7 The Executive met on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to consider the first 12 month review and consider the progress of the projects included in the FTFT. It was resolved by the Executive:
- That the progress with projects included within the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy be noted.



- That it be noted that the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy will be included within the quarterly Future Town, Future Council monitoring reports.
- That a further progress report on the Strategy be submitted to the Executive in 12 months' time.

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

**Recommendation 2.1: That Executive note the progress with projects included within the Future Town, Future Transport Strategy.**

- 4.1 FTFT contains transportation projects to be implemented or progressed in the short term (2019 to 2022). The following paragraphs and Table 1 give a brief overview of the key milestones achieved in the past year (2020–2021) and the expected targets for next year. The rest of the section gives a description of the progress since October 2020 for each of the projects listed in FTFT.

##### **Highlights from October 2020 – December 2021**

**Cycle Hire – on going**  
**New Bus station – opening in 2022**  
**Sustainable Travel Town Bid- success**  
**Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**  
**Parking Standard SDP**  
**New Developments**  
**Town Centre Regeneration**  
**Bus Services Enhancements**  
**Removal of mopeds from Stevenage Cycleway**  
**Re-evaluate use of powered- access on Stevenage Cycleway**  
**Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan (AAP)**  
**Extend contactless payments to Stevenage Railway station**  
**Parking Strategy**  
**A1(M) all lane running / Smart motorway**  
**Promote EV use and accessibility**  
**Cycle Training & Education**  
**Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF tranches 1,2,3,4)**  
**London Luton Airport Expansion**

- 4.2 Sustainable Transport continues to be a key priority for the Council and for the wider Hertfordshire area. The outbreak of Covid-19 prompted a renewed focus on sustainable transport as employees of most sectors have been encouraged to work remotely and there has been restricted use of public transport. Encouraging signs can be seen nationwide that there has been an increase in walking and cycling and the Government has been keen for local authorities to install emergency measures to promote active travel. The Government has announced funding for the installation of more permanent measures and the Council has continued to work closely with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) when identifying what schemes to seek funding for.
- 4.3 Whilst Covid-19 has had an effect on the delivery of some schemes, there has been significant progress in many important projects during this time, as explained briefly below, and in more detail throughout the remainder of this section.
- 4.4 The Council has made progress delivering flexible office space in the town centre as part of the North Block development to provide a place for residents to work locally, reducing the need to travel further afield to their usual workplace. The completion of the Co-Space building in the Town Square has proved successful in this regard.
- 4.5 The Hertfordshire Growth Board has continued to attract investment for infrastructure into the County. Projects on the A414 and A602 are being delivered to ease East-West movement and this will help to ease congestion in Stevenage as a result.
- 4.6 Work with HCC and the Local Enterprise Partnership remains ongoing and the bid submitted in October 2020 to receive significant funding towards sustainable transport projects through the Government's Town Fund was successful. As part of the national Budget announcements in March 2021, Stevenage achieved the joint highest allocation in this funding round, with an award of £37.5 million secured for 9 specific projects. Business cases are currently being prepared for each Town Fund project, with detailed plans as to how the funding will be distributed across each project to ensure positive delivery to significantly benefit the town. Town Deal projects include proposals for cycling and pedestrian connectivity (including upgrading of existing cycleways), the A602-Gunnels Wood Road roundabout scheme, and enabling works to the station gateway which could include feasibility work with Network Rail for a regenerated station.
- 4.7 The Council approved planning permission for the relocation of the town centre bus station, to create a new bus interchange closer to the railway station to form an important sustainable transport hub. This will enable multi-part journeys to be taken entirely on sustainable forms of transport as well as providing an improved environment to users. Construction works have progressed significantly in the last year and the new bus interchange is close to completion.
- 4.8 Following publication of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) in late 2019, the Council continues to secure the future delivery of extensions to the cycle network from housing developers through S106 agreements. The LCWIP Action Plan has been developed to monitor future delivery.

- 4.9 Stevenage was formally accepted onto Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Travel Town (STT) programme in November 2020. Since early 2021, SBC and HCC officers have been working to identify infrastructure, planning and behavioural change schemes to improve the modal share of sustainable transport in the town. The Action Plan for the programme was formally approved in September 2021.
- 4.10 Over the next year, officers will continue to identify funding options and delivery priorities for the programme, including cycle route improvements and the reallocation of road space to bus, cycle and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. Schemes could be selected from those already identified in the emerging HCC North Central Growth & Transport Plan, the SBC Local Plan, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, FTFT, the SBC Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan and / or the SBC Cycling Strategy.
- 4.11 Officers from the Council and HCC have been working closely together in recent months to agree a programme as part of the overall Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Travel Town. This includes a communications strategy, engagement plan for behavioural change, addressing any "quick-win" schemes and a full list of relevant schemes for the Sustainable Travel Town initiative. The Implementation Plan is anticipated to be presented to HCC's Highways and Transport Panel in early 2023.

#### **New Bus Interchange**

- 4.12 Significant progress has been made on the construction of the new bus interchange located closer to the railway station. The interchange will provide safe bicycle parking, a comfortable and modern waiting environment for passengers and capacity for electric bus charging, as well as a cafe and mobility store.
- 4.13 HCC has undertaken consultation on the requisite Traffic Regulation Orders to provide a bus lane on Lytton Way to ease access to the interchange, better integrating the leisure park and Gunnels Wood Road with the town centre. Once fully completed in Summer 2022, the interchange will create a sustainable transport hub in the town centre which enables passengers to easily transfer between sustainable transport modes.
- 4.14 The public realm improvements will be completed in March 2022. The current bus station in the Town Centre will continue to operate until all services have fully migrated to the new Bus Interchange in Summer 2022.

#### **SBC Workplace Travel Plan**

- 4.15 The SBC Workplace Travel Plan was approved by SLT in 2019 to replace the Green Travel Plan adopted in 2013. The Plan contains a range of measures to increase the share of sustainable modes used by the Council's workforce.
- 4.16 Capital funding was approved by Councillors to implement measures within the Plan with £15,000 per annum available in 2021–22, 2022–23, 2023–24 and 2024–25. Officers are looking to re-tender the E Car club in the town centre for 2022/2023. The budget for 2021/2022 is to provide part-funding to central government bid for £100,000 towards 18 new EV chargers in the town's local neighbourhood centres.

### **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

- 4.17 The Stevenage LCWIP was finalised with support from the Department for Transport and HCC and published in late 2019, making Stevenage the only authority in Hertfordshire with a published LCWIP. LCWIPs are identified in the Government's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Strategy as a key tool to identify and fund strategic cycling and walking improvements at a local level.
- 4.18 Since its completion, officers have been using the LCWIP as key evidence to seek funding for priority interventions. SBC and HCC have focussed on delivering routes between the centre and edges of town using S106 funds and the Department for Transport's Emergency Active Travel Fund. Detailed plans for Route 1, on North Road, were consulted on in Summer 2021, and S106 from North Stevenage and the EAT fund will deliver the northern portion of the scheme.
- 4.19 Route 1 from the LCWIP (North Road – Central Section) is securing funding for a dedicated space for cyclists provides a segregated 2-way cycle route on North Road between the A602 Lytton Way gyratory (outside the Thomas Alleyne Academy) and Coreys Mill Lane. A consultation with local stakeholders and residents was carried out in July 2021, with feedback that the scheme had 53% support.
- 4.20 A report was taken to Hertfordshire's Highways & Transport Panel on 14 September 2021 with a recommendation that the Route 1 scheme be progressed towards implementation. The scheme is currently in the detailed design phase and Hertfordshire officers are working through the related legal processes required for implementation. They are engaging with utility providers regarding any diversion works that may be required and will be ready to engage with the contractor in Spring 2022 with works expected to commence in Summer 2022.
- 4.21 The northern end of Route 2 can be completed with the next tranche of Emergency Active Travel funds (EATF). West Stevenage has agreed in principle to deliver much of Route 5 and East Stevenage will deliver most of Route 6.
- 4.22 Additionally, a cycling masterplan in the Town Centre should be developed to ensure that the different developments progressing in the area provide integrated cycling improvements as part of their schemes.

### **Cycle Hire Scheme**

- 4.23 The Council has ambitions to introduce a cycle hire scheme to ensure that lack of access to a cycle is no longer a barrier to cycling. A technical feasibility study was conducting in 2019/2020 to identify the likely size of a scheme, locations for docks, phasing options, potential financial models and key factors for success.
- 4.24 The study found that a scheme would be feasible in Stevenage but should be implemented in two or three phases, starting with a focus on the west of town, covering Lister Hospital, Gunnels Wood Road, the Town Centre, the Railway Station and nearby residential areas before expanding eastwards to

cover the rest of the Borough. The study advises that improvements to cycling access through the Town Centre and Old Town, two of the key destinations within the Borough, would help the viability of any potential scheme.

- 4.25 The Council intended to start a procurement exercise seeking cycle and scooter suppliers early in 2021, however resourcing restrictions and STT bids have pushed this back to 2022. It is now expected that the resources to support the tender will be in place from March 2022, and the Council was planning to engage local business, such as SmartGo Stevenage organisation. A bid in 2022 to STT will be required to fund the scheme.

### **Parking Standards SPD**

- 4.26 The 2019 Local Plan required the Council to review its parking requirements to ensure that parking requirements matched modern policy to promote a reduction in car use. Parking requirements had been set out in the 2012 Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 4.27 The Council adopted the new Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD after a decision by Executive in September 2020. The SPD reduces car parking in the most accessible areas of town and increases cycling and Electric Vehicle parking. As an SPD, it continues to be a material consideration for all planning applications submitted to the Council.

### **New Developments**

- 4.28 Since the adoption of the Local Plan in 2019 and the subsequent adoption of FTFT, the Council now expects proposals for residential or non-residential development to prioritise sustainable modes of transport over privately owned cars. This involves placing new developments in sustainable locations, providing high quality off-road links to key services and connecting to existing cycle ways and pedestrian routes.
- 4.29 The Council has secured funding for major extensions to the cycleway network linked to the North Stevenage, West Stevenage and East of Stevenage (in East Hertfordshire District) developments as well as significant contributions to improve passenger transport. This will continue to be a focus of planning officers.
- 4.30 The Council adopted a Supplementary Planning Document, the Developer Contributions SPD, in March 2021. This SPD provides further clarity regarding policy requirements for sustainable transport.

### **Town Centre Regeneration**

- 4.31 Progress with the town's £1 billion major regeneration programme continues, with the scheme obtaining permission in October 2020. The plans include cycling and walking links and reduced vehicle parking in line with the updated Parking Provision & Sustainable Transport SPD.
- 4.32 Other schemes progressing within the Town Centre, such as those on Queensway and the Forum, will also include measures to promote active and sustainable transport and discourage car use.

### **Bus User Enhancement**

- 4.33 As previously mentioned, the new bus interchange will create a much improved environment for bus users, as well as being closer to the rail station to make multi-mode journeys simpler and easier.
- 4.34 SBC is supporting Arriva and HCC bid to central government for the ZEBRA decarbonise funding to electrify most of Arriva existing buses based out of their Stevenage depot.
- 4.35 SBC will support the local transport authority with other forthcoming bids for enhancements to the bus services.

### **Removal of mopeds from Stevenage cycleways**

- 4.36 Officers have lobbied HCC to amend the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) which contain a Prohibition of Driving Order that exempts mopeds from being banned on the cycleways. It was discovered that the Prohibitions' description of mopeds includes the term 'having a second means of propulsion' (i.e., pedals) which is a historic design concept no longer used by modern mopeds. As such, this effectively means that mopeds are already illegal on the cycleway. However, the signage on much of the cycleways is outdated so enforcement cannot be carried out against modern mopeds even though they are technically illegal.
- 4.37 HCC committed to undertaking an investigation to determine whether it would indeed be safer to remove mopeds from the cycleways or keep them separate from larger motorised vehicles on roads, and if the results are positive, re-write the TROs and replace the signage on the cycleways. However, the legal procedures and costs involved in implementing these changes across the whole Borough are significant and it is likely that it will be done on a ward-by-ward basis over a number of years. HCC officers are continuing to investigate in order to develop this workstream.

### **Re-evaluate use of powered vehicles on cycleways**

- 4.38 This is will be considered in more detail now that Stevenage has been accepted on to the HCC Sustainable Travel Town programme and will focus on the use of electric cycles and electric scooters.
- 4.39 The legal status of the cycleway still excludes the use of powered vehicles. However, nationally, the legal status may change to allow the use of e-scooters on the highway network, following national trials of e-scooters. HCC will need to update its policies, once and if guidance and legal status is changed by the Department for Transport in late 2022. Any changes will be agreed following consultation with the Hertfordshire districts.

### **Extend contactless payment to Stevenage**

- 4.40 The Council has lobbied HCC to ensure that the emerging HCC Rail Strategy includes rolling out contactless payment across the county. HCC, in its role as Local Transport Authority, leads on the development of transport policy across Hertfordshire and is a key body to help lobby Transport for London and / or Network Rail to extend London's contactless / Oyster card

functionality to locations linked to, but not part of, the capital. This workstream is ongoing.

### **Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan**

- 4.41 Council officers consulted with the public from July to September 2021 on an early stage “Issues and Options” version of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan or “AAP”.
- 4.42 The Issues and Options AAP was developed in conjunction with David Lock Associates and outlines the core issues that are present within the station area as well as the background policy and wider context that affects its development. This is an early stage of the preparation of an AAP.
- 4.43 Among the options proposed within the AAP include significant changes to the central section of Lytton Way:
- Option 0 – Do nothing.
  - Option 1 – All traffic modes: reduces the central area of Lytton Way to one lane each way.
  - Option 2 – Bus and Taxi only: reduces the central area of Lytton Way to one lane each way, movement to buses and taxis only.
  - Option 3 – Pedestrianised Plaza: central area of Lytton Way traffic is removed and pedestrianised.
- 4.44 A report is being presented to Executive in February which will assess the consultation responses, aim to discuss and develop a “preferred option” which will form the next stage of the AAP: the Preferred Options Report. This will then be drafted and go back to Executive to approve for public consultation, in Summer 2022.

### **A1(M) Smart Motorway**

- 4.45 Highways England had previously committed to upgrade the section of the A1(M) within Stevenage, one of the ten busiest stretches of the route from London to Leeds, through the implementation of a SMART Motorway. This would have included a hard shoulder and variable speed limits.
- 4.46 In January 2020, Councillors passed a motion opposing the roll-out of Smart Motorways on the basis that the design would be unsafe and challenged Government to come up with alternative proposals to cut congestion on the A1(M).
- 4.47 Further correspondence with Highways England and the Secretary of State for Transport, as well as responses to the public consultation event which followed the widespread reporting of the dangers of SMART Motorways, has resulted in the project being paused. The survey work that was already undertaken on the A1(M) SMART Motorway project will be used if Highways England restart the project, which was scheduled for 2025.
- 4.48 HCC officers met recently with Highways England regarding the SMART motorway project. While in some respects Highways England are still hopeful of the A1(M) SMART motorway project (between Junctions 6 and 8 of the A1(M)) progressing in 2025, the reality is that the projects are paused until there is 5 years’ worth of safety data which can prove that all lane running is

safe. As such, there is still a significant risk that the scheme will not be delivered, indeed it is not a committed scheme. Therefore, the clear advice currently is that any future transport modelling should not include the scheme.

### **Promote Electric Vehicle Use**

- 4.49 The Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD requires developers in Stevenage to provide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points on their developments and install the underlying cabling for future charging points. The Council's emerging Parking Strategy will similarly promote EV use by the provision of EV facilities on the Council's public parking.
- 4.50 HCC has been working to develop an EV Strategy that seeks to ensure residents and businesses across Hertfordshire can safely and reliably access EV charging infrastructure in line with Local Transport Plan policies.
- 4.51 An initial scoping workshop was held by HCC and consultancy WSP in October 2021. This sought to review best practice, mapping and demand analysis to identify gaps in provision and to identify and develop an action plan and implementation plan.
- 4.52 Following the workshop, next steps will include to develop the implementation plan, refine position statements and to progress the EV Strategy. Council officers will be working closely with HCC and WSP to ensure the EV Strategy is developed in a way that benefits Stevenage. An updated paper will be presented to HCC's Highways and Transport Panel in early 2022.
- 4.53 SBC is leading on bidding for over 18 new EV charging points within the town's Neighbourhood centres in early 2022, shown below. These would be a further stage in or support for increasing accessibility to EV charging.

No	HCC Division	Site	Post Code	No. of EVCPs	Highway status
1	Bedwell	Bedwell Shops	SG1 1NA	2	HCC
2	Bedwell	Archer Road	SG1 5HF	1	SBC
3	Broadwater	Oaks Cross	SG2 8LU	2	HCC
4	Chells	The Glebe	SG2 0LX	2	HCC
5	Old Stevenage	Filey Close shops	SG1 2JW	2	SBC
6	Shephall	Burwell Road	SG2 9RF	2	HCC
7	Shephall	The Hyde	SG2 9SE	3	HCC
8	St Nicholas	Canterbury Way	SG1 4LJ	2	SBC



9	St Nicholas	St Nicholas Park Pavilion	SG1 4PE	2	SBC
			Total	18	

- 4.54 Planning permission was granted in December 2021 for the new Grid Serve EV charging station by junction 7 of the A1(M). This will provide over 40 new EV charging bays for both motorways and local users.

### **Parking Strategy**

- 4.55 The Council is responsible for much of the public parking in the Borough and committed to update the 2004 Parking Strategy. The emerging strategy (The Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021–2031: Living and Sustainable Streets for Stevenage) was approved for public consultation at the December 2020 meeting of the Executive, but consultation has been postponed.

### **Cycle Training and Education**

- 4.56 HCC continue to undertake cycle training and education within schools as part of the Bikeability programme. In addition to this, SBC and the Police have put a renewed focus on raising awareness of the Town Centre cycle ban and anti-social riding more generally.
- 4.57 Hertfordshire County Council officers have provided details of schools in Stevenage that have undertaken training. HCC have also provided an extensive delivery through the cycle hub.

Summer 2021	Broom Barns School
Summer 2021	Woolenwick Junior School
Summer 2021	All Saints C of E Primary, Datchworth
Summer 2021	Aston St Mary's Primary School
Summer 2021	Bedwell Primary School
Summer 2021	Codicote Primary School
Autumn 2021	Peartree Spring Primary School
Autumn 2021	Lodge Farm Primary School
Autumn 2021	The Leys Primary and Nursery
Autumn 2021	St Nicholas C of E Primary School
Spring 2022	Ashtree Primary School & Nursery
Spring 2022	Round Diamond School

### **Old Town Parking**

- 4.58 The Council is undertaking a study of on-street parking in the Old Town excepting the High Street. Officers will be engaging with Ward Councillors, reviewing requests and complaints that are on file, and carrying out surveys and investigations on street. They will then report back on what they have found and make recommendations for any changes, due by the end of this financial year 2021/22.
- 4.59 SBC has been able to rebuff attempts by HCC to introduce on-street parking charges in the Old Town through the STT. During 2020-2022 SBC has provided time limited free parking in the former Waitrose car park to support local businesses recover from the pandemic.

