

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Wednesday, 15 June 2022**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

**Contact: Lisa Jerome (01438) 242203**

**committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

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

---

## AGENDA

### PART I

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

#### **2. MINUTES - 4 MARCH 2022 AND 16 MARCH 2022**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 4 March 2022 and 16 March 2022 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 24

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

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

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10 March 2022

Community Select Committee – 16 March 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22 March 2022

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 23 March 2022

Community Select Committee – 29 March 2022

Pages 25 – 46

#### **4. CORPORATE PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23**

To consider and agree the Council's key priorities and areas of focus for 2022/23, for inclusion in the Annual Report, and which form the basis of the corporate performance reporting for the year.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

#### **5. CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE - JUNE 2022**

To consider an update report on the Council's Climate Change Strategy and initiatives.

Pages 47 – 60

**6. ASSESSMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23 AND RELATED LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS**

To consider the key announcements of relevance to local government in the Government's legislative agenda for 2022/23, and the potential opportunities and implications for Stevenage.

Pages 61 – 78

**7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**8. 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.

**9. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 16 MARCH 2022**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 March 2022 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 79 - 80

**10. PURCHASE OF STRATEGIC LAND OPPORTUNITY FOR USE AS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION**

To consider the proposed purchase of a strategic land opportunity for use as supported accommodation.

Pages 81 - 190

**11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

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

**NOTE: Links to Part I Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 15 June 2022 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Friday, 4 March 2022**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

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

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 3.06pm

#### **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.

The Chair referred to the situation in the Ukraine, and the recent invasion by Russian Military forces upon the orders of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. She stated that it was a great tragedy, and that the thoughts of Stevenage residents were with the people of the Ukraine. Their courage, resilience and determination was admirable, and it had been incredibly moving to watch the situation worsen in recent days. At 5pm this evening (4 March), an event was to be held in the Town Square to stand in solidarity with the people of the Ukraine. Members of the town's Ukrainian and Polish communities would be attending this event, and it was hoped that they would be joined by many Stevenage residents. The Chair invited Executive Members and officers to attend the event.

#### **2 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - GARDEN SQUARE AND DIVERSIFICATION OF RETAIL SPACE**

Prior to the consideration of this item, the Chair welcomed Mr Adrian Hawkins OBE (Chair of the Stevenage Development Board) to the meeting and invited him to address the Executive.

Mr Hawkins stated that Hertfordshire had the slogan "county of opportunity", and he firmly believed that Stevenage had been the town of opportunity for him and his family. For him, opportunity represented the one aspect that life provided that could be delivered by careful management, vision and investment. With this in mind, he had been delighted to have been appointed as the Independent Chair of the Stevenage Development Board.

During his career with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Adrian

had witnessed much effort and time expended by LEP and SBC colleagues on the outline plan for Stevenage Town Centre regeneration, including the SG1 development and the proposals for the Towns Fund projects. He was proud that the Stevenage Development Board was entirely aligned in their support for all nine projects submitted to the Government under the Towns Fund bid, which had been successful in securing the joint highest national funding award of £37.5M. He paid tribute to the Members and officers of SBC for their work in supporting the Towns Fund projects.

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Garden Square and Diversification of Retail Space Project.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that the Garden Square and Diversification of Retail Space project involved proposals to help bring forward a new high quality Garden Square in the heart of the town centre, to bring vibrancy and activity to the town, and to help improve some of the parts of the shopping areas in Stevenage. Overall, it brought in £3.75M of Towns Deal funding, building on work such as the improvements that the Council had made to the Town Square, and supporting major regeneration projects such as the SG1 scheme with Mace.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration explained that across the UK, many town centres faced stark challenges, with the popularity of online shopping having grown significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council had a bold and positive regeneration plan, to help Stevenage become Even Better, and create a place where people work, visit, shop, live, create and enjoy. The Business Case had two elements, which both focussed on the objective to support Stevenage Town Centre to adapt to changing retail habits. This project aimed to facilitate the diversification of the Town Centre, utilising principles set out in the Grimsey Review, and the Stevenage Central Framework, to use leisure, culture, experience, food and beverage, and an exciting events programme, to create a vibrant town centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration commented that the first element of the Business Case was to enable and enhance the development of Garden Square, the new high quality public space, which would be the foundation for the establishment of modern food and beverage spaces, placed firmly within the heart of the town centre, and support the transition towards this ahead of the full redevelopment coming forward. The Garden Square would be a pivotal location within the town centre which a high proportion of incoming residents, workers and visitors would see when they arrived and/or through which they were likely to pass. If this location was transformed to a high standard with a strong sense of place, it could help address the look and feel of the area which currently constrained investment and footfall and this scheme would help assure the success of the new housing and commercial developments currently planned or underway.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that the second element was to invigorate currently vacant spaces and poorer retail assets to become catalysts for innovative regeneration, as shown by schemes such as Co-Space. Collectively these will help create a diverse town centre economy, which utilised retail, leisure, culture and experience as part of a high-quality environment to