### **Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF): Tranches 1, 2, 3 and 4**

- 4.60 Hertfordshire County Council has secured more than £6 million through the Government's Active Travel Fund 2020/21 (Tranche 2) to encourage more sustainable travel across Hertfordshire. The improvements that are being planned will help create better places to live, work and visit across the county. By making it safer and easier to walk and cycle more often, this can not only help reduce congestion and improve air quality, but also deliver health and wellbeing benefits for all.
- 4.61 Hertfordshire County Council has submitted a bid for Active Travel Fund 2021/22 (Tranche 3) for other sections of Route 1 (known as the north and southern extension of North Road) and are currently awaiting feedback from the Department for Transport. The northern extension will connect from Coreys Mill Lane junction to the new housing developments (identified in the Local Plan) at the north of Stevenage. The southern extension reaches from the North Road junction with the A602 Lytton Way along the eastern side of the gyratory to the High Street.

### **London Luton Airport Expansion**

- 4.62 London Luton Airport Limited (LLAL) is preparing to apply for a Development Consent Order for a significant expansion of the current airport operation. The Development Consent Order is anticipated to be submitted to Luton Borough Council in January 2022 and Stevenage Borough Council will be consulted as a key stakeholder.
- 4.63 LLAL reported previously that the overarching theme of responses to the first formal consultation was the effect of the proposed increase on climate change. As such, they are making changes to the scheme to further limit the proposal's impact and ensure that climate change remains a legacy focus of the development once through the DCO process.

**Recommendation 2.2: That Executive note that Future Town, Future Transport will be reviewed quarterly and annually as part of the Future Town, Future Council monitoring.**

- 4.64 Progress with the overall FTFT strategy will continue to be monitored and reported as part of the corporate monitoring duties related to Future Town, Future Council (FTFC). The FTFC reports will highlight progress or issues

with any relevant scheme from FTFT and will identify risks that could affect future progress.

- 4.65 Not all FTFT schemes are expected to be delivered at the same time, and many transport projects have long timeframes for delivery. The quarterly monitoring reports will focus on the schemes that are progressing at that specific time, allowing for a more targeted snapshot of what is occurring, whilst the annual report will enable a broader, more overarching, summary of progress.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The costs associated with this report have been met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 Any potential schemes that are mentioned in Future Town, Future Transport will need to be subject to a business case and / or will require third party funding.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.3 There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.
- 5.4 The legal ramifications of any potential schemes mentioned in Future Town Future Transport will need to be considered at the point of planning and delivery.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.5 Any proposed changes to the highways network included in Future Town, Future Transport would be assessed by the HCC Safety Audit Team prior to their implementation.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.6 There are no direct policy implications associated with this report. As a key Council strategy, sitting beneath the Future Town, Future Council strategy, progress with FTFT will be reported as part of the corporate FTFC monitoring

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.7 Future Town, Future Transport seeks to drastically increase levels of active and sustainable transport as alternatives to the use of privately-owned vehicles. As transportation currently accounts for such a high proportion of the town's carbon emissions, FTFT has the potential to have significant positive impacts on climate change.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.8 Future Town, Future Transport seeks to improve accessibility in Stevenage for all types of transport, promoting walking, cycling and public transport, not just privately-owned cars. The promotion of other forms of transport should

have a positive impact on the equalities and diversity implications of transportation.

### **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.9 Any proposed changes to the highways network included in Future Town, Future Transport would be assessed by the HCC Safety Audit Team prior to their implementation.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 [Future Town, Future Transport \(2019\)](#)
- BD2 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan \(2019\)](#)
- BD3 [Stevenage Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(2017\)](#)
- BD4 [Stevenage Borough Council Mobility Strategy \(2016\)](#)
- BD5 [Stevenage Cycling Strategy \(2018\)](#)
- BD6 [Stevenage Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan \(2019\)](#)
- BD7 [Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document \(2020\)](#)
- BD8 [Draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2013 – Living and Sustainable Streets for Stevenage](#)
- BD9 [Developer Contributions SPD \(2021\)](#)

### **APPENDICES**

None.

Part 1



Agenda item:

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**Meeting** EXECUTIVE  
**Portfolio Area** RESOURCES  
**Date** 19 January 2022



## DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2022/23

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Clare Fletcher | 2933  
**Contributor** Senior Leadership Team  
**Lead Officers** Clare Fletcher | 2933  
**Contact Officer** Clare Fletcher | 2933

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the Council's draft 2022/23 General Fund Budget, Council Tax Support Scheme and draft proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax.
- 1.2 To consider the projected 2021/22 General Fund Budget

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

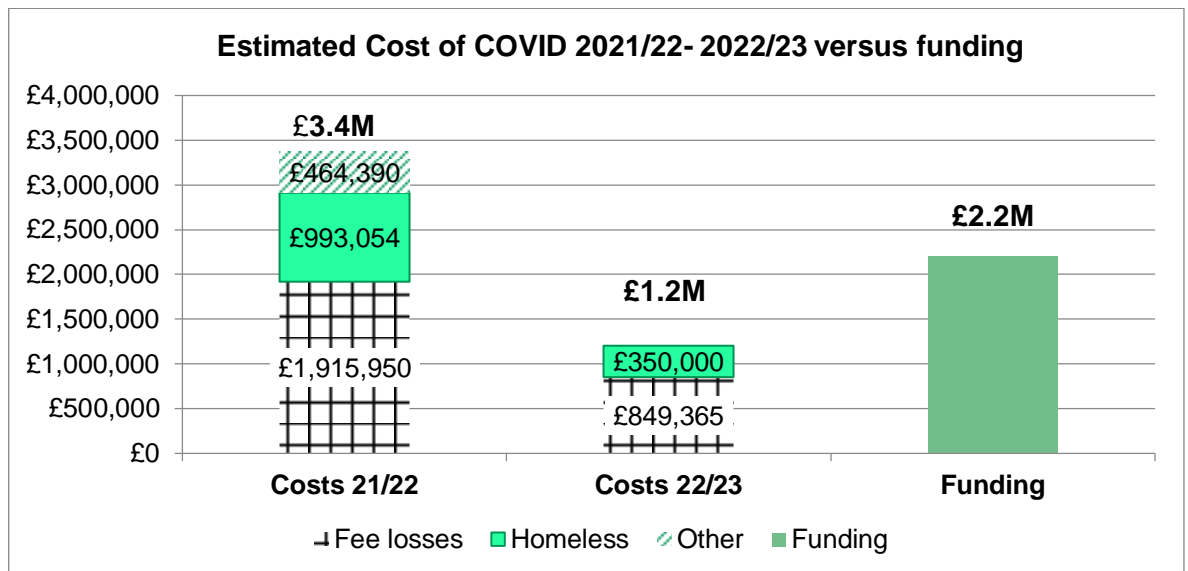
- 2.1 The 2021/22 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of £11,755,780 is approved.
- 2.2 Members note the inclusion of the 2022/23 Fees and Charges of £341,780 (Appendix B to this report) in the draft 2022/23 budget.
- 2.3 The draft General Fund Budget for 2022/23 of £11,004,220 (is proposed for consultation purposes), with a contribution from balances of £1,238,955 and a Band D Council Tax of £225.57 (assuming a 2.26% increase).

- 2.4 The updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), summarised in section 4.14 be noted.
- 2.5 The minimum level of General Fund reserves of £3,471,038 in line with the 2022/23 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix C to this report, is approved.
- 2.6 The contingency sum of £400,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2022/23, (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount).
- 2.7 The Making Your Money Count (MYMC) options as set out in section 4.2 and Appendix A, totalling £780,945 and £39,370 for the General Fund and HRA respectively for 2022/23 be included into the Council's budget setting processes for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.8 The Growth options included in section 4.4 are approved for inclusion in the 2022/23 General Fund (£120,078) and HRA (£63,360) budgets.
- 2.9 That the pressures of £1,773,340 are noted as set out in section 4.3 to this report.
- 2.10 Members approve a further £300,000 to pump prime Transformation to be included in the Council's 2022/23 budget setting processes to enable to significantly contribute to the savings targets as set out in section 4.12.
- 2.11 Members approve the identification of a further £250,000 of MYMC options for the June 2022 MTFS report as set out in paragraph 4.12.4.
- 2.12 Members approve the use of the business rate gains only once realised and ring fence the use for firstly the financial resilience of the Council and if required to be transferred to the Income Equalisation Reserve and thereafter, they are used for Regeneration or Co-operative Neighbourhood one off spend.
- 2.13 That the 2022/23 Council Tax Support scheme is approved as set out in section 4.6 to this report.
- 2.15 That the decisions taken on recommendations 2.3 – 2.13 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.
- 2.16 That Members note the Equalities Impact Assessments appended to this report in Appendices D and E.
- 2.17 The work of the Leader's Financial Security Group (LFSG) in reviewing the efficiency, commercial and fees and charges as outlined in section 4.18 of the report is noted.
- 2.18 That key partners and other stakeholders are consulted and their views considered as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process.

### 3 BACKGROUND

3.1 This report sets out the 2022/23 draft General Fund Budget including Making Your Money Count (MYMC) options, growth bids and pressures. The General Fund Budget forms part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the council tax; the council tax support scheme; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits.

The December 2021 MYMC report identified the significant on-going cost of COVID, (this was before any impact of the plan B directive by the government and subsequent Omicron variant financial impacts). This is kept under constant review and will need to be refined up to the February 2022/23 Council report for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 budgets. The December 2021 projections are summarised in the chart below.



3.3 Included in the net costs is expenditure and grant funding of £185,154 for the Prevent and vaccinate initiative for rough sleepers. This is part of a £25Million funding package to support all local authorities across England to find appropriate accommodation for rough sleepers including those who may have left accommodation already provided and, to use to boost vaccination rates across rough sleepers. The use of the grant is currently being assessed.

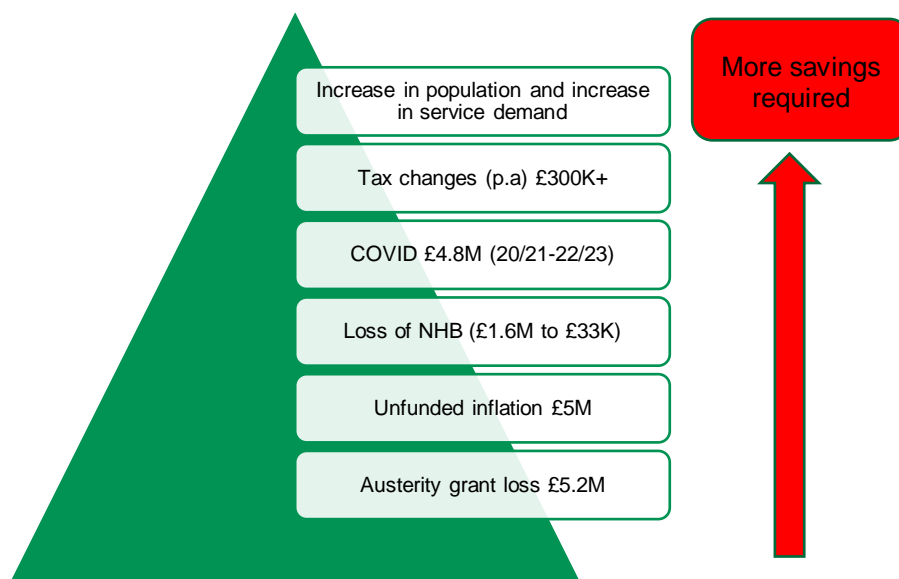
3.4 At the time of writing the December MYMC report the provisional financial settlement had not been published, (16 December 2021). The Chancellor announced an additional £1.6Billion per annum (2022/23 to 2024/25) for local government as part of Spending Review 2021 (SR21). The majority of this amount has been included in the Core Spending Power figures. Based on the figures in the Core Spending Power amounts, there has been a national net increase in funding (excluding the multiplier adjustment and Adult Social Care reform funding) of £1.526Billion. A breakdown of this change is shown below and the impact for Stevenage detailed in section 4.1.

- + £822Million Services Grant – A new grant based on 2013/14 Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) shares
- + £636Million – Increase to the Social Care Grant
- + £63Million – Inflationary increase to the Improved Better Care Fund
- + £72Million – Increased Revenue Support Grant (RSG) (based on CPI)
- (£68Million) – Reduction in New Homes Bonus Funding
- Council Tax increases for District Council's up to the greater of £5 on a Band D property or 2%.

3.5 The Council must set a balanced budget each year (Local Government Finance Act 1992). The Council is required to estimate revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, together with contributions from reserves, in order to determine a net budget requirement to be met by government grant and council tax.

3.6 That ability to set a balanced budget and retain services has become harder with the financial impacts of grant loss, COVID and government policy changes requiring a sustained savings programme through the Financial Security programme and now the Making your money Count (MYMC) initiative to deliver cumulative savings of £11Million since 2010/11.

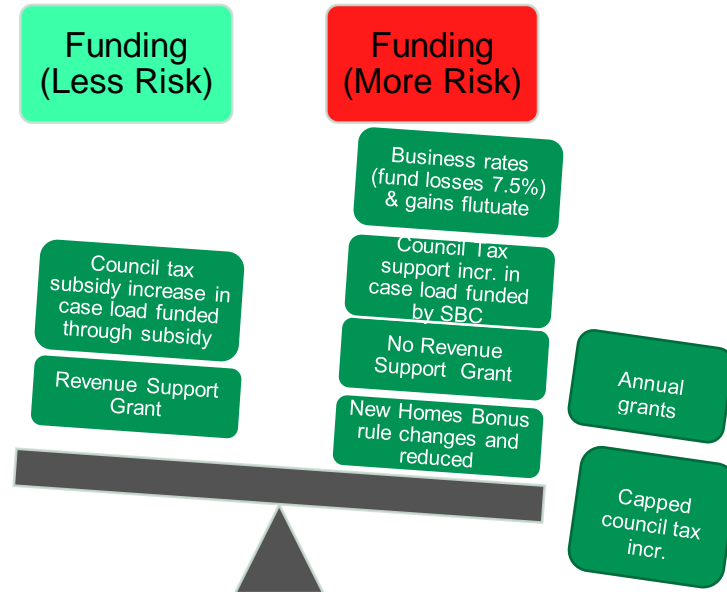
**Pyramid of Pressures for the General Fund**



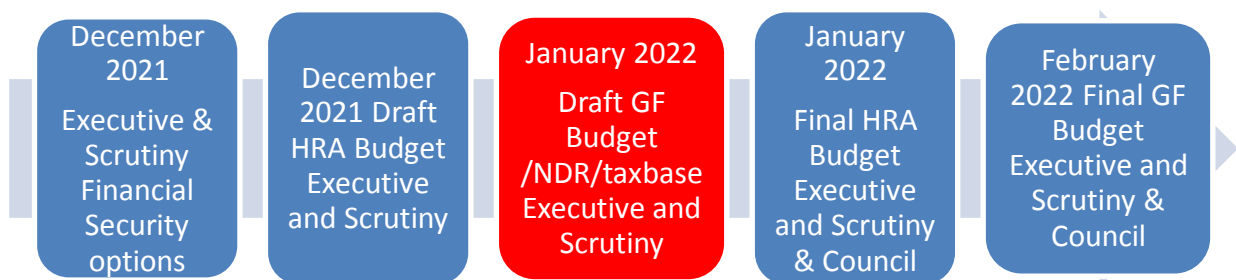
3.7 At the same time there has been a transition towards more inherent risk in local government funding, with fluctuations in caseload and funding streams, together with annual grant funding for new burdens such as homeless



reduction Act, as illustrated below.



- 3.8 The December MYMC report identified inflationary pressures on the General Fund of £861,000 including an increase in national insurance for Adult Social Care of 1.25% for employers and a projected increase in utility and fuel costs. The combination of pressures identified meant budget reductions of at least £760K were required for 2022/23, which may need to be revised upwards in the event of further COVID losses.
- 3.9 The December MTFS report modelled a 2.26% increase in Council tax (or £5 on a Band D), which was included as an option in the 2022/23 provisional finance settlement. This would increase council tax raised next year by £199,641 and is in addition to the savings target outlined in paragraph 3.8.
- 3.10 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution, prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a consultation period. The timescale required to implement this process is outlined below.



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

### 4.1 Provisional Finance Settlement 2022/23

- 4.1.1 On 16 December 2021, the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) released a written statement to Parliament on the provisional local government finance

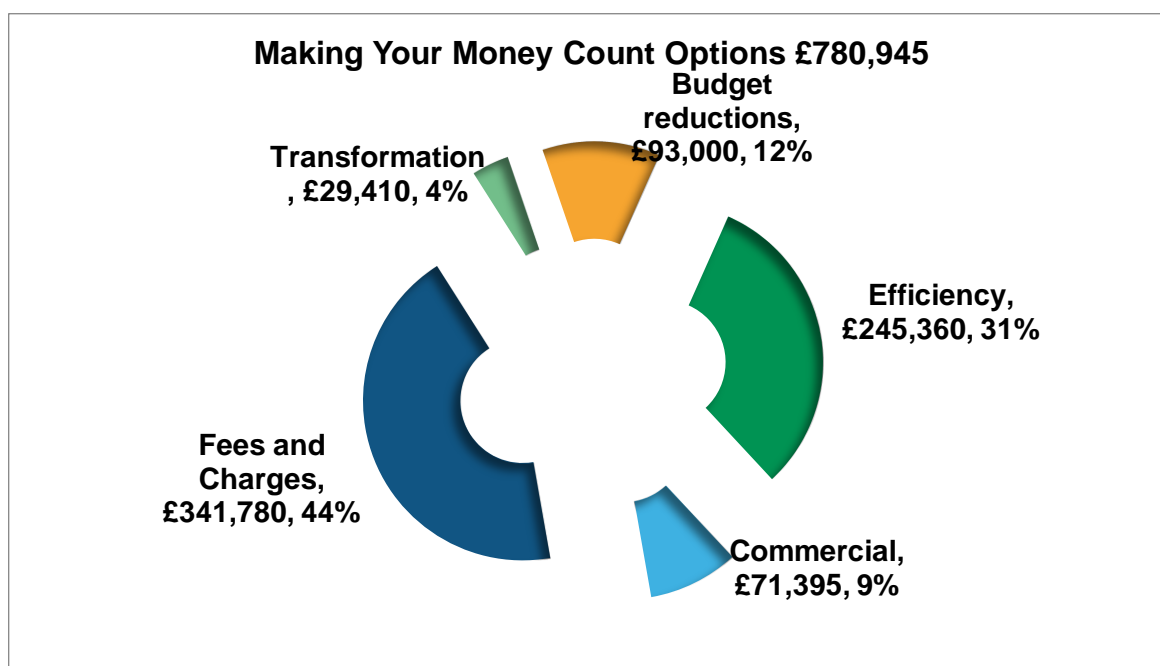
settlement 2022/23. The settlement is for one year only and is based on the Spending Review 2021 (SR21) funding levels.

- 4.1.2 A further year of lower tier services grant was given, with a total national value remaining unchanged at £111Million. Whilst the distribution methodology is the same as 2021/22 (mostly using 2013/14 SFA amounts, but partly providing a minimum funding guarantee so no authority has a reduction in CSP), individual authorities' allocations have changed, due to the minimum funding guarantee element, (Stevenage 2022/23 £115,932 compared to 2021/22 £140,043).
- 4.1.3 A Services Grant (Nationally £822Million) was also announced, it would appear that this means of distribution is for one year only, however the total funding amount is expected to be in each of the next two years settlements at a Core Spending Power (CSP) level. The methodology may change so the same level of funding is not guaranteed but this grant includes funding for the increased NICs burden and it might be reasonable to expect all authorities will get some level of funding going forward, (Stevenage 2022/23 £177,337).
- 4.1.4 The council tax referendum limit will be 2% for local authorities, with social care authorities allowed an additional 1% social care precept. The provisional settlement confirmed that districts will be allowed to apply the higher of the referendum limit or £5 (2.26% for Stevenage Borough Council), and that social care authorities will be allowed to 'catch up' any of the 3% referendum limit from last year which was unused.
- 4.1.5 As announced in the SR21, the business rates multiplier has been frozen for 2022/23. Therefore, the three elements of the Business Rates Retention system (Baseline Need, NNDR Baseline and Tariff/Top Up amounts) remain unchanged, (except for pilots, where amounts have increased to reflect grants rolled in). The under-indexing multiplier grant has been increased (by £375Million), in order that local authorities do not lose what would have been the increase to the multiplier.
- 4.1.6 The New Homes Bonus (NHB) 2022/23 allocations have been announced at £554Million, a reduction of £68Million, (part of the £1,526Million) on 2021/22. There have been no changes to the scheme for 2022/23, with a single year's new allocation made alongside the outstanding legacy payment for 2019/20. There is no planned legacy payment for 2022/23 (as in 2020/21 and 2021/22), the Stevenage NHB allowance has increased as a result of additional affordable homes created in the Borough by £23,800 to £32,200 over that estimated.
- 4.1.7 Top Up/Tariff Adjustments (Negative RSG) – As in previous years, the government has decided to eliminate the negative RSG amounts, this would have been a cost of £27,146 to Stevenage Borough Council in 2022/23.
- 4.1.8 A summary of the settlement versus the December MTFs assumptions are shown in the table below and funding is £280,430 higher than estimated, but as identified above this level of funding (Lower Service , Services Grant and NHB).

<b>Table 1 Provisional Finance Settlement (2022/23)</b>			
	<b>December MTFS</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Variance (= less)</b>
Business Rates	£2,572,848	£2,572,848	£0
Under indexing	£247,462	£211,363	(£36,099)
<b>Total Business Rates</b>	<b>£2,820,310</b>	<b>£2,784,211</b>	<b>(£36,099)</b>
New Homes Bonus (NHB (legacy payments))	£8,400	£32,200	£23,800
Lower Tier services grant	£0	£115,392	£115,392
2022-23 Services Grant	0	£177,337	£177,337
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,828,710</b>	<b>£3,109,140</b>	<b>£280,430</b>

## 4.2 The MYMC Options

4.2.1 The MYMC options approved at the December Executive for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny totalled £792,945, this has been recalculated as £780,945, a reduction of £12,000. The ability to deliver savings, particularly in the current climate is becoming ever more difficult and decisions have to be made in weighing up increasing fees and charges versus reducing services, beyond any efficiency savings identified. The options summarised below are show those options met through the Transformation, commercial and insourcing programmes and the remainder through budget reductions, (detailed in Appendix A and B to this report).



4.2.2 The approval of fees and charges require a report to the Executive which was in December 2021 to be implemented in the main during January 2022 and are for note. The MYMC savings options as approved at the December Executive require the budget and policy process to be observed as set out in paragraph 3.10.

- 4.2.3 The 2022/23 budget options include some service reduction in order to meet the necessary level of savings required. The Executive Portfolio holders reviewed their areas of responsibility for discretionary spend in terms of:
- Level of spend
  - Ability to deliver so one or two larger savings versus multiple small savings with the former being preferred.
- 4.2.4 Two options have been put forward for Executive approval to close the funding gap and ensure financial resilience for the Council going forward. The options are summarised below and included in Appendix A.

<b>Table 2 2022/23 Funding the gap</b>				
<b>Service</b>	<b>Potential Staff Redundancy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Service spend</b>	<b>General Fund</b>
Play Service	2	The proposal subject to consultation is to reduce the days the play centres are open in the school holidays by three days a week at each centre and for each day reduce by one hour. Pop up play and play outside of play centres would still be part of the offer, (full year saving £100K).	£514,150	£75,000
Funding for Co-operative Neighbourhoods	0	Seed funding was introduced from 2021/22, however CIL funding will be coming on stream in 2022/23 and it is proposed to use prior year under spends/ NDR gains once realised up to £60K to fund works	£18,000	£18,000
	<b>3</b>			<b>£93,000</b>

- 4.2.5 The decision to recommend reducing expenditure for the options is to ensure that the General Fund has sufficient balances and the ability to meet a requirement to contribute to balances by 2024/25 or earlier. In addition the Play option will also look to better utilise the buildings and remodel the service. Officers recommend play option one.
- 4.2.6 The impact of the options in terms of staffing reductions if all of the options are approved would result in an estimated three redundancies, (eight redundancies 2021/22), this is subject to consultation and is an indicative number currently.
- 4.2.7 The savings options in this report are all on-going and any inability to deliver them will require equivalent value replacement savings. The ability to deliver further savings is going to be challenging, the MYMC plan beyond 2022/23 is use the following tools to help meet the target through;
- Transformation of services with more on-line services.

- Insourcing and commercial options, including the expansion of the Revenue and Benefits shared service.
- The new leisure management procurement.

Any shortfall would need to be met from increased fees or service rationalisation.

- 4.2.8 The level of financial option outlined in the report may need to be revisited if the impact of COVID worsens than estimated and set out in outlined in paragraph 3.2. An update on the Council's finances will be presented to the June 2022 Executive to determine whether the action taken to ensure a resilient budget has been sufficient.

### 4.3 Growth and Pressure currently assumed in the General Fund 2022/23

- 4.3.1 The 2022/23 General Fund budget includes growth pressures of £1.65Million, of which 73% are COVID related. These were assumed in the December MYMC report and rationale is set out below.

Table 3- Pressures	2022/23	Comments
Garage asbestos issues	£265,720	The garages rectification works are likely to impact on garage rental income for 2022/23 and the income collectable has been reduced to reflect that. No impact has been assumed beyond 2022/23.
Garage improvement borrowing costs	£51,206	The garage improvement programme as approved by Members was part funded from borrowing and this is the budgeted increase for 2022/23
Reduction in commuted sums	£59,280	The Council receives sums for the maintenance of adopted playgrounds and land for a number of years. A number of these amounts have now ended
COVID costs	£1,199,365	COVID costs have been assumed within the budget based on latest information and as set out in paragraph 3.6
2022/23 growth bids	£75,000	A growth allowance was included in the budget and this is as set out in section 4.4
<b>Total Pressures identified</b>	<b>£1,650,570</b>	

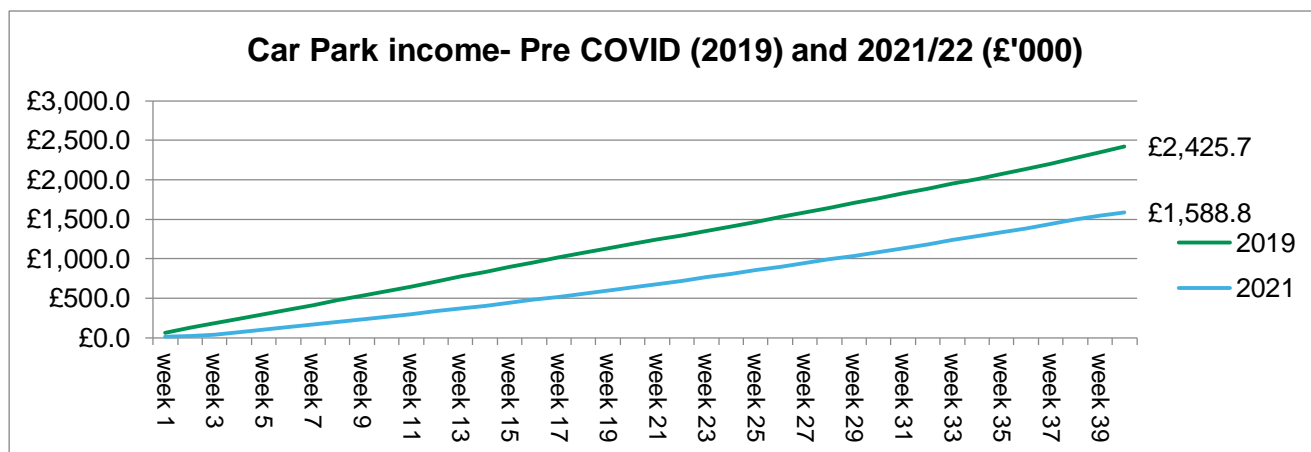
- 4.3.2 Since then an additional £122,770 of net costs has been identified as summarised below.

Table 4 -Draft Budget changes	MTFS	2022/23	Variance	Comments
Salary inflation	£652,469	£698,359	£45,890 ↑	Higher salary inflation as a result of changes to grades, increments and personnel
Contract and Utility inflation	£340,069	£370,119	£30,050 ↑	Increased inflationary pressures identified during budget setting
Business Rates Ridlin's stadium	£0	£33,280	£33,280 ↑	The stadium had never been business rated and the 2021/22 General Fund has a backdated bill for £160,000
Change in business rate relief for public conveniences (zero rated)	£8,410	£0	(£8,410) ↓	There has been a change in the rating for public conveniences and they no longer are chargeable for business rates
Increase projection in commercial premises income	(£4,258,000)	(£4,278,000)	(£20,000) ↓	Based on current lease renewals and lettings commercial income has been increased by £20,000
Reduction in budget for Trade Waste costs	£290,000	£265,000	(£25,000) ↓	Waste disposal costs based on the level of trade waste disposal and projected income levels is estimated to be £25K less for 2022/23.
Increase in HRA recharges	(£130,771)	(£141,361)	(£10,590) ↓	Based on higher inflation costs recharges to the HRA are projected to be higher.
Increase in motor and employer and Public Liability insurance premium increase and excess		£102,420	£102,420 ↑	The level of insurance premiums based on claims history and the current insurance market has meant a significant increase in premiums.
Other		(£24,870)	(£24,870) ↓	
<b>Total</b>	<b>(£3,097,822)</b>	<b>(£2,975,052)</b>	<b>£122,770</b>	

4.3.3 At the time of writing the report there were potential further additional costs from the Shared revenue and Benefits service SLA, however this was not

completed in time for publication of the report and will be updated in the final General Fund report for February.

- 4.3.5 The impact of the Governments Plan B and work from home if you can directive has impacted on the Council’s car parking income and the current 2021/22 projection of a loss of £1.5Million may be higher. This will be assessed in early January to determine the in-year impact.



- 4.3.4 These additional net pressures may increase the need for savings if balances are below the minimum level required for 2022/23 and may also increase the level of future savings beyond next year. This will be reviewed as part of the February final budget report and June 2022 MTFS update.

#### 4.4 Growth Options

- 4.4.1 The 2021 MTFS did include a small allowance (£75K) for priority growth and two bids were included for consideration by Members. At the December Executive a further growth bid was approved to help resource the climate change agenda for the Council (General Fund £45K and HRA £45K). This growth bid was welcomed at the December 2021 Overview and Scrutiny meeting and is now included in the draft budget proposals for consideration and summarised below.

Table 5- Growth Proposal	Impact of Growth Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	£ General Fund	£ HRA	£ Capital
New Climate change officer post and continuation of time limited resources approved for 2020/21-2021/22.	To meet the Climate Change agenda and deadline of zero emissions by 2030, a dedicated post is required (plus the continuation of time limited resources) to drive the priority forward across the Council.	£45,000	£45,000	

<b>Table 5- Growth Proposal</b>	<b>Impact of Growth Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .</b>	<b>£ General Fund</b>	<b>£ HRA</b>	<b>£ Capital</b>
two new Regeneration officers to meet the increase in programme (Towns Fund, Levelling up, increased Regeneration activity)	The Team are at a critical phase in the business cases; it will be very intensive between now and Christmas to get the first half through, and then efforts will be redoubled January-March to get the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> tranches through. The additional two posts will increase capacity to deliver.	£56,718	£0	£25,482
Post to keep digital context for front line and back office staff	There is no post currently to keep the key central information (INTRANET) current, as a source of key data. This will allow up to date information to internal and external customers in a timely fashion.	£18,360	£18,360	£0
		<b>£120,078</b>	<b>£63,360</b>	<b>£25,482</b>

#### 4.5 Council Tax

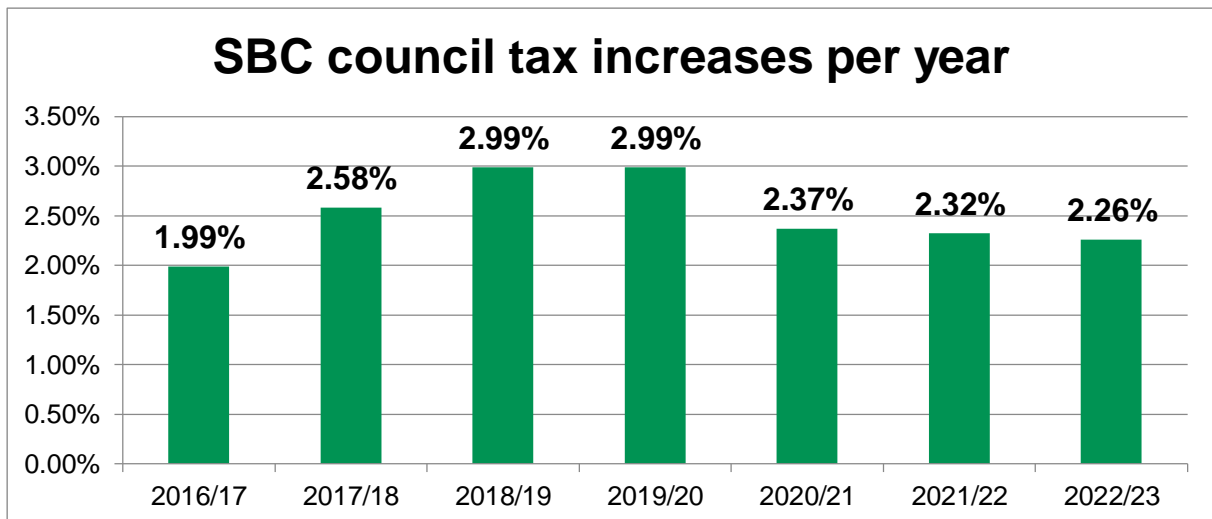
4.5.1 Part of the budget setting process includes consideration of council tax levels. The provisional settlement allows for a 2% or £5.00 on a Band D (2.26%), whichever is the greater, before a referendum on an amount above this is required. The provisional settlement consultation does not closed until 13 January but the Draft Budget assumes the 2.26% increase.

4.5.2 The table below shows the increase per property band based on a 2.26% increase.

<b>Table 6-Council Tax increase modelled for Stevenage Precept 2022/23</b>				
<b>Council Tax band</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2.26% increase</b>	<b>Total cost per year</b>	<b>Total cost per week</b>
A	£147.05	£3.33	£150.38	£2.89
B	£171.56	£3.89	£175.45	£3.37
C	£196.06	£4.44	£200.50	£3.86
D	£220.57	£5.00	£225.57	£4.34
E	£269.59	£6.11	£275.70	£5.30
F	£318.60	£7.22	£325.82	£6.27
G	£367.62	£8.33	£375.95	£7.23
H	£441.14	£10.00	£451.14	£8.68

4.5.3 Increasing council tax by 2.26% versus 1.99% gives the Council an additional £17,098 per year, this is below inflation (CPI) and will be the lowest increase since 2016/17 as summarised below.





4.5.4 Council tax is a key funding resource and locally raised taxation has become more important to the General Fund for the reasons set out in paragraphs 3.6-3.8. As in previous years the council tax increase will not be agreed until the February Council meeting. Based on the increasing financial dependency of the General Fund budget the CFO recommends a 2.26% increase is considered by the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### 4.6 Council Tax Support

4.6.1 A local CTS scheme cannot be revised for at least one financial year. A Billing Authority (for example SBC) must consider whether to revise or replace its scheme with another on an annual basis.

4.6.2 Any revision to a scheme must be made by the Council by the 11 March, immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect and will require consultation with those affected. Additionally consideration should be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed.

4.6.3 The Council must, in the following order, consult with major precepting authorities (i.e. Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire), publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme. The CFO wrote to both precepting authorities regarding the proposal for 2022/23 and at the date of writing the report no response had been received from the PCC or HCC.

4.6.4 The current **working age** scheme requires those all maximum benefit to pay 8.5% of their council tax bill for the year. This equated to £143.87 for a Band C council home in 2021/22 on the total bill (an additional 25% discount for a single person) or £2.77 per week.

4.6.5 Members approved a resolution, in the October Executive Council Tax Support report, to retain the existing scheme for 2022/23. Members are recommended to agree the existing scheme updated for benefit changes for 2022/23.