attract sufficient footfall to ensure that new and existing businesses could thrive, and provide the amenities that residents, businesses and visitors needed to make Stevenage a vibrant 21st Century town.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration concluded by stating that, since work started on the Business Case, Stevenage had been shortlisted as one of 68 towns to receive support from the High Streets Task Force. The town had been shortlisted following analysis into the regional indicators of deprivation, inequality and exposure to retail change following the effect of Covid-19 on town centres and high streets. This reinforced the need for these types of interventions to bring pace and momentum as the Council worked through its regeneration plans.

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) thanked MACE for their support and ideas on the Business Case. The funding would allow the Council to deliver the benefits of the SG1 Scheme and the Garden Square project quicker by making some physical changes immediately and changing the way the space was used, as well as carrying out further enabling works to speed up the programme and reduce the level of risk.

Upon the Chair's invitation to speak specifically on the Garden Square and Diversification of Retail Space project, Adrian Hawkins stated that the Business Case supported the replacement of the town's vast 1950s Bus Station with an open public space, leading to the delivery of a new Garden square and diversified retail space, and recognising absolutely that the heart of a town lies in its people.

The following comments were made by Members and officers:

- the project would follow a two stage process, with Phase 1 comprising some good quality interim works once the new Bus Interchange was opened, with a more permanent solution (Phase 2) once the wider SG1 redevelopment scheme progressed. The site would be used for community and cultural events;
- consideration should be given to the retention and possible use of the existing bus shelters for pop-up arts and crafts displays;
- it was important that a strong message was given to the public about the phased nature of the project, emphasising the timescales involved;
- it was noted that the works to deliver the Phase 2 (permanent) element of the project were programmed for 2025, although efforts would be made to bring forward this date if possible; and
- Residents would be consulted and asked to provide their ideas on the future use of the space in the Summer of 2022.

The Chair advised that there would be a formal opening of the new Bus Interchange at 2.30pm on Thursday, 10 March 2022. The Interchange would not be open for buses immediately, as training and testing would be required, although it was hoped that it would open in the Spring.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.

2. That the business case for the Garden Square and Diversification of Retail 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).
3. That further community engagement relating to the existing bus station space and Garden Square, which are within the remit of this programme, be endorsed.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

### **3 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (SITEC)**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Science, Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC) Project.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that the SITEC project had been allocated £5M of Towns Deal funding. The overall award of £37.5M for Stevenage, via the Town Investment Fund, recognised that the need to raise skills levels and opportunities in Stevenage was a key priority. The Investment Plan that the Stevenage Development Board and Council had formulated had identified that although the town's population had higher than average Level 1 and 2 qualifications, it had significantly lower than average Level 4 & 5 qualifications.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration stated this had meant that people were leaving education at the earliest opportunity to access paid work, but not going on to develop the qualifications and skills needed to progress to jobs with a higher salary. This was evidenced by the significant disparity between the average salary of somebody working in Stevenage compared to somebody living in Stevenage. There was also a perception amongst some residents that the "STEM" employers in the town were not accessible to them. The primary purpose of the SITEC project was to provide access to high-quality facilities which bridged the gap to higher education and removed some of the barriers to traditional higher educational attendance, resulting in a better skilled workforce that provided local employers with the required local labour supply.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration commented that the project aimed to deliver a new learning facility in the centre of Stevenage, to address the skills deficits that underpinned the gap in employment and earnings between Stevenage's residents and the high-tech businesses developing in the town. This would be achieved in partnership with key stakeholder and businesses and industries in Stevenage. As the project was at an early stage, there were still different options in relation to where and how the facility would be delivered, and a Strategic Outline Case (high-level business case) had therefore been prepared.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration explained that there was a proven and growing demand for skilled technical workers for jobs within the

engineering, technology science and health industries. The SITEC would bridge the skills gap, train the workforce of the future and stimulate job creation by providing specialisms in a variety of sectors, all of which are critical to the Stevenage area and the wider Hertfordshire and UK economy, including Engineering, Life sciences, Biotechnology, Telehealth and Telecare, Digital and Computing Innovation and Advanced Construction Skills.