## 4.7 Business Rates Income

- 4.7.1 The December MTFS only included the 2022/23 base line funding for business rates, or the amount the government has assessed the Council needs under its funding needs formula. Any gains above this are not guaranteed and have fluctuated from year to year and cannot therefore fund on-going spend.
- 4.7.2 The CFO recommended in the December MYMC report that unrealised gains in the business rate reserve, and any new 2022/23 gains that are subsequently forecast, are only allocated for spend (one off in nature), once achieved at the year end, due to the level of balances and the volatility in business rates from year to year. Any gains available shall be reported to Members for spending options in a June report, with a recommended use for Regeneration or Co-operative Neighbourhood one off spend.
- 4.7.3 The completion of the NDR1 form, (issued by the government) determines the level of business rates collectable, level of reliefs due in 2022/23, together with the current business rate yield in January. This has been delegated to the CFO after consultation with the Resources Portfolio holder to approve.
- 4.7.4 The government has announced new 2022/23 business reliefs for the retail and hospitality sector. The government compensates Councils for loss of business rates for these type of new reliefs by giving Section 31 grants, as they suppress the income yield and therefore the Council's share of business rates. Further guidance was received prior to Christmas and there will be a limit of £110,000 business rate relief per business (not by premise) and this includes subsidiaries in the business relationship. This means working out how much relief and therefore S31 grant is due is difficult to assess. This may require grant to be issued in April and businesses required to sign a declaration to determine whether if any other part of the business has claimed reliefs from other councils or subsidiaries. This is a change from the 2021/22 reliefs.
- 4.7.5 In order to complete the NNDR1 and the projected business rates for 2022/23 the year end release needs to go into system and tested and this means that a first draft will not be completed until 18-20 January and as such after the publication of the January draft budget report. Based on current data and with the caveats relating to extended reliefs, a first estimate has been made on existing information and must be heavily caveated until the system generated data is known in mid-January and shows a projected net gain of £420,918.

Table 7-Summary Business Rates	2022/23 Budget	Settlement	Variance
Business Rates SBC share	(£16,393,516)	(£18,002,194)	£1,608,678
S31	(£2,579,722)	(£211,363)	(£2,368,359)
Total Business Rates income	<b>(£18,973,238)</b>	<b>(£18,213,557)</b>	<b>(£759,681)</b>
Tariff	£15,429,346	£15,429,346	£0
Funding	(£3,543,892)	(£2,784,211)	(£759,681)
Levy	£338,763		£338,763
<b>Total Retained</b>	<b>(£3,205,129)</b>	<b>(£2,784,211)</b>	<b>(£420,918)</b>

4.7.6 This initial assessment shows gains above the baseline level of £2.57Million, however until the further work is completed this is indicative only, the position has also been complicated by a significant number of large appeals being settled for supermarkets which will impact on the collectable yield. In 2020/21 COVID has impacted the level of business rate yield, reducing gains significantly.

4.7.7 The 2021/22 business rates have also been projected and as in 2020/21, a significant repayment to the Collection Fund as a result of reliefs being announced (in March 2021) after the level of business rate had been approved for the year. The impact is shown below and currently no change to the overall surplus is projected.

	2021/22 Estimate	2021/22 Projected	Variance	Repay Collection Fund 2022/23
Business Rates	(£15,114,209)	(£15,114,209)	£0	£0
Business Rates Tariff	£15,429,346	£15,429,346	£0	
Levy	£412,640	£412,640	£0	
S31 grants NNDR	(£815,229)	(£3,886,781)*	(£3,071,552)	
Total in year business rates	<b>(£87,452)</b>	<b>(£3,159,004)</b>	<b>(£3,071,552)</b>	<b>£0</b>
Repay 2020/21 NDR losses to collection Fund in 2022/23				£387,834
<b>Total Repayment to the Collection Fund</b>				<b>£387,834</b>

*\*this needs to be updated for the newly announced CARF funding reliefs*

4.7.8 Any business rate gains in 2021/22 and 2022/23 have not increased General Fund balances with the majority of the gains transferred to the NDR allocated reserve until realised.

4.7.9 The balance of the gains in the NDR allocated reserve, which are not planned to be returned to the General Fund or are uncommitted as at the 31 March 2023, total £897,000. The December MYMC report recommended these (2021/22 for £474,000 and 2022/23 gains (£421,000) still to be realised) are only allocated for spend (one off in nature) once achieved year end; this is due to the level of balances and the volatility in business rates from year to year. Any gains available shall be reported to Members for spending options in a June report (2021/22 gains), but the CFO recommends that the primary purpose (of any such gain) should be to ensure the continued financial resilience of the Council and if required to be transferred to the Income Equalisation Reserve and thereafter, they are used for Regeneration or Co-operative Neighbourhood one off spend.

## 4.8 COVID grants announcements in December 2021

4.8.1 **COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)** - The Government has announced the CARF scheme of £1.5 billion. The scheme is designed to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. This support package was originally announced on 25 March 2021, but no details were provided until 15 December 2021. The Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria reimburse local authorities where relief is granted using discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. The full guidance is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-additional-relief-fund-carf-local-authority-guidance>.

4.8.2 The guidance is intended to support billing authorities in administering the CARF business rates scheme and includes information on the eligibility criteria and operation of the scheme. Individual billing authorities are required to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case whether, having regard to this guidance and their own local scheme, to grant relief under section 47. The relief is available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of 2021/22. **Stevenage has been allocated £2,610,059 of business relief funding.**

4.8.3 The main area of discretion is the allocation of funding between the qualifying businesses. However there is scope to exclude specific business types. The government has indicated that the scheme should not:

- award relief to ratepayers who, for the same period of the relief, either are or would have been eligible for the Extended Retail Discount (covering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure), the Nursery Discount or the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme (AGOSS),
- award relief to a hereditament for a period when it is unoccupied (other than hereditaments which have become closed temporarily due to the government's advice on COVID-19, which should be treated as occupied for the purposes of this relief), and

the scheme should direct support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

4.8.5 A scheme is currently being designed to meet the criteria and there will need to be an application process. The Council's website has been updated to give relevant information until the scheme goes live in January 2022.

4.8.6 **ARG-** as a result of the on-going impact of COVID, with the Omicron variant and the implementation of the government's plan B restrictions, the Area Restrictions Grant (ARG) fourth scheme agreed in the December MYMC report has been paused and reviewed to ensure that it has targeted those businesses most likely to have suffered during December as a result of the continuation of the pandemic, and particularly the Omicron Variant. The revised scheme is shown at Appendix E and the revision has been signed off by the Resources Portfolio holder. The scheme will be advertised in January providing a month for businesses to apply to access the relevant grant. The

government has indicated there will potentially be more ARG funding for Councils and an announcement of allocations of funding is due in January.

4.8.7 **Omicron Hospitality and Leisure grants** -On 21 December 2021, the Government announced the introduction of a grant support for hospitality and leisure businesses in England. Guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-billion-in-support-for-businesses-mostimpacted-by-omicron-across-the-uk>.

4.8.8 The scheme provides support to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses, in recognition that the rise of the Omicron variant means they are likely to struggle over Christmas period and coming weeks. This is a one-off grant funding scheme. Applications have to be made and the scheme must close on 28 February 2022, with all payments being made by 31 March 2022. The amount awarded is based on the rateable value of the business premises on 30 December 2021 as follows:-

Omicron grant- Applicability	Grant £
Businesses with a rateable value on the 30 December 2021:	
£15,000 or under	£2,667
Over £15,000 and less than £51,000	£4,000
£51,000 and over	£6,000

4.8.9 The Government defines qualifying businesses in the following categories:

- Hospitality definition: a business whose main function is to provide a venue for the consumption and sale of food and drink
- Leisure definition: a business that provides opportunities, experiences and facilities, in particular for culture, recreation, entertainment, celebratory events, days and nights out, betting and gaming
- Accommodation definition: a business whose main lodging provision is used for holiday, travel and other purposes.

#### 4.9 2022/23 General Fund Net Expenditure

4.9.1 The 2021/22 projected and the 2022/23 draft General Fund net expenditure is summarised below, including the changes from the December 2021 report. The 2021/22 net budget has increased by £577,200 or £156,280 (excluding the transfer of those business rate gains), compared to the December's MTFs.

Table 8 Summary of 2022/23 budget movements	On-going	£	On-going £
Total Net budget reported December 2021		£10,427,020	
Table 1- New Homes Bonus increase in income	N	(£23,800)	
Reduction in 2022/23 savings options (para 4.2.1)	Y	£12,000	£12,000
Table 4- Draft budget changes	Y	£122,770	£122,770
Table 5- Climate Change growth option (approved at December Executive)	Y	£45,000	£45,000

<b>Table 8 Summary of 2022/23 budget movements</b>	<b>On-going</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>On-going £</b>
Table 5- Transfer 2022/23 NDR gains to allocated reserve	N	£420,920	
Other	Y	£310	£310
<b>Total budget movements</b>		<b>£577,200</b>	<b>£180,080</b>
<b>Updated General Fund 2022/23 net budget</b>		<b>£11,004,220</b>	

4.9.2 There is an on-going adverse impact on balances for future years of £180,080, this will increase the need for further savings for 2023/24 and the CFO recommends that Transformation savings when identified should be taken in 2022/23 to improve the resilience of the General Fund budget.

#### 4.10 2021/22 General Fund working budget

4.10.1 The 2021/22 Net General Fund Budget has increased by £58,000 a summary is shown in the table below.

<b>Table 8 Summary of 2021/22 budget movements</b>	<b>On-going</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>On-going £</b>
Quarter 2 working budget		£11,697,780	
Backdated Ridlin's Business rates (see also Table 4)	Y	£160,000	£33,280
Rental for space at Daneshill	N	(£105,000)	
Works to Daneshill house (asbestos removal and new ways of working)	N	£46,000	
COVID grants			
BEIS (4) administration costs for business grants	N	(£73,000)	
Protect and vaccinate rough sleepers funding	N	(£185,164)	
COVID spend relating to grants	N	£215,164	
<b>Total budget movements</b>		<b>£58,000</b>	<b>£33,280</b>
<b>Updated General Fund 2021/22 net budget</b>		<b>£11,755,780</b>	

#### 4.11 Projected General Fund Balances

4.11.1 The projected General Fund balances and council tax requirement are shown below.

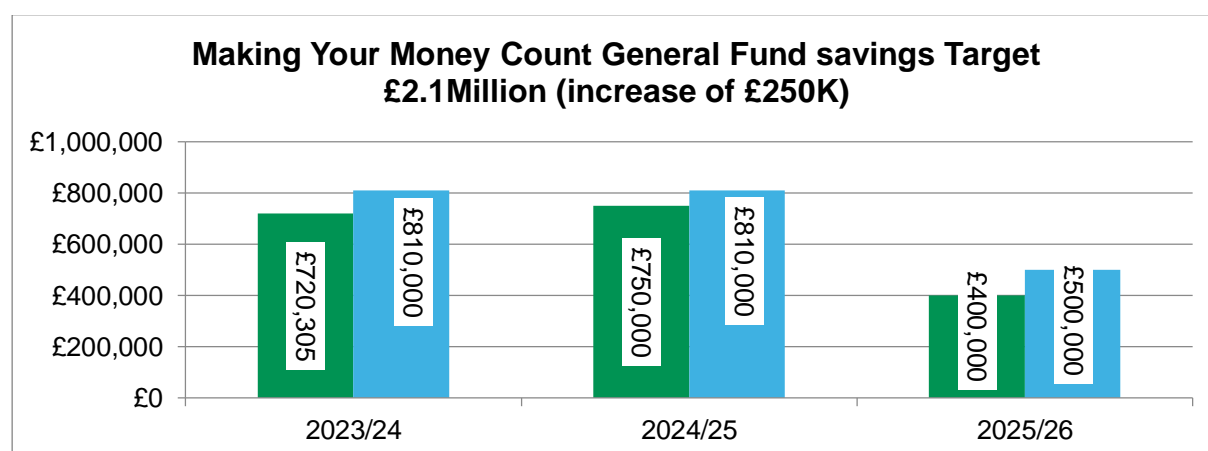
<b>Table 9-General Fund Budget</b>	<b>2021/22 Estimate</b>	<b>2021/22 Projected</b>	<b>2022/23 Estimate</b>
Net Expenditure	£10,635,570	£11,755,780	£11,004,220
(Use of)/ Contribution to Balances	(£326,067)	(£1,458,915)	(£1,238,955)
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>£10,309,503</b>	<b>£10,296,865</b>	<b>£9,765,265</b>
Lower Tier Grant	(£140,043)	(£140,043)	(£115,392)

Table 9-General Fund Budget	2021/22 Estimate	2021/22 Projected	2022/23 Estimate
Council tax Support grant	(£118,859)	(£118,859)	
Service Grant	£0	£0	(£177,337)
Total grant support	<b>(£258,902)</b>	<b>(£258,902)</b>	<b>(£292,730)</b>
Business Rates net of tariff and levy	(£2,343,779)	(£2,343,779)	(£625,407)
S31 grants NNDR	(£815,229)	(£3,886,781)*	(£2,579,722)
Total in year business rates	<b>(£3,159,008)</b>	<b>(£6,230,560)</b>	<b>(£3,205,129)</b>
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) re 2021/22	£0	£0	£3,071,552
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) re 2020/21	£8,547,930	£8,581,365	£387,834
(Return) /Contribution to Collection Fund (NDR) pre 2020/21	(£821,128)	(£821,128)	£0
Transfer from NNDR reserve	(£8,461,090)	(£5,410,335)	(£3,359,908)
Collection Fund Surplus (ctax)	(£40,152)	(£40,152)	(£50,090)
Council Tax Requirement	£6,117,154	£6,117,154	£6,316,795
Council Tax Base	27,734	27,734	28,004
Council Tax Band D	£220.57	£220.57	£225.57
Council Tax Band C	£196.07	£196.07	£200.51

\*needs to be updated for the impact of CARF funding Para 4.8.1

#### 4.12 Revision of Financial Security Targets Future Years

4.12.1 The Financial Security target for 2023/24-2025/26 has been revised as a result of the further service pressures identified in this report and as set out in Table Eight in this report is now £2.1Million, as summarised below, an increase of £250K on the previous target. This will need to be reviewed at the next MTFS update to ensure firstly that there is a contribution to balances by 2024/25 and secondly to reflect any further impacts of COVID on the General Fund.



4.12.2 This savings target is based on the following pressures and funding assumptions.



<b>Table 10-Rationale for Savings Target</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
<b>Pressures above the base budget:</b>				
Homeless costs	£410,000	£310,000	£310,000	£60,000
Car Parking losses	£719,760	£0	£0	£0
Garage rental losses	£265,720	£0	£0	£0
Commercial rent bad debt provision	£129,601	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000
Contribution to income equalisation reserve	£150,000	£100,000	£0	£0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,675,081</b>	<b>£530,000</b>	<b>£430,000</b>	<b>£180,000</b>
<b>Funding increases:</b>				
Additional grant funding in settlement	(£292,730)	(£120,000)	(£120,000)	£0
<b>Net Pressures</b>	<b>£1,382,351</b>	<b>£410,000</b>	<b>£310,000</b>	<b>£180,000</b>

- 4.12.3 Savings targets beyond 2022/23 are predicated on an improving position for both garage and car parking income and a reduction in homeless costs. There are other risks in addition to those shown above which are summarised below.

<b>Expenditure and Income</b>	<b>Table 11 – Risks to Financial Resilience</b>	<b>Risk (to increase cost)</b>
<b>Inflation</b>	supply chains issues have led to scarcity of materials and HGV drivers, which impact on the cost of service delivery	high
	2021/22 pay award rejected by the unions, 2022/23 pay inflation could increase with as a result of general inflation increases	high
	Projections for inflation of CPI at 4% will exacerbate inflationary pressures in the General Fund and HRA for pay, goods and services.	high
	The National insurance increase announced for social care will increase contractual commitments	high
<b>COVID</b>	The cost of COVID maybe on-going to the Council as a result of higher homeless costs and lower fees and charges	high
	The impact of COVID on the Council's leisure provider may lead to requests for further support above that given in 2020/21	high
<b>Core funding</b>	The government has signalled a business rate reset in which current gains could be removed through a higher tariff applied to business rates retained	high
	The Fair Funding review could reduce the level of funding deemed by the government to be required by the Council	Medium



Expenditure and Income	Table 11 – Risks to Financial Resilience	Risk (to increase cost)
	Grant funding for new burdens is announced annually such as homeless or rough sleeper funding which makes recruitment and retention difficult on a permanent basis	high
	There is uncertainty around future years government funding with only a high level three year settlement figure announced in the budget	high

4.12.4 Due to the level of risk outlined above and the assumptions that the Council's three main income streams garages, commercial rents and car parking will in the main achieve pre-2020/21 levels beyond 2022/23, the CFO recommends that savings up to a value of £250K are identified that could be implemented if the General Fund financial resilience reduced and the Executive is updated at the June 2022 Executive.

4.12.5 The MYMC savings options going forward are anticipated to be driven through the Transformation and Commercial and Insourcing Strategy. If sufficient savings cannot be identified through these initiatives then the probability of further service reductions is likely as the ability to deliver efficiency savings has diminished.

#### 4.13 Risk Assessment of General Fund balances

4.13.1 The General Fund balances have been risk assessed for 2022/23 and the minimum level of balances required is £3,471,038, (£3,653,529, 2021/22)

4.13.2 The risk assessment of balances includes amounts for general overruns in expenditure and losses of income (1.5% of the gross value) and in addition for specific risks.

4.13.3 The impact of COVID on fees and increased costs is included in the risk assessment with an additional £1Million, (£750K fees and £250K costs) in addition to that assumed within the budget.

#### 4.14 General Fund Reserve Projections

4.14.1 General Fund balances are projected to be £3.4Million by 2025/26 which means a reduction of £3Million from balances held at 1 April 2021.

Table 12 GF Balances £'000	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<b>Revised Balances at 31 March each Year:</b>					
<b>use of balances</b>	(£6,401)	(£4,942)	(£3,703)	(£3,243)	(£3,256)
<b>General fund Balance 1 March</b>	£1,459	£1,239	£460	(£13)	(£130)
	(£4,942)	(£3,703)	(£3,243)	(£3,256)	(£3,386)

4.14.2 The 2022/23 projected year end balances are £3,703,005 which is £231,967 above the risk assessed balances of £3,471,038, this is only a minimal cushion above the assessed level of reserves, however the risk assessed balances does include £1Million for COVID fee losses and additional costs.

This further enforces the recommendation in paragraph 4.12.4 to identify £250K of further potential savings.

#### 4.15 Contingency Sums

4.15.1 The Executive will recall that a Contingency Sum needs to be determined by the Council as part of the Budget and Policy Framework in order to avoid the need for Council to consider all supplementary estimates during the course of the year. This contingency sum constitutes an upper cumulative limit during the financial year within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, rather than part of the Council's Budget Requirement for the year. A sum of £400,000 is proposed for 2022/23, this remains unchanged from the current year, however due regard will need to be given to breaching minimum balances.

#### 4.16 Allocated Reserves

4.16.1 The allocated reserves as at 31 March 2023 are estimated to be £3.243Million, if the Business Rates Reserve NNDR S31 grants is excluded there is a planned use of £1.8Million of reserves between 1 April 2021 and the 31 March 2023. The allocated reserves are summarised in the following table.

Movements to/from Allocated Reserves £'000					
Allocated Reserve	Balance as at 1 April 2021	Anticipated transfer to /from reserves	Forecast balance as at 31 March 2022	Anticipated transfer to/from reserves	Forecast balance as at 31 March 2023
New Homes Bonus	(£469)	£230	(£239)	£234	(£5)
Transformation Reserve	(£330)	£0	(£330)	£230	(£100)
Business Rates Reserve	(£1,644)	£552	(£1,092)	£25	(£1,067)
Business Rates Reserve S31 grants	(£9,059)	£5,410	(£3,649)	£3,360	(£289)
Homeless and Rough Sleeper reserve	(£370)	£193	(£176)	£0	(£176)
Regeneration Assets	(£1,017)	£253	(£764)	(£31)	(£795)
Insurance Reserve	(£76)	£65	(£11)	£0	(£11)
Regeneration Fund (SG1)	(£746)	£206	(£540)	£295	(£245)
Town Centre	(£81)	£0	(£81)	£0	(£81)
Planning Delivery Grant	(£65)	£0	(£65)	£0	(£65)
Income equalisation reserve	(£8)	(£250)	(£258)	(£150)	(£408)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(£13,864)</b>	<b>£6,659</b>	<b>(£7,205)</b>	<b>£3,963</b>	<b>(£3,243)</b>

4.16.2 The use of reserves does not take into account any use of the Income Equalisation reserve which may be required in 2022/23, particularly if fee

income is impacted by COVID. The NDR reserves balances are based on the level of business rates as set out in section 4.7.

4.16.3 The SG1 Regeneration reserve balance is projected to total £245K by the 31 March 2023 and is likely to need additional funding from 2023/24 onwards and business rate gains could be utilised to do this.

#### **4.17 Chief Finance Officer's Commentary**

4.17.1 The Chief Finance Officer is the Council's principal financial advisor and has statutory responsibilities in relation to the administration of the Council's financial affairs (Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). This commentary is given in light of these statutory responsibilities.

4.17.2 The Council has evolved its budget strategy to meet multiple challenges as set out in this report in paragraphs 3.6 -3.8. The financial strategy to deal with this is the 'Making Your Money Count' (MYMC) strand of 'Future Town Future Council'.

4.17.3 Officers regularly update the MTFS to ensure that a clear financial position for the Council can be demonstrated over the next five years. This medium term view of the budget gives a mechanism by which future 'budget gaps' can be identified allowing for a measured rather than reactive approach to reducing net expenditure. The MYMC year round approach to identifying budget options means that work is on-going throughout the year to bridge the gap.

4.17.4 The Council has taken significant steps over recent years to balance its budget but as yet does not meet the principle aim of the MTFS to: 'achieve an on-going balanced budget until by 2024/25 by ensuring inflationary pressures are matched by increases in fees and income or reductions in expenditure'.

4.17.5 The impact of COVID has increased financial risk and an update to the June 2022 Executive is planned to give an early indication if further financial resilience measures are required in year. This has been a difficult budget to set, particularly the need to increase fees and charges when the economy is still impacted by COVID versus reducing services and making savings. The financial resilience measures taken/for approval which increase the security of the Council's position, are:

- A June 2022 General Fund MTFS update to the Executive.
- A risk assessment of balances to ensure general reserves held take into account increased risk including an increase for further COVID losses.
- The establishment of an income equalisation reserve (£408,000 by 31 March 2023) which can be returned to the General Fund if fees and charges are lower than projected.
- Reduce the use of reliance on Revenue Contributions to Capital (RCCO) by identifying sites for disposal and using capital receipts rather than revenue (September 2020 MTFS report).

- Identification of a sufficient level of on-going MYMC options to ensure General Fund balances are above or at the minimum level required for 2022/23.
- Use of any business rate gains only when realised and ring fenced to maintain the financial resilience of the General Fund and thereafter FTFC priorities.
- A transformation programme to deliver savings from 2023/24 onwards.

4.17.6 There is small contribution to balances projected in 2024/25, however there is a significant draw on balances through the MTFS period and a need to deliver savings through the MTFS timeframe.

4.17.7 The current projections of balances and the measures the Council has taken to date, and as set in this report, have meant the level of balances projected are sufficient to set the 2022/23 budget, if all options included in the report are approved. However the CFO considers that options totalling £250,000, as set out in paragraph 4.14.2, are brought forward in the June 2022 MTFS update report should the level of reserves subsequently be projected to be lower due to further COVID losses and/or other pressures, in order to improve financial resilience.

4.17.8 While delivering one of the most difficult budgets, the Council is also continuing with one of its most ambitious phases with the Council looking to redevelop and regenerate the town centre and at the same time improve the housing market in Stevenage. Both these priorities come with the risk of potentially needing to invest more resources. There is a ring fenced reserve for Regeneration and further estimates of resources have been included in the General Fund MTFS.

#### **4.18 Leaders Financial Security Group**

4.18.1 The LFSG chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Resources, on behalf of the Leader and with cross party representation, met on three occasions in October and November to consider the rates of efficiency, commercial and fees and charges. There was majority support by LFSG for the efficiency, commercial and fees and charges options. The comments from LFSG were contained in the December 2021 MYMC report.

4.18.2 LFSG supported the higher fees and charges levels (option 3) (majority view) and as approved at the December 2022 Executive also recognising the need to balance fee increases versus service reductions.

4.18.3 LFSG also supported the MYMC options with the exception of the reduce options which were not finalised at the time the group met. However a majority supported a reduction to the cost of play (67%) when asked to rank five service areas where a saving (if the Council had to make a reduction to balance the budget) from a discretionary area of spend.

4.18.4 There were a number of questions and points made on savings options and fees and charges which were:

- Advertising for car park season tickets is not widely known and needs to be better promoted.

- The group asked officers to review Corey's Mill parking to be better aligned with NHS pricing and requested a further option (option 3).
- The group asked if the stay period at Corey's Mill could be extended beyond the three hours and were advised a traffic control order would be required. A shorter parking period was required to ensure that there was parking available at the site, however the AD Planning & Regeneration sort to look at the possibility of extending the stay time to four hours during 2022/23.
- The free parking Saturdays were questioned as to their ability to increase footfall into the Town Centre and the AD Planning & Regeneration undertook to see if the monetary value of lost parking income could be better utilised to increase town centre footfall
- Members recommended that EV charging was a chargeable service and should not be offered free on-street or in car parks, this would be a growing cost as the number of electric powered cars increases.
- The increase in pre-application fees was queried as to the level of increase in fees. Officers explained that a review by the Commercial Manager working with the service had revised charges based on recovering the staff costs to deliver the advice.
- LFSG supported the removal of discounts on parking (through the use of validators) for a number of hotels and other businesses in the town, but also suggested this should not be available for the leisure providers, this was not recommended as part of the officer proposal.
- Members asked for a list of payments to charities and organisations, which is being compiled for review by LFSG (for contributions over £5K).
- One Member asked whether recycling was promoted enough and whether the Council was achieving income from the sale of recyclates. LFSG were advised that recyclate pricing had been suppressed but had recovered during 2021/22, but was subject to significant price fluctuations.

#### **4.19 Consultation**

- 4.19.1 In October and November 2021, the Council undertook a survey among residents into how they perceive Stevenage Borough Council services and their local area. The information gathered from residents helps to provide insight on their priorities for the town, the extent to which the Council is perceived to provide value for money and how well services are meeting resident expectations. The full findings of the survey are still being analysed and service areas are beginning to develop actions in response.
- 4.19.2 The full findings of the survey will be shared with the Executive and the Neighbourhood meetings throughout February. This will enable all Councillors to understand perceptions and findings for the town as a whole, and specific priorities and challenges in local areas, and to help shape how the Council responds to the findings. Ahead of this, the outcomes from key questions on preferred ways for the Council to achieve financial resilience as a result of cuts to the funding it receives, and views on whether the council tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides value for money, are shared below given their direct relevance to the budget setting process.

4.19.3 The 2021/22 Residents survey shows that resident's preferences are firstly to reduce costs through more on line services. This was ranked the highest (out of five options in 2021 and 2017) with 41% of those responding to the survey indicating that this was their preferred option; this first rate ranking has increased from 2017 and supports the Transformation programme as a method to reduce costs.

<b>Please tell us your order of preference for each of the following options by ordering them 1 to 5</b>	<b>2021 rank</b>	<b>2017 rank</b>	<b>1st</b>
Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online	1	1	41%
Increase income from fees and chargeable services, to keep the council's element of Council Tax as low as possible	2	3	24%
Spend less by reducing or cutting the services that you tell us are not a priority	3	2	16%
Make money by selling more of our services to residents and customers	4	5	9%
Increase our element of Council Tax (for example from 51p per day to 55p per day)	5	4	10%

4.19.4 The 2021 residents' survey asked residents whether the council tax represented value for money and whilst those strongly disagreeing have increased (from 7% to 15%), overall 52% (up from 46% in 2017) agree it is value for money (as shown in the chart below).

	<b>Responses</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides good value for money?</b>	Strongly agree	16%	10%	7%	6%	6%
	Tend to agree	36%	36%	39%	39%	40%
	Neither	18%	30%	30%	35%	33%
	Tend to disagree	10%	17%	18%	17%	16%
	Strongly disagree	15%	7%	6%	5%	5%
	Don't know (DNRO)	4%				
	<b>Summary: Agree</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>46%</b>
	<b>Summary: Disagree</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>21%</b>

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 The report deals with Council finances and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.

## **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget each year. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to estimate revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, together with contributions from reserves, in order to determine a net budget requirement to be met by government grant and council tax.

## **5.3 Policy Implications**

5.3.1 The report deals with Council policy and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.

## **5.4 Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

5.4.1 The 2022/23 budget options include staff implications and these are summarised in paragraph 4.2.6. All the options are subject to consultation and the financial outcomes assumed may change as a result of that consultation taking place.

5.4.2 In compliance with SBC's Organisational Change Policy any proposals involving potential redundancies will be fully consulted on with the trade unions and affected staff for a minimum 30-day consultation period, and again may therefore change depending on the outcomes of the consultation process.

5.4.3 Officers will continue to work in an open and transparent way with the trades unions, and will provide them with the information required, in accordance with statutory requirements and best employment practice, as soon as this is available. The trades unions will be provided with all relevant information in accordance with the Council's legal obligations.

5.4.4 Wherever possible staff who find themselves in a redundancy situation will be redeployed to a suitable alternative post. If that redeployment results in the staff affected moving into a lower-graded, post pay protection will apply for a 12-month period.

## **5.5 Equal Opportunities Implications**

5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of The Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the need to:

- Remove discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that its unlawful under this Act
- Promote equal opportunities between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 5.5.2 These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the Budget in February 2022.
- 5.5.3 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2022/23 officers have begun Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related savings proposals. These are currently in draft form, since they must consider appropriate evidence and the findings of consultation with various stakeholders to inform the decision by Council in February 2022. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers will collect further information and identify actions to mitigate the impact as far as possible. These EqIAs are summarised and attached in **Appendix D** with further information on the process to date and planned activity. EqIAs for future years' savings will be presented alongside the draft Budget for the relevant year.
- 5.5.4 An overarching EqIA will also be developed once individual EqIAs are finalised for Council in February 2022. This will consider the collective impact of the Budget on people with protected characteristics.
- 5.5.5 As well as considering the impact on service delivery and equality, an EqIA concerning all strands of potential discrimination will be required by the Head of Paid Service on proposed redundancies and restructures per savings proposal and as a whole. It is proposed that this will be produced alongside the required restructure consultation documents as it is only at this stage that the actual impact on staff will start to be known. As the proposals will be delivered over a range of different timescales, the whole, i.e. combined EqIA, will be reviewed periodically with the Council's Strategic Leadership Team. All staff impacts are summarised at **Appendix E**.
- 5.5.6 The staff EQIA recognises that the options identified in Appendix A impact adversely on woman staff members.

## **5.6 Risk Implications**

- 5.6.1 There are risk implications to setting a prudent General Fund budget if the Financial Security options identified in Appendix A are not achieved and crucially if future options are not found to meet the targets outlined in the report.
- 5.6.2 There are a number of risks that have been identified and these are set out in the report.

## **5.7 Climate Change Implications**

- 5.7.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency at the June 2019 Council meeting with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. The Transformation programme and the digital on-line agenda will contribute to reducing the Councils carbon footprint.
- 5.7.2 This report recommends a growth bid for a Climate Change post to support the Council's resolution to meet the 2030 date.



## **6.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2021/22-2025/26)

BD2 Making Your Money Count Options December 2021 Executive

## **7.0 APPENDICES**

Appendix A General Fund and HRA Budget Options 2022/23

Appendix B Fees and Charges 2022/23

Appendix C Risk Assessment of Balances 2022/23

Appendix D Equalities Impact Assessment overview

Appendix E Staff Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix F Revised ARG 4 scheme

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APPENDIX A

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2022/23

	General Fund £	HRA
Efficiency	£245,360	£6,700
Commercial	£71,395	£0
Fees and Charges	£212,280	
Extra Fees	£129,500	
Transformation	£29,410	£32,670
Reduction options	£93,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£780,945</b>	<b>£39,370</b>

Ref No	Manager	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs (any redundancy/ capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Budget 2021/22	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Year 1	£ HRA Year 1
<b>2022/23 Efficiency Options</b>										
F1	Rob Gregory	CCTV	A reduction in Broadland Guarding Contract (40.45% Stevenage share)	£0	0	£395,470	Contract reduction re-negotiated with provider in 2021/22, the share shown is the SBC saving only, which excludes the partnership saving. Contract being re-tendered for 2022-25	Immediate	15,257	0
F2	Rob Gregory	CCTV	Reduction in CCTV and Parking Manager (40.45%)	£0	0	£33,260	Savings due to retirement of Group Manager- . CCTV will report to Community Safety Manager, Some core business development capacity to support commercial growth to be retained and linked to commercialisation work stream.	Immediate	5,000	0
F3	Zayd Al-Jawad	Planning & Environment	Technical support staff changes	£0	0		Saving from technical Support staffing from 2022/23 onwards.	2021/22	1,990	0
F5	Zayd Al-Jawad	Parking	Combining on and off street parking services	£0	0		Saving from Parking Mgr retiring, the net saving includes changes to two existing job roles	1 September 2021	6,383	0
F6	L Walker	SDS Ops	Service Review	£0	0		Projected £157k saving - reduced by a market forces supplement for HGV driver roles given the national driver shortage etc. And the need for additional management support (1FTE) - Savings potential will reduce as staff progress through the scale points, but could be offset with churn of leavers and starters.	2022/23	27,980	0
F7	L Walker	Herts Agency Agreement	Increased HCC contract price as negotiated in 2021/22	£0	0		Agreement signed for 2021/22 but budget used to complete digital improvements at Cavendish in that year and for 2022/23 onwards a saving for the General Fund	1st April 2022	104,000	0
F8	Clare Fletcher	Shared Revenue and Benefits Service	Reduction in outside officers/control and benefits based on churn and change to contracted hours	£0	0	£1,944,270	Reduction in staff costs through reducing headcount through natural change in hours and non-replacement of staff. This is deemed to be achievable by the Shared Service.	1st April 2022	38,950	0
FS15	Lloyd Walker / Julia Hill	SDS	Cease provision of seasonal bedding displays to roundabouts / hammerheads	£0	0		Replace seasonal bedding schemes with sustainable planting - support Climate Change Strategy and biodiversity as implemented.	now implemented	19,000	0
FS7	Rob Gregory	Corporate Policy and Business Support Team	Reduction of 1FTE- post currently vacant	£0	0	£33,500	Reduction in team by one post, which will also include the re-grading of an existing role. Will reduce some corporate capacity.	1st April 2022	26,800	6,700
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£2,406,500</b>			<b>£245,360</b>	<b>£6,700</b>

<b>2022/23 Commercial in-sourcing Strand</b>										
C1	N Capuano	Garages	Increase recharges from locks changes to achieve full cost recovery	£0	0		Recovery of costs from tenants for lock changes to ensure full recovery of costs.	Immediate	6,880	0
C8	N Capuano	Garages	Cost recovery re freehold cleansing and weed spraying	£0	0		Recover costs from sold garage owners, will take some time to set up the service charge regime	1 June 2022	14,085	0
C9	L Walker	Trade Waste	Reduce concession for schools and play groups to concessions policy of 25%	£0	0		Currently schools and play groups pay £13.75 versus £22.25 per standard lift, this equates to a 38.2% discount, this proposal is to remove discount, to a £18 price (market based) the saving is based on 80% remaining with the full price model. The exact increase in income is still to be confirmed (estimated January 2022).	1 April 2022	30,430	0

	General Fund £	HRA
Efficiency	£245,360	£6,700
Commercial	£71,395	£0
Fees and Charges	£212,280	
Extra Fees	£129,500	
Transformation	£29,410	£32,670
Reduction options	£93,000	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£780,945</b>	<b>£39,370</b>

Ref No	Manager	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementati on costs (any redundancy/ capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Budget 2021/22	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	£ General Fund Year 1	£ HRA Year 1
C10	Zayd Al-Jawad	Car parking Concessions	Remove concession validators for hotel and bingo halls	£0	0		Currently validators are in place that discount parking charges for the hotel in the town centre and for Mecca bingo. The proposal based on the Councils financial position is to remove these concessions. (Number needs confirming notional amount included) This has been estimated to be between £20K-£37K saving based on actual usage.	1 April 2022	20,000	0
				<b>£0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£0</b>			<b>£71,395</b>	<b>£0</b>

**2022/23 Transformation Options**

BG1	Ruth Luscombe	CSC	Reduce CSC Opening hours		0	£843,130	Current Customer Services opening hours are 8:30-5:30 for face to face services and 8:00-6:00 for other channels (inc Telephone), Monday to Friday except bank holidays and other closures. This savings proposal is to reduce the opening hours by an hour at the end of the day, to 8:00-4:30 for face to face, and 8:00-5:00 for other channels. This would allow provision of the same service but reduce resourcing by 2FTE. This has been modelled using forecasting tools, and other changes in demand etc. may mean real performance would be different.	1 April 2022	19,600	29,400
BG2	AD Finance & Estates	Facilities	Reduce FM support by 1 part time (staff costs shown in costs)	TBC	1	£0	The hybrid working method has reduced post and other tasks and the Head of Estates considers the post could be removed	1 April 2022	9,810	3,270
				<b>£0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>£843,130</b>			<b>£29,410</b>	<b>£32,670</b>

**2022/23 Reduce Options**

BG6	Rob Gregory	Neighbourhood Ward	Remove seed funding for Neighbourhood Wards	£0	0	£18,000	This was introduced in 2021/22 but has yet to be implemented due to 21/22 growth monies being on hold. Alternative funding could come from CIL or prior year underspends say up to a value of £36,000.	1 April 2022	18,000	0
BG3	AD Communities and Neighbourhoods	Play	Reduce the direct costs of play from £514K by £100K over 2 years	TBC	1 or 2	£514,150	The proposal subject to consultation is to reduce the days the play centres are open in the school holidays by three days a week at each centre and for each day reduce by one hour. Pop up play and play outside of play centres would still be part of the offer, (full year saving £100K).	1 June 2022	75,000	0
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>£0</b>	<b>1 or 2</b>	<b>£514,150</b>			<b>£93,000</b>	<b>£0</b>

**£439,165      £39,370**

FEES AND CHARGES - RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23		2021/22 Fees	Option 1	Increase £	Income (Reduction) / Increase	Option 2	Option 3
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE			Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications	Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications
<b>Car Parks</b>							
<b>New Town:</b>	<b>7am-7pm (6am-7pm at St Georges only) :</b>					<b>Alternative Fee</b>	<b>Total Income Increase (Option 2 Fee)</b>
	Mon-Saturday up to 30 Mins (St Georges & Westgate only)	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00		£0.50	
	Mon-Saturday up to 1 hour	£1.80	£1.80	£0.00		£1.90	£20,000
<b>Short Stay</b> (The Forum, Westgate, St Georges)	Mon-Saturday up to 2 hours	£2.60	£2.70	£0.10	£4,800	£2.70	£5,500
	Mon-Saturday up to 3 hours	£3.30	£3.50	£0.20	£3,600	£3.50	£3,600
	Mon-Saturday up to 5 Hours	£4.00	£4.20	£0.20	£2,400	£4.20	£2,500
	Sunday	£2.20	£2.50	£0.30	£2,800	£2.50	£2,800
	Night Parking 7pm to 7am	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00		£2.00	
<b>Total Short Stay</b>					<b>£13,600</b>		<b>£27,100</b>
<b>Long stay</b>	Mon-Fri before 8.30am	£8.00	£8.50	£0.50	£4,800	£8.50	£4,800
	Mon-Fri 8.30am to 7pm	£5.00	£5.20	£0.20	£4,800	£5.20	£5,000
	Saturday 6am - 6pm	£5.00	£5.20	£0.20	£1,800	£5.20	£2,000
	Sunday	£2.20	£2.50	£0.30	£2,400	£2.50	£2,400
	Night Parking (7pm to 6am or 6pm - 6am)	£2.00	£2.00	£0.00		£2.00	
<b>Total Long Stay</b>					<b>£13,800</b>		<b>£13,800</b>
<b>Railways</b>	Mon-Fri 4am to 4am	£9.00	£9.30	£0.30	£8,800	£9.50	£13,600
	Saturday	£7.20	£7.50	£0.30	£3,200	£7.60	£4,200
	Sunday	£6.80	£7.00	£0.20	£2,700	£7.20	£4,450
<b>Total Railways</b>					<b>£14,700</b>		<b>£22,250</b>
<b>Season Tickets</b>	New Town (price per month)	£89.00	£89.00	£0.00	£0	£91.00	£2,500
	Blue Badge Holders (Season Ticket, price per Annum)	£44.00	£48.00	£4.00	£500	£50.00	£500
	Rail (price per month)	£160.00	£160.00	£0.00	£0	£165.00	£600
<b>Season Tickets SubTotal</b>					<b>£500</b>		<b>£3,600</b>
<b>New Town GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>£42,600</b>		<b>£66,750</b>
<b>Old Town:</b>							
<b>Primett Rd North</b>	<b>Monday - Saturday 0600-1600 hours</b>						
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.20	£0.10			£1.30
	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.60	£0.10			£1.80
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.00	£0.10	£1,500		£2.40
	More than three hours	£5.00	£5.00	£0.00			£5.00
<b>Primett Rd South</b>	<b>Monday-Friday</b>						
	0600-1600hrs	£2.90	£3.00	£0.10			£3.00
	1600-0600hrs	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00			£0.50
	<b>Saturday 0600-1600:</b>						
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.20	£0.10	£1,500		£1.30
	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.60	£0.10			£1.80
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.00	£0.10			£2.40
	More than three hours	£2.70	£2.80	£0.10			£3.00
	<b>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</b>	£0.50	£0.50	£0.00			£0.50
<b>Church Lane North</b>	<b>Mon-Sat 0600-1600hrs</b>						
	up to one hour	£1.10	£1.20	£0.10			£1.30
	up to two hours	£1.50	£1.60	£0.10			£1.80
	up to three hours	£1.90	£2.00	£0.10	£1,750		£2.40
	More than three hours	£2.70	£2.80	£0.10			£3.00
	<b>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</b>	free	£2.80	£0.10			£3.00
<b>Season Tickets</b>	Old Town (price per month)	£46.00	£50.00	£4.00	£2,000		£50.00
<b>Old Town GRAND TOTAL</b>					<b>£6,750</b>		<b>£7,400</b>
<b>Car Parks:</b>	<b>Business Tokens/ Commercial Income</b>	various	various		£4,000		£4,000
<b>Loss of income due to price increase</b>		£0.10	9.75%		-£6,000		-£8,000
<b>TOTAL "All Off Street Car Parks"</b>					<b>£47,350</b>		<b>£62,750</b>
<b>On Street Parking</b>							
<b>Town Centre</b>	up to 30 mins	£0.60	£0.70	£0.10		£0.70	£1.00
	Up to 1 Hour	£1.80	£1.80	£0.00		£1.90	£2.00
	Up to 2 Hours	£2.70	£2.90	£0.20		£2.90	£3.00

FEES AND CHARGES - RECOMMENDED									
FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23									
		2021/22 Fees	Option 1			Option 2		Option 3	
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	Income (Reduction) / Increase	Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications		Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications	
	Up to 3 Hours	£3.50	£3.80	£0.30	£14,000	£3.80	£17,000	£4.00	£25,000
	Up to 4 Hours	£4.50	£5.00	£0.50		£5.00		£5.00	
	Up to 5 Hours	£6.00	£11.00	£5.00		£11.00		£11.00	
	Over 5 hours	£10.00	£11.00	£1.00		£11.00		£11.00	
Corey's Mill Lane	up to 1 hr £1.10 up to 2 hrs £1.70 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £2.20	up to 1 hr £1.10 up to 2 hrs £1.70 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £2.20	up to 1 hr £1.10 up to 2 hrs £1.70 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £2.20	£0.00	£0	up to 1 hr £1.50 up to 2 hrs £2.00 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £3.00	£50,000	up to 1 hr £1.50 up to 2 hrs £2.50 up to 3 hrs (max stay) £4.00	£90,000
<b>On Street Parking Total</b>					£14,000		£67,000		£115,000
<b>Street Naming/Numbering</b>									
Various Options, some examples shown here	First Dwelling Numbering	£105.00	£109	£4.00	£400		£400		£400
	Next ten dwellings (per dwelling)	£56.00	£58	£2.00					
	Naming of new street	£212.00	£220	£8.00					
	Commercial numbering first unit	£278.00	£288	£10.00					
	Commercial numbering further units	£139.00	£145	£6.00					
<b>External Works (e.g. Other LAs)</b>									
Examples of Hourly Charge out rate for staff time (VAT to be added)	Engineering Services Manager	£63.10	£66.25	£3.15	£50		£50		£50
	Principal Engineer	£58.30	£61.25	£2.95					
	Traffic & Parking Enforcement Manager	£55.00	£57.75	£2.75					
	Engineer	£43.50	£45.70	£2.20					
	Inspector	£41.20	£43.25	£2.05					
<b>Town Centre Charges</b>									
Street Hoarding Licences	Hoarding/Scaffold Licence (per week/100m run)	£48.00	£50	£2.00	£480		£480		£480
	Crane Licence	£2,187.00	£2,250	£63.00					
	Skip Licence (per fortnight)	£41.00	£43	£2.00					
<b>On Street Parking</b>									
	H Bar Marking Application fee	£30.00	£31.00	£1.00	£160		£160		£160
	H Bar Marking Fee	£85.00	£88.00	£3.00					
	Parking Bay Suspension (5 bays/wk)	£200.00	£210.00	£10.00					
	Parking Bay Suspension (per additional bay)	£5.00	£6.00	£1.00					
Parking Permits (e.g. Burymead) (selected example charges shown)	First Permit	£56.00	£56.00	£0.00	£0				£0
	Second Permit	£82.00	£82.00	£0.00					
	Third Permit	£108.00	£108.00	£0.00					
	Fourth Permit	£134.00	£134.00	£0.00					
	20 visitor vouchers	£15.00	£15.00	£0.00					
<b>Garages:</b>									
Prices shown are "NET" of VAT. Housing Tenants generally do not pay VAT but other customers do pay VAT, meaning the actual weekly increase for a Category A garage	Standard Garage (Category A)	£12.05	£12.50	£0.45	£103,300				£103,300
	Standard Garage (Category B)	£11.85	£12.25	£0.40					
	Standard Garage (Category C)	£11.45	£11.70	£0.25					
	Premium Sized Garages	£15.00	£15.60	£0.60					
	Road Facing Garages	£13.70	£14.25	£0.55					
<b>Garages Total</b>					£103,300		£103,300		£103,300
<b>Markets:</b>									
	Indoor Market Rents	various	various		£6,980				
	Other Market Fees	£100	£120						

FEES AND CHARGES - RECOMMENDED		2021/22 Fees	Option 1			Option 2		Option 3
FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23		2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	Income (Reduction) / Increase	Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications		Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications
<b>Markets Total</b>					£6,980		£6,980	£6,980
<b>Bulky Waste:</b>								
	3 Items	£45.00	£48.00	£3.00				
	6 Items	£75.00	£78.00	£3.00				
	7 Items	n/a	£88.00	new				
	8 Items	n/a	£97.00	new				
	9 Items	n/a	£106.00	new				
	10 Items	n/a	£115.00	new				
	Cancellation Fee	£11.00	£11.00	£0.00				
<b>Bulky Waste Total</b>					£2,700		£2,700	£2,700
<b>Trade Refuse:</b>	Increase in fees to cover additional increase in disposal costs (example of pricing shown, 1100 litre bin)	£22.25	£23.25	£1.00	£30,000		£30,000	£30,000
<b>Skips:</b>	Increase in fees to cover additional increase in disposal costs (example of pricing shown 6yard skip)	£294.00	£305.00	£11.00	£2,000		£2,000	£2,000
<b>Increase disposal cost of waste for Trade, Clinical, Skips and Transfer Station:</b>					-£18,000		-£18,000	-£18,000
<b>Cemeteries:</b>		various			£11,490			
<b>Cemeteries Total</b>					£11,490		£11,490	£11,490
<b>Parks and Open Spaces:</b>		various			£4,650			
<b>Parks and Open Spaces Total</b>					£4,650		£4,650	£4,650
<b>Allotments:</b>	Price per M <sup>2</sup> per year	£0.60	£0.77	£0.17	£12,300			
	100M <sup>2</sup> per year	£60.00	£77.00	£17.00				
	250M <sup>2</sup> per year	£150.00	£192.50	£42.50				
<b>Allotments Total</b>					£12,300		£12,300	£12,300
<b>Fishing</b>	Adult Day Ticket	£8.20	£8.50	£0.30	£200			
	Junior Day Ticket	£6.15	£6.35	£0.20				
	Night Fishing	£18.40	£19.00	£0.60				
	<b>Average of above</b>	£10.92	£11.28	£0.37				
<b>Fishing Total</b>					£200		£200	£200
<b>Planning:</b>	<b>Major development</b>				£1,800			
	100+ residential units, 6000+sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 3ha+ PER 100 units /6000sqm/3ha or part of.	£3,800.00	£3,990	£190				
	<b>Bespoke hourly service for</b> 100+ residential units, 6000+sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 3ha+ PER 100 units /6000sqm/3ha or part of	n/a	£192	new				

FEES AND CHARGES - RECOMMENDED										
FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23										
		2021/22 Fees	Option 1			Option 2		Option 3		
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 FEE	2022/23 FEE	Increase £	Income (Reduction) / Increase	Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications		Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications		
	25-99 residential units, 2001-5999sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 1ha-3ha. <b>Bespoke hourly service for 25-99 residential units, 2001-5999sqm of commercial /change of use or where the site is 1ha-3ha.</b>	£3,800.00	£3,990	£190						
	Development requiring an EIA if not within the above categories	n/a	£192	new						
	<b>Bespoke hourly service for Development requiring an EIA if not within the above categories</b>	£3,700.00	£3,885	£185						
		n/a	£185	new						
	<b>Other Major Developments</b>									
	Provision of 10-24 dwellings or where the site is between 0.5ha and 1ha. <b>Bespoke hourly service for Provision of 10-24 dwellings, 1001sqm to 2000sqm, or where the site is between 0.5ha and 1ha</b>	£2,250.00	£2,360	£110						
	Change of use or provision of 1001sqm - 2000sqm of commercial floor space or on a site with an area exceeding 1ha.	n/a	£113	new						
		£2,250.00	£2,360	£110						
	<b>Minor Development</b>									
	Single dwelling/replacement dwelling	£225.00	£236	£11						
	<b>Bespoke hourly service for Single dwelling/replacement dwelling</b>	n/a	£68	n/a						
	2-5 dwellings	£445.00	£467	£22						
	<b>Bespoke hourly service for 2-5 dwellings</b>	n/a	£68	n/a						
6-9 dwellings	£1,150.00	£1,205	£55							
<b>Bespoke hourly service for 6-9 dwellings</b>	n/a	£68	n/a							
Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 0-500sqm or on a site with an area up to 0.5ha.	£225.00	£236	£11							
<b>Bespoke hourly service for Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 0-500sqm or on a site with an area up to 0.5ha</b>	n/a	£68	n/a							
Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 501sqm and 1000sqm or on a site with an area between 0.5ha and 1 ha	£740.00	£777	£37							
<b>Bespoke hourly service for Change of use of buildings/new commercial buildings with a floor space between 501sqm and 1000sqm or on a site with an area between 0.5ha and 1 ha</b>	n/a	£68	n/a							
<b>Householder</b>										
Domestic extensions, conservatories etc. and alterations to residential properties. (WITH SITE VISITS)	£80	£225	£145							



FEES AND CHARGES - RECOMMENDED									
FEE INCREASES FOR 2022/23									
Service	Fees and Charges for 2022/23	2021/22 Fees 2021/22 FEE	Option 1 2022/23 FEE	Increase £	Income (Reduction) / Increase	Option 2 Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications	Option 3 Alternative Parking Charges with budget implications		
	Domestic extensions, conservatories etc. and alterations to residential properties. (WITHOUT SITE VISITS)	n/a	£175	n/a					
	<b>Specialist Advice</b> Works to listed buildings Developments affecting a conservation area	£159.00	£163	£4.00					
	<b>Advertisements</b> Per Site	£80	£188	£108.00					
	<b>Telecommunications</b>  Per Site	n/a	£376	new					
	<b>Meeting with Assistant Director</b> Cost per hour for the assistant director to attend meetings	n/a	£271	new					
<b>Planning Total</b>						£1,800	£1,800		£1,800
	<b>Hackney Carriages:</b>	various	various	£0.00	£0		£0		£360
	<b>Env Health &amp; Licensing:</b>	<b>Housing Act 2004</b>			£360		£360		£360
		Licence for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	£750	£775	£25.00				
		Service of Housing Act Notices	£395	£410	£15.00				
	<b>Env Health &amp; Licensing:</b>	<b>Food Premises</b>	various		£500		£500		£500
		Destruction Certificate	£136	£141.50	£5.50				
		Health Certificate	£111	£115.00	£4.00				
	<b>Env Health &amp; Licensing:</b>	Licensing including: Acupuncture, street trading etc.	various	various		£1,660	£1,660		£1,660
	<b>Local Land Charges</b>	Residential Property (Con 29)	£65.40	£68.00	£2.60				
		Residential Property (LLC1)	£17.50	£18.20	£0.70				
		Commercial Property and Areas of Land (Con 29)	£85.20	£88.60	£3.40				
		Commercial Property and Areas of Land (LLC1)	£22.80	£23.70	£0.90				
		Con29O Enquiry Q4	£12.00	£12.50	£0.50				
		Con29O Enquiry Q5-21 (each)	£6.00	£6.25	£0.25				
		Con29O Enquiry Q22	£24.00	£24.95	£0.95				
		Additional Enquiry	£13.08	£13.60	£0.52	£2,200	£2,200		£2,200
	<b>Housing General Fund:</b>	<b>Careline Alarm- private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)</b>	various						
					<b>£224,580</b>		<b>£292,980</b>		<b>£354,080</b>
Excluding Allotments saving already identified in 2021					£212,280		£280,680		£341,780

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**APPENDIX C : RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF GENERAL FUND BALANCES 2021/22**

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that the budgeted level of income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved. This is anticipated largely to be as a result of the downturn in economy, but could also be as a result of poor weather, new competition and the impact of Covid-19. All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the monthly/quarterly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience.		
		<b>Calculated Risk</b>	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Parking Income* (on street/off-street)	£4,344,690	2.0%	£86,894
Development Control Income	£412,630	5.0%	£20,632
Recycling Income	£639,960	2.5%	£15,999
Garages	£3,440,570	1.0%	£34,406
Trade Refuse & Skips	£1,068,340	2.5%	£26,709
Indoor Market	£438,580	5.0%	£21,929
Commercial Property Income	£3,584,240	5.0%	£179,212
COVID losses arising from a loss of fees and charges in excess of budgeted for			£750,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>£1,135,780</b>

\* The council has a parking account which identifies how parking fees are spent on parking and related costs

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	Potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide the service increases significantly (including as an impact of Covid-19). Individual budgets reviewed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience and so any variances should show up during the year.		
		<b>Calculated Risk</b>	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Housing Benefit maximum risk based on not meeting threshold for Local Authority errors.	£180,000	40%	£72,000
Loss of Business Rates yield	£2,572,439	maximum loss (7.5%)	£192,933
Lower S31 Grants than anticipated which means the NNDR yield would be higher but would not be returned to the General Fund until 2022/23.	£2,579,722	5%	£128,986
Increase in bad debts as a economic changes impacting on charging for services	£152,000	100%	£152,000
There is an increased cost of Bed and Breakfast as a result of higher homelessness (exposure based on impact of COVID)	£430,000	20%	£86,000
risk of capital works requiring funding as a result of rephasing/deferring works in the Capital Strategy	£250,000	50%	£125,000
Costs related to COVID in ICT, PPE and other related costs	£0		£250,000
Housing Benefit overpayment net income reduces and results in a pressure on the General Fund	£492,480	10%	£49,248
<b>Total</b>			<b>£1,056,167</b>

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for.		
		<b>Calculated Risk</b>	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5%	£712,090	5.00%	£35,605
Less staff time charged to capital than budgeted	£644,180	10.00%	£64,418
REVISED: pay award is higher than budgeted for 0.25%	£20,145,870		£46,970
Contractual inflation 1% increase	£9,254,742	1.00%	£37,318
Utility and fuel inflation usage/costs increase	£1,113,370	4.50%	£50,102
Borrowing costs will be higher than estimated on new borrowing in Capital Strategy	£64,136	1% increase in borrowing costs for the garage programme	£19,756
<b>Total</b>			<b>£254,168</b>

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		<b>Calculated Risk</b>	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Savings Options	£780,945	13.50%	£105,428
<b>Total</b>			<b>£105,428</b>

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure and income	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure		
		<b>Calculated Risk</b>	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Likelihood Percentage	Balances Required
Gross Income (excludes specific income listed above)	£25,589,119	1.50%	£383,837
Gross Expenditure (excludes specific expenditure listed above)	£35,710,647	1.50%	£535,660
<b>Total</b>			<b>£919,496</b>

**Level of Balances Assumed in General Fund Based on risk**

**£3,471,038**

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## **FINANCIAL SECURITY: 2022/23 Appendix D**

### **Overall Equality Impact Assessment of proposals**

#### **Equality at Stevenage Borough Council**

1. Stevenage Borough Council as a service provider, employer and community leader is committed to achieving equal opportunities for everyone. We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them.
2. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.
3. Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Impact Assessment considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marital status
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation.
4. Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion in considering the impact on people in terms of their social or economic background.
5. EqIAs also help the Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

#### **Making Your Money Savings Count Proposals 2022/23**

6. Prior to their consideration at Executive in December 2021, all savings proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Some of these have no direct public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqIA.

7. Where a negative, positive or disproportionate impact is likely, Assistant Directors and other appropriate managers have drafted Equality Impact Assessments.
8. This year there are seven proposals that may potentially have a positive, negative or disproportionate impact. These are:
  1. Introducing an annual service charge for the cleansing, sweeping and weeding of garages.
  2. increase in Garage Fees & Charges
  3. Raising off street parking fees
  4. Change to on-street parking tariffs
  5. Removal of car parking validator discounts for commercial business customers and staff in the town centre
  6. Reducing the cost of the Play Service whilst continuing to provide free play opportunities across the town.
  7. Savings in the Customer Service Centre including shortening the opening hours for face to face appointments.
9. The potential impact of these proposals is summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Executive and Council in January and February 2022. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on people with particular protected characteristics is identified where appropriate.
10. It should be noted that some of the proposals are at a very early stage, and it will only be possible to assess their potential impact once these proposals are further developed. It is therefore probable that further potential impacts will be identified, along with appropriate mitigations, over the coming weeks and months.
11. The following further activity will take place:
  - January – February 2022 - EqlAs further developed, considering further evidence as available
  - February 2022 - Consideration of all completed EqlAs at Council meeting, alongside the budget proposals
  - Ongoing review and update of EQIA's and impact as proposals are further developed and implemented throughout 2022/23, including consultation and engagement as appropriate.

**Summary of potential impacts identified as a result of budget proposals**

Protected characteristic	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)	Responsible officer
<p><b>Age</b></p>	<p>Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of more than inflationary price increases having a disproportionate effect on them.</p> <p>Ref</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older people may be more likely to need to visit the hospital area, so any increases in charges for parking in that area could impact them more than other people.</li> <li>Proposals to remove the car parking validator discounts for commercial business customers and staff in the town centre could impact on older people in particular. A high percentage of visitors to the leisure related commercial activity in particular may be elderly and some may be on pension credit. The increase in parking charges may have a negative impact on their finances.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate). There are also good public transport links to the hospital for those able to use them.</li> <li>Signposting to public transport options in and around the town centre, thus avoiding the need to drive in and pay to park.</li> </ol> <p>It is believed that many people accessing these business already use the bus rather than drive, so the potential impact will be minimal.</p> <p>Commercial operators have the option to retain the validator machine (for a monthly fee) so that the organisations can continue to offer discounted parking to their workers and customers if they wish. Staff at the Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express have the option to purchase car park season tickets, which offer a 10% discount on monthly season</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration</li> <li>Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Older people may also be negatively impacted by increases in charges for garages. Whilst the increase up to a maximum of 60p a week is considered minimal, for those on pension credit this may make renting some garages unaffordable.</p> <p>4. This also applies to the increased charges for garage freeholders to cover cleansing, sweeping and weeding of their garages.</p> <p>5. Reduced opening hours in the Customer Service Centre at the end of the day would be more likely to impinge upon access for people of working age. While people in many jobs are able to make personal calls during their working day, some may be more restricted from doing this.</p>	<p>ticket rates.</p> <p>3. The proposed increase is very low and it is hoped that this will not provide a barrier to existing and future rentals.</p> <p>If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Choice Based Lettings. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage (if available).</p> <p>4. The increase is £11.40 per annum (22p per week) so the impact of this in isolation is considered minimal. However the cumulative impact of this and other increases will be considered on a case-by-case basis where people raise questions or concerns.</p> <p>Monitoring of feedback from garage freeholders on the application of the charges, and levels of debt from garage freeholders, will be closely monitored in the lead up to and following implementation.</p> <p>5. Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7.</p> <p>The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them, and provides an opportunity for people who can't / prefer not to use online services to still access the support they need.</p>	<p>3. Assistant Director SDS</p> <p>4. Assistant Director SDS</p> <p>5. Assistant Director Digital and Transformation</p>
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<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of a disability pay gap in the UK.</p> <p>People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts (see below).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The price increase in charges for garages might impact people who are on disability allowance. Whilst the increase up to a maximum of 60p a week is considered minimal, for those on disability benefits this may make renting some garages unaffordable.</li> <li>2. This also applies to the increased charges for garage freeholders to cover cleansing, sweeping and weeding of their garages.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The proposed increase is very low and it is hoped that this will not provide a barrier to existing and future rentals. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Choice Based Lettings. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage (if available).</li> </ol> <p>Garages will normally be allocated in date order from the waiting list; however the Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The fee will be collected through an online payment system and if necessary, can be subject to a flexible payment plans (up to a maximum of 2 payments to cover the debt).</li> </ol> <p>The increase is £11.40 per annum (22p per week) so the impact of this in isolation is considered minimal. However the cumulative impact of this and other increases will be considered on a case-by-case basis where people raise questions or</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assistant Director SDS</li> <li>2. Assistant Director SDS</li> </ol>
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	<p>3. Disabled customers are more likely to use face to face services, so any reduced opening hours in the Customer Service Centre could impact them more.</p>	<p>concerns.</p> <p>3. Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7.</p> <p>The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them, and provides an opportunity for people who can't / prefer not to use online services to still access the support they need</p>	<p>3. Assistant Director Digital and Transformation</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
<b>Marital status</b>	<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>Pregnant women may be more likely to attend the hospital, and therefore disproportionately affected by any price rises in on-street parking there.</p>	<p>Fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate). There are also good public transport links to the hospital for those able to use them.</p>	<p>Assistant Director Planning &amp; Regulation</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of an ethnicity pay gap in the UK. People from ethnic minorities may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts (see below).</p>		
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
<b>Sex</b>	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of a gender pay gap in the UK. Women may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts (see below).</p>		

<p><b>Sexual Orientation</b></p>	<p>No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.</p>		
<p><b>Socio-economic</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposals to remove the car parking validator discounts for commercial business customers and staff in the town centre would impact staff and visitors who will have to pay the standard rates to park in town centre car parks. This may have a particular impact if these people are on low incomes.</li> </ol> <p>It is believed that many people accessing these businesses already use the bus rather than drive, so the potential impact will be minimal.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The price increase in charges for garages might impact people who are on low incomes and in receipt of benefits. Whilst the increase up to a maximum of 60p a week is considered minimal, for those on pension credit this may make renting some garages unaffordable.</li> <li>3. This also applies to the increased charges for garage freeholders to cover cleansing, sweeping and weeding of their garages.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customers attending in the evening when there is free parking in the on street bays as an alternative.</li> <li>2. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Choice Based Lettings. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage (if available).</li> </ol> <p>Garages will normally be allocated in date order from the waiting list, however the Council reserves the right give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and judged on its own merit.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The increase is £11.40 per annum (22p per week) so the impact of this in isolation is considered minimal. However the cumulative impact of this and other increases will be considered on a case-by-case basis where people raise questions or concerns.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assistant Director SDS</li> <li>2. Assistant Director SDS</li> <li>3. Assistant Director SDS</li> </ol>

	<p>4. Any increase in fees is likely to impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage. This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people if prices increase significantly.</p> <p>5. Reduced opening hours in the Customer Service Centre at the end of the day would be more likely to impinge upon access for people of working age. While people in many jobs are able to make personal calls during their working day, some may be more restricted from doing this.</p>	<p>The fee will be collected through an online payment system and if necessary, can be subject to a flexible payment plans (up to a maximum of 2 payments to cover the debt).</p> <p>4. The town centre is well served by other modes of transport while fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate).</p> <p>This potential impact may be lessened as more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car. It is often the case that protected characteristics correlate with lower rates of car ownership.</p> <p>5. Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7.</p> <p>The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them, and provides an opportunity for people who can't / prefer not to use online services to still access the support they need.</p>	<p>4. Assistant Director Planning &amp; Regulation</p> <p>5. Assistant Director Digital and Transformation</p>
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## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

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What is being assessed?	Introducing a service charge to garage freeholders of £12.14 per annum for the cleansing, sweeping and weeding of their garages, with effect from June 2022. This equates to 23p per week.	What are the key aims of it?	It costs the Council £20,240 per year to provide cleansing, sweeping and weeding services to 2,000 freehold garages. The Council have the ability to charge most freeholders for cleansing, weeding and sweeping under an obligation in the conveyancing documents. The aim is to fully recover these costs.			
Who may be affected by it?	Garage freeholders (residents who have bought their garage from the Council in previous years)		6,565 garages are available for rental from the Council and routine maintenance and cleansing are included in the weekly rent that leaseholders pay. This charge to freeholders ensures that everyone who utilises a garage pays their fair share for cleansing, sweeping and weeding services.			
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)						
Form completed by:	Nadia Capuano	Start date	June 2022	End date	June 2023	
		Review date	December 2022			

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Garage Improvement Programme, Freeholder Fees Report	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	
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Explain the **potential positive, negative or unequal impact** on the following characteristics and **how likely** this is:

Age	Unequal – Older garage freeholders if they are on means tested pension credit may find it more difficult to source the funds to pay for the £12.14 annual service fee. However since this is a small amount (22p per week), we expect very few residents from this demographic to be financially burdened by this.	Race	Unequal – Office for National Statistics data confirms the existence of an ethnicity pay gap in the UK. Garage freeholders from ethnic minorities may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. However since this is a small amount (23p per week), we expect very few residents from this demographic to be financially burdened by this.
Disability	N/A	Religion or belief	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	Sex	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	Sexual orientation	N/A
Pregnancy & maternity	N/A	Socio-economic <sup>1</sup>	Unequal –Low income garage freeholders may find it more difficult to source the funds to pay for the £12.14 annual service fee. However since this is a small amount (23p per week), we expect very few residents from this demographic to be financially burdened by this.
Other	N/A		

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

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	<p>The fee will be collected through an online payment system and if necessary, can be subject to a flexible payment plans (up to a maximum of 2 payments to cover the debt).</p> <p>This charge to freeholders ensures that everyone who utilises a garage pays a fair share of the annual cost incurred by the council by bringing charges in line with those paid by garage tenants.</p>	Encourage good relations	

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

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Monitoring of feedback from garage freeholders on the application of the charges	Rebecca Millett	Monitored through feedback and data from Garage Services team	June 2022
Monitoring of levels of debt from garage freeholders	Rebecca Millett	Monitored through feedback from Garages Services team	Ongoing following implementation in June 2022.

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Steve Dupoy, Assistant Director SDS**

**Date: 20.12.21**

## Full Equality Impact Assessment

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		The increase in Garage Fees & Charges for Financial Year 22-23			
Lead Assessor	Nadia Capuano			Assessment team	Nadia Capuano Daud Latif
Start date	April 2022	End date	March 2023		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	September 2022				

Who may be affected by it?	Service users / residents
What are the key aims of it?	<p>1: To decrease the void rates of garages to ensure maximum number of residents can benefit from garage services</p> <p>2: To combat inflationary pressures and increased service costs by ensuring that garage prices rise alongside inflation</p> <p>3: To ensure revenue generation from garages, assisting the Council with its financial security challenges.</p> <p>4: To apply a different percentage increase to different garage types (ranging from 2.18% to 4.01%) depending on the specification and demand to provide a wider range of options for residents.</p>

What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	With the launch of online Choice Based Lettings	Promote equal opportunities	Garage pricing is differentiated (i.e., low	Encourage good relations	



	<p>(CBL), anticipated to go live in late 2021/early 2022, residents will be able to bid on garages that best suit their needs based on factors such as price, affordability, location and distance.</p>		<p>demand garages cost less than premium garages). The proposed fees and charges increases allow for more differentiation and ensure that residents can choose a garage that suits their needs.</p>		
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<p>What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<p>Garages databases containing information on the status of all SBC garages, resident requirements and the garages waiting list.</p>
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>Garage Services are using a commercial model where low void, high demand areas will see a bigger increase in fees as residents have a high demand product. Conversely, high void, low demand garages will see a smaller increase in fees to help decrease the void rate. Garage tenants with the lowest fee increase will need to pay an additional 25p per week / £13 per year.</p> <p>Garages renters with the highest fee increase will pay an additional 60p weekly / £31 per year. It is anticipated that this minimal fee increase will not adversely affect any garage current renters or deter future renters.</p>
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	Garage prices were benchmarked against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the SBC proposals compare, the proposed garages pricing ranges from £11.75 to £15.60 and these fees sit directly in the middle of the benchmarked competitors; Luton and Dacorum, who are likely to raise their prices further as part of their reviews of fees and charges for 22/23.
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### Evidence and impact assessment

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

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Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The price increase might impact the elderly who are on pension credit and could affect young people on low incomes. Renting a garage is a discretionary service and tenants use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. It is anticipated that elderly residents have the funds to pay the maximum 60p a week extra and that this amount will not be too much extra burden on their finances. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Choice Based Lettings.			
What opportunities are there	With launch of Choice Based Lettings, potential garage tenants can bid for garages online. Prices and locations will	What do you still need to	Exact go-live date of the implementation of		

to promote equality and inclusion?	be clearly displayed and applicants will be measured against set criteria to award the garage, in a similar way to the management of the current manual waiting list.	find out? Include in actions (last page)	the new online Choice Based Lettings system.
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**Disability**

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

Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The price increase might impact on people who are on disability allowance. Renting a garage is a discretionary service and tenants use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. It is anticipated that disabled residents have the spare funds to pay the maximum 60p a week extra and that this amount will not be too much extra burden on their finances. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Choice Based Lettings.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>With launch of online Choice Based Lettings, potential garage tenants can bid for garages.</p> <p>Garages will normally be allocated in date order from the waiting list; however the Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Exact go-live date of the implementation of the new online Choice Based Lettings system.		

	evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits. The overall decision will be undertaken by the Garages Manager.		
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<b>Gender reassignment</b>					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions		

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

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

<b>Religion or belief</b>					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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

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

<b>Socio-economic<sup>2</sup></b>					
e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The price increase might impact residents with a socio-economic disadvantage who are in receipt of benefits. Renting a garage is a discretionary service and tenants use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. It is anticipated that residents will have the funds to pay the maximum 60p a week extra, and that this amount is not expected to be a large burden on the finances. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, lower cost			

<sup>2</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

		garage through Choice Based Lettings.	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>With launch of online Choice Based Lettings, potential garage tenants can bid for garages.</p> <p>Garages will normally be allocated in date order from the waiting list, however the Council reserves the right give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and judged on its own merit. The overall decision will be undertaken by the Garages Manager.</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Exact go-live date of the implementation of the new online Choice Based Lettings system.

<b>Other</b>					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions			



inclusion?		(last page)	
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**What are the findings of any consultation with:**

Staff?	Discussion with Garages & Commercial team regarding garages void rates and inflationary pressures led to the implementation of applying different percentage increase to different garage types (ranging from 2.18% to 4.01%) depending on the specification and demand.	Residents?	Not consulted with
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted with	Partners?	Not consulted with
Other stakeholders?	Not consulted with		

**Overall conclusion & future activity:**

Explain the <b>overall findings</b> of the assessment and <b>reasons for outcome (please choose one)</b> :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to being charged an additional 25p to 60p per week for garages. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage (if available). It is

		anticipated that the vast majority of garage tenants will be less affected.
	2c. Stop and remove	

**Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:**

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
The Garages Services team will continue to monitor termination levels, offer assistance to tenants looking for a cheaper garage and assist them with the CBL process	CBL will impartially assign garages to bidders based on waiting time whilst the Garages team will review exceptional cases, promoting equal opportunity. Garages team will also offer assistance when needed to encourage good relations.	Rebecca Millett	April 2022	The Garage Services team already monitor termination levels and offer assistance to tenants looking for a cheaper garage

**Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director: Steve Dupoy, Assistant Director SDS**

**Date: 20.12.21**

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>Raising off street parking fees</b>	What are the key aims of it?	To raise revenue for the council		
Who may be affected by it?	All car park users				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	17/11/2021				
Form completed by:	Andrew Gough	Start date	01/01//21	End date	01/01/22
		Review date	17/11/22		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Sectoral knowledge, feedback on existing charges, feedback from past consultations, ONS data.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	The public's views on the equalities impacts of this are unknown at this time. Response to the implementation of the new charges will be closely monitored.
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	<p>Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of price increases having a disproportionate effect on them.</p>	Race	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of an ethnicity pay gap in the UK. People from ethnic minorities may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>Refer to “Socio-economic” below.</p>
Disability	<p>Disabled people are more likely to earn less than able bodied people, and will be impacted by the higher cost of season tickets for blue badge holders. However the rate still represents a 46% discount on the full price, mitigating the impact somewhat.</p> <p>ONS data confirms the existence of a disability pay gap in the UK. People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p>	Religion or belief	No unequal impact identified

Gender reassignment	No unequal impact identified	Sex	ONS data confirms the existence of a gender pay gap in the UK. Women may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.
Marriage or civil partnership	No unequal impact identified	Sexual orientation	No unequal impact identified
Pregnancy & maternity	No unequal impact identified	Socio-economic <sup>3</sup>	<p>Any increase in fees is likely to impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage. This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people.</p> <p>At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport while fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate). This potential impact may be lessened as more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car. It is often the case that protected characteristics correlate with lower rates of car ownership.</p>
Other	Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved		

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

Appendix D

	public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.	
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Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

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

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Close monitoring of the response to, and impact of, the new charges	Philip Howard	Monitoring plan to be developed, linked to customer feedback	Sept 2022

**Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director: Zayd Al-Jawad, Assistant Director Planning and Regulation**

**Date: 06.01.2022**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk)

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>Change to on-street parking tariffs</b>	What are the key aims of it?			
Who may be affected by it?	Any motorist				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	17/11/2021				
Form completed by:	Phil Howard	Start date	01/01/2022	End date	01/01/2023
		Review date	17/11/2022		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Sectoral knowledge, feedback on existing charges, feedback from past consultations, ONS data.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	The public's views on the equalities impacts of this are unknown at this time. Response to the implementation of the new charges will be closely monitored.
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	<p>Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. They may also be more likely to need to visit the hospital area, where price rises are proposed.</p> <p>ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of price increases having a disproportionate effect on them.</p> <p>Refer to “Socio-economic” below.</p>	Race	<p>ONS data confirms the existence of an ethnicity pay gap in the UK. People from ethnic minorities may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>Refer to “Socio-economic” below.</p>
Disability	<p>There is currently a shortage of dedicated blue badge parking both in the town centre and at the hospital. If increased parking charges discourage driving/parking by others, there will be increased parking availability for blue badge holders (who are not charged).</p> <p>ONS data confirms the existence of</p>	Religion or belief	No impacts identified.



	<p>a disability pay gap in the UK. People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>Refer to “Socio-economic” below.</p>		
Gender reassignment	No impacts identified.	Sex	ONS data confirms the existence of a gender pay gap in the UK. Women may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts.
Marriage or civil partnership	No impacts identified.	Sexual orientation	No impacts identified.
Pregnancy & maternity	<p>Pregnant women may be more likely to attend the hospital, and therefore disproportionately affected by any price rises there.</p> <p>Refer to “Socio-economic” to the right.</p>	Socio-economic <sup>4</sup>	<p>Any increase in fees is likely to impact those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage. This could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people.</p> <p>At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport while fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks</p>

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

			<p>(and therefore clearly below the market rate).</p> <p>Existing and proposed parking charges represent only a small cost compared to the overall expense of running a car, and the less well-off are more likely not to drive (more than half of households in the bottom income quartile do not have a car).</p>
Other	<p>Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.</p>		

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	<p>Increasing the availability and accessibility of parking for those people holding a blue badge helps to</p>	Encourage good relations	

			provide equality of opportunity for disabled people who may not be able to travel except by car.		
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**What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?**

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Close monitoring of the response to, and impact of, the new charges	Philip Howard	Monitoring plan to be developed, linked to customer feedback	Sept 2022

**Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director: Zayd Al-Jawad, Assistant Director Planning and Regulation**

**Date: 06.01.2022**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk)

## Full Equality Impact Assessment

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		Removal of car parking validator discounts for commercial business customers and staff in the town centre			
Lead Assessor	Nadia Capuano			Assessment team	Nadia Capuano  Andy Gough
Start date	April 2022	End date	Ongoing		
When will the EqlA be reviewed?	October 2022				

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Who may be affected by it?	Customers and staff using Mecca Bingo, Holiday Inn and Ibis Hotels. They have current informal arrangements with the Council that include a number of discounts or set rates of parking. These arrangements have not been reviewed since 2014.
What are the key aims of it?	To ensure parity for town centre businesses, staff and customers and ensure that public funds are not subsidising commercial enterprises.

What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	This proposal ensures a level playing field and means that visitors and workers in the town centre have access to the same rates for their	Encourage good relations	There will be the option to retain the validator machine (for a monthly fee) so that the organisations can continue to offer

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			parking		discounted parking to their workers and customers if they wish. Staff at the Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express have the option to purchase car park season tickets, which offer a 10% discount on monthly season ticket rates.
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Financial information on the extent to which the Council is subsidising private parking Information on levels of demand around parking Research on the promotion of parking rates by Mecca, IBIS and the Holiday Inn
In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	IBIS charge their customers a higher rate than that which is charged by the Council and therefore make a profit on the arrangement.

## Evidence and impact assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		A high percentage of visitors to the leisure related commercial activity in particular may be elderly and some may be on pension credit. The increase in parking from between 50p-£1.30 (depending on the time of day that they are parking) may have a negative impact on their finances.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Public transport options.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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Disability					
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions		

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

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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

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

<b>Religion or belief</b>					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	



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

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

<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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<b>Socio-economic<sup>5</sup></b> e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		This change will not impact public transport users as it will affect the price of car parking and it is believed that many of the users arrive by bus. It will impact staff and visitors who will have to pay the standard rates to park in town centre car parks and this may have particular impact if these workers are on low incomes. This however is the same for all town centre workers. Many of the leisure Bingo Hall users attending in the evening when there is free parking in the on street bays as an alternative.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

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

please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

**What are the findings of any consultation with:**

Staff?	Parking staff confirmed the number of validations from these businesses which equated to £60k of subsidy in 2019/20 and is forecasted at £37.7k in 21/22. It is agreed that action is required to protect parking income and ensure parity for visitors and workers in Stevenage.	Residents?	Not consulted
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted	Partners?	Not consulted
Other stakeholders?	Letters will be issued to the affected businesses outlining the proposed changes and opening up the potential for dialogue.		

**Overall conclusion & future activity**

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

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Detail the <b>actions that are needed</b> as a result of this assessment and how they will help to <b>remove discrimination &amp; harassment, promote equal opportunities</b> and / or <b>encourage good relations</b> :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
1. Monitor the impact on businesses		Andy Gough	Ongoing	
2. Monitor the impact on demand		Andy Gough	Ongoing	

Approved by Head of Service / Strategic Director:



Zayd AL-Jawad . Assistant Director Planning & Regulation

Date: 20/12/2021

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

What is being assessed?	Potential Changes to the Play Service	What are the key aims of it?	Play centres are open in the school holidays reduced by three days a week at each centre and for each day reduce by one hour. Pop up play and play outside of play centres would still be part of the offer		
Who may be affected by it?	Young people and families				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	Dec 2021				
Form completed by:	Geoff Caine	Start date	February 2022	End date	Summer 2022
		Review date	February 2022		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Previous full year service attendance.</p> <p>Annual revenue budget</p> <p>Staffing resources and structure.</p> <p>.</p>	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Detailed information on the number of unique user's footfall has not been available as the "open door policy" in place prior to March 2020 resulted in very little data being collected. The Pandemic has inhibited the implementation of the new business model. The service re-opened in mid-July with some restrictions in place, the return of users has been slow therefore measurement of the performance of the service in non-
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			restricted has not been viable.
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Explain the **potential positive, negative or unequal impact** on the following characteristics and **how likely** this is:

Age	<p><b>General (potential neutral impact)</b></p> <p>In general terms, the option will still provide a service albeit limited to the young people and families of Stevenage.</p> <p><b>Older People with caring responsibilities</b></p> <p>The council will still be providing a free service to young people and families within the town, this is a unique service that no other local authority provides in Hertfordshire</p> <p><b>Younger People (potential positive impact)</b></p> <p>The council will still be providing a free service to young people and families within the town, this is a unique service that no other local authority provides in Hertfordshire</p>	Race	<p><b>Potential Positive Impact</b></p> <p>The introduction of a new and fit for purpose booking system will provide key user data, which will be able to identify the differing backgrounds of users.</p>
Disability	<p><b>Potential Positive Impact</b></p> <p>The service has and will continue to provide services for disabled people.</p>	Religion or belief	<p><b>Potential Positive Impact</b></p> <p>Previous service delivery has not analysed users religion or belief and because of the open door policy and lack of data capture. The new booking system would allow us to capture activity within faith groups the views of people</p>

			of different religion or beliefs can be better captured.
Gender reassignment	<b>Potential Positive Impact</b> There is the potential to undertake more focused engagement activity to capture the views of this protected characteristic group.	Sex	<b>Potential Neutral Impact</b> The service will continue to be available for all children and families within the community.
Marriage or civil partnership	<b>Neutral Impact:</b> Not applicable	Sexual orientation	<b>Potential Neutral Impact:</b> The service will continue to be available for all children and families within the community.
Pregnancy & maternity	<b>Neutral Impact:</b> The service actively encourages pregnant women and those on maternity to use the service that have children over 5 years old.	Socio-economic <sup>6</sup>	<b>Potential Negative Impact:</b> The service will continue to be available for all children and families within the community. Some users may have difficulty in accessing services if the play centre local to them is not open.
Other			

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	The Play Service will continue to provide a safe environment that	Promote equal opportunities	The Play Service will continue to provide a safe environment that	Encourage good relations	The Play Service is located in the heart of the community and is

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

	proactively encourages equal opportunities.		proactively encourages equal opportunities.		a hub for community activity and wellbeing.

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

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Agree what option for service reduction is to be implemented	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	February 2022
Restructure service area	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2022
Define and implement new operational plans	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2022
Implement new booking system	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Manager	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services Service Plan	Summer 2022



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**Approved by Assistant Director/ Strategic Director: Rob Gregory , Assistant Director Communities and Neighbourhoods**

**Date: 20.12.2021**

## Full Equality Impact Assessment

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

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		<b>Customer Services savings option</b>	
<b>Description</b>		<p>Current Customer Services opening hours are 8:30-5:30 for face to face services and 8:00-6:00 for other channels (inc Telephone), Monday to Friday except bank holidays and other closures.</p> <p>This savings proposal is to reduce the opening hours by an hour at the end of the day, to 8:30-4:30 for face to face, and 8:00-5:00 for other channels. This would allow us to provide the same service but reduce resourcing by 2FTE. This has been modelled using forecasting tools, and other changes in demand etc may mean real performance would be different.</p> <p>The efficiency gain arises from being able to resource more evenly throughout the day due to shorter opening times.</p> <p>No additional cost has yet been factored in for increasing the Out of Hours service opening time to cover the 5pm-6pm period.</p>	
Lead Assessor	Greg Arends		Assessment team
Start date	Not yet determined, potentially April 2022	End date	There would be no end date
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	No review anticipated		

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Who may be affected by it?	Members of the public using Customer Services face to face services
What are the key aims of it?	Reduced operational costs by reducing opening hours to Customer Services.

What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	<p>Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7. The slight reduction in opening hours is mitigated by this.</p> <p>The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them.</p>	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>The opening hours for access to other Herts districts have been researched. The current telephone opening hours are longer than for any other council. The proposed reduced opening hrs will mean Stevenage still offers the joint-most accessible service, with Three Rivers.</p> <p>Broxbourne council appears to no longer offer a telephone service at all.</p>
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Current phone opening time – 10hrs

Proposed phone opening time – 9hrs

Face to face services are more difficult to assess as not all councils publish full details. 3 councils no longer offer face to face services at all, and only Hertsmere council appears to offer a comparable level of face-to-face service as Stevenage.

Therefore in considering the potential impact on people of the proposed changes, Stevenage will still be providing the widest access of any Hertfordshire district.

Herts District	Telephone	Max telephone hrs open per day	Face to face
<b>Broxbourne</b>	No telephone access obviously available	0hrs	Closed
<b>Dacorum</b>	8:45am to 5:15pm Monday to Thursday, 8:45am to 4:45pm Friday	8.5hrs	Appointment only services unclear, opening hours not stated
<b>East Herts</b>	9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday	8hrs	Herford 10am – 1pm, 2pm – 4pm Tuesday Bishops Stortford 10am – 1pm, 2pm – 4pm Wednesday
<b>Hertsmere</b>	9am – 5:15pm Monday to Thursday, 9am - 5pm Friday	8.25hrs	9am - 5.15pm Monday to Thursday, 9am - 5pm Friday Appointment only
<b>North Herts</b>	9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday	8hrs	Appointment only for foreign pension signing and microfiche viewing in person, no other services. Opening hours not stated

<b>Herts District</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Max telephone hrs open per day</b>	<b>Face to face</b>
<b>St Albans</b>	8:45am to 5:00pm Monday to Thursday, 8:45am to 4:30pm Friday	8.25hrs	Closed
<b>Three Rivers</b>	8:30am – 5:30pm Monday to Thursday, 8:30-5pm Friday	9hrs	Closed
<b>Watford</b>	8:45am to 5:15pm Monday to Thursday, 8:45am to 4:45pm Friday	8.5hrs	9am-3pm Monday and Friday, 11am-5pm Wednesday
<b>Welwyn Hatfield</b>	9am – 5pm Monday- Thursday 9am -4:45pm Friday	8hrs	Appointment only services unclear, opening hours not stated

## Evidence and impact assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Reduced opening hours at the end of the day are more likely to impinge upon service access for people of working age. While people in many jobs are able to make personal calls during their working day, some may be more restricted from doing this.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7. The slight reduction in opening hours is mitigated by this.</p> <p>The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them. This provides an opportunity for people who can't / prefer not to use online services to still access the support they need</p>			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<b>Disability</b> e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	✓
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Its is not clear whether Disabled customers are more likely to use our face to face services, so the reduced opening hours could/may impact them . The reason for this is two-fold.  Firstly, there are a number of services that are often supported through face to face that disabled people are more likely to use or be eligible for; in particular benefits and housing lettngs services.  Secondly, the nature of some disabilities means that some disabled customers are more likely to need the higher levels of support we can offer through the face-to-face service.  However, these factors do not apply equally to all types of disability.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7. These services can be significantly better for people with certain disabilities (e.g. deafness), but can be harder for others to use (e.g. learning difficulties). Nevertheless it does provide an additional access channel for customers that can use it after opening hours are reduced.  The use of appointments for face to face services means that customers can book a time that's good for them. And provides an opportunity for people who can't / prefer not to use online services to still access the support they need			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<b>Gender reassignment</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		



<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Race</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Religion or belief</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Sex</b>					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Sexual orientation</b>					
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	None identified
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		We have no data on our service users to indicate impacts on the basis of this characteristic, and there is no clear reason to believe it might happen.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Socio-economic<sup>7</sup></b>					
e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact	None identified	Negative impact	None identified	Unequal impact	
					✓
Please evidence the data and		Reduced opening hours at the end of the day are more likely to impinge upon service access for people who are			

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

information you used to support this assessment	working. While people in many jobs are able to make personal calls during their working day, some may be more restricted from doing this.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Almost all services are now available online which enables customers to access them 24/7. The slight reduction in opening hours is mitigated by this.</p> <p>This allows people to make arrangements around their working day (eg before / after work or during lunch for example). However, there is no provision evenings or weekends, so need to be mindful of this</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

**Other**

**please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts**

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

**What are the findings of any consultation with:**

Staff?	The CSC is working with departments to see how services can be adapted , (I.E. key drop off and collections ).	Residents?	The 2021 town wide residents survey asked residents to rank five approaches to savings money. The most popular option by far (62% selecting it as first or second choice) was to Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online
Voluntary & community sector?	None carried out.	Partners?	None carried out.
Other stakeholders?	Feedback from visitors to the CSC has been that the appointment system means they know when they will be seen and generally welcomed. Emergency cases are seen on the day		

**Overall conclusion & future activity**

Explain the <b>overall findings</b> of the assessment and <b>reasons for outcome (please choose one):</b>		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	Reduction in opening hours is likely to have an unequal impact for certain protected characteristics. However, the availability of 24/7 online services offers many alternative, and better, access.  Even with the proposed reductions, Stevenage will still offer the widest opening access to

		customers of all Hertfordshire districts.
	2c. Stop and remove	

**Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:**

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Monitoring and review of changes following implementation, based on feedback from a variety of sources including customers?				

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Ruth Luscombe**

**Date: 20.12.2021**

## Brief Equality Impact Assessment APPENDIX E

### For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	<b>Proposed Employee Related Savings for 2022/23</b>	What are the key aims of it?	To consider the potential impact of the proposed employee related savings for 2022/23 on all staff and particularly those under the protected characteristics.		
Who may be affected by it?	Employees within the areas where savings have been identified				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqIA will be undertaken for each saving individually as part of the relevant employee consultation process				
Form completed by:	Kirsten Frew	Start date		End date	
		Review date			

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What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Workforce Equalities Data as of September 2021	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	Currently no workforce information is held on socio-economic status of the Stevenage Borough Council workforce and therefore this cannot be assessed.
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age	The age profile of those likely to be impacted by these savings is spread across the age ranges of 30-39, 40-49	Race	All of the employees likely to be impacted by the savings have identified themselves as White British.

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	and 50-59. As no employees in the age range of 16-20 or 20-29 are impacted by these savings, it is likely that the options will have a disproportionate effect on those above the age of 30.		
Disability	33.3% of the employees likely to be impacted by these savings have identified themselves as having a disability.	Religion or belief	66.6% of the employees likely to be impacted by these savings have identified themselves as having Christian beliefs and 33.3% as having other religious beliefs.
Gender reassignment	Data for this protected characteristic is incomplete for the employees impacted by the proposed savings options.	Sex	The profile of the employees impacted by the proposed savings is 66.6% female and 33.3% male. The proposed savings are therefore likely to have disproportionate effect on more woman than men.
Marriage or civil partnership	33.3% of those likely to be impacted by the saving proposals have identified themselves as married and 66.6% as single.	Sexual orientation	All employees impacted by the proposed savings have identified themselves as Heterosexual.
Pregnancy & maternity	No information is held on the pregnancy and maternity status of the employees	Socio-economic <sup>1</sup>	No information is held on the socio-economic status of the employees impacted by the

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



Appendix E

	impacted by the proposed savings.		proposed savings.
Other			

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Consider approach to address some of the unequal impacts	Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	Consult with staff and trade unions on the proposed savings.

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

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
A Full EqIA will be undertaken for each of the proposed savings that impacts upon employees as part of the wider consultation exercise on the proposed changes.	Individual ADs responsible for each proposed Saving	As part of the consultation process.	

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director:**

**Date:**

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## Appendix F - Revised Area Restrictions Scheme (ARG 4)

Decision	Definition	Award Amount
<p>All businesses must be trading and not exceed state aid/subsidy levels.</p> <p>All business must have either a liability for business rates or rent of business premises.</p> <p>All business must have been trading between 1 December 2021 and 31 December 2021</p>		
<b>Events Businesses and their suppliers</b>	A business whose main function is to provide events and the suppliers of equipment to these businesses.	To be determined at close of application period
<b>Revised: Hospitality and their suppliers</b>	A business whose main function is to provide a venue for the consumption and sale of food and drink and the suppliers of these consumables	To be determined at close of application period
<b>Revised :Leisure</b>	A business that provides opportunities, experiences and facilities, in particular for culture, recreation, entertainment, celebratory events, days and nights	To be determined at close of application period
<b>Revised: Personal Care</b>	A business which provides a service, treatment or activity for the purposes of personal beauty, hair, grooming, body care and aesthetics, and wellbeing.	To be determined at close of application period
<b>Travel businesses</b>	A Business that arranges travel	To be determined at close of application period
<b>Removed from the scheme:</b> Business impacted by Covid that have not received any other grants from the Council	Business contacting the Council seeking help	To be determined on closure of scheme

(Revised added to the ARG4 scheme/Removed from the scheme - a general category removed)

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

Document is Restricted

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