The Executive noted that the project would benefit from close working with the Hertfordshire LEP Skills Advisory Board, North Herts College, other Further education providers and key local businesses to help set out the level of demand for this project, and appraise the best land options to deliver it. As an earlier stage project, it would be reported back to the Stevenage Development Board and Executive in due course with the next stage of the detailed business case.

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) advised that, as this Business Case was at an earlier stage than others, it was a Strategic Outline Case which included a number of options as to how the SITEC would be delivered. There were also a number of processes for his Team to follow to develop further the governance arrangements for the project over the next 9 to 12 months.

The Chair invited Mr Adrian Hawkins OBE (Chair of Stevenage Development Board to comment on this Business Case. Mr Hawkins stated that this project would provide the means to deliver social mobility by creating a radical change in people's lives. He felt that the creation of local employment opportunities, supporting local businesses, and providing higher incomes for those that wished to aspire to a better way of life was levelling up in action.

Mr Hawkins added that the Borough had seen the development of advanced manufacturing, life sciences technology and pharmaceuticals with various employers already based in the town. More were expected to follow, and in the next 5 to 7 years it was forecast that several thousand new jobs could be created requiring Level 3 or above qualifications. The need was therefore clear for SITEC, which would be launched to provide a clear focus for the delivery of STEM skills at Level 3 or above. It was "real world" differences to people's lives such as SITEC which he and the Stevenage Development Board were most proud to be delivering as part of the regeneration of the town.

The following comments were made by Members:

- the scheme was welcomed, and it was important that businesses were able to steer the type of training courses that would be provided by the SITEC, in order that it was the most appropriate skills development for their needs; and
- it was pleasing to note that the Stakeholder Group for the project included North Herts College, the University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, and business representatives. Crucially, the SITEC would provide an interface between Stevenage residents and the international businesses located in the town, which was considered to be vital for a diverse and integrated community.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Science, Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC) 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).
3. That it be noted that the project is at an earlier stage compared to others in the programme and will require an updated business plan and full business case to be approved prior to drawdown of funding.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

#### **4 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - CYCLING & PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY (INCLUDING ARTS & HERITAGE TRAIL)**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity (including Arts & Heritage Trail) Project.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that the Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity (including Arts & Heritage Trail) project secured £3.5M of Towns Deal funding towards sustainable transport and culture in Stevenage, helping encourage greater use of the town's extensive cycle ways and pedestrian routes.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration commented that Stevenage benefitted from 45km of dedicated cycle routes, a testament to the vision shown in the early days of the New Town development. This proud history was matched by the Council's ambition to be a true, Sustainable Travel Town. The Council had made a number of steps in this direction, by developing a clear Local Cycling and Walking Plan (called the LCWIP) to help make the case for investments to improve these routes, and bring green and healthy travel options to the fore.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration explained that the project had two core elements. The first was to deliver a heritage and arts trail, thereby creating a quality visitor attraction showcasing the incredible heritage assets and public art across the town, together with the installation of new art features to complete the trail. The second element was the delivery of enhanced modern pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, linking new developments in the town centre with key employment areas and routes across the Town and Borough. This aimed to increase accessibility and connectivity between places so that mobility was not a barrier to opportunity; improve levels of health and wellbeing; and improve the perception and experience of places across the town centre. In turn, these improvements would contribute towards the Council's climate change goals.



The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure & Culture stated that in recent years there had been an increase in the number of murals painted in the local cycle network underpasses, which had generated a significant amount of interest. There was a growth in interest amongst the creative community in Stevenage regarding street art, and so the proposed Arts and Heritage Trail would be the ideal vehicle to move this onto the next level.

The Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure & Culture reminded Members that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) was responsible for maintenance of the Borough's 45km cycleway network, and he hoped that as this project came to fruition the County Council would recognise that broken linkages in the network needed to be fixed and re-instated, and that the existing network needed to be properly maintained.

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) advised that this was another infrastructure project, which was vital to connecting different parts of the town. The Business Case was originally earmarked for delivery later in the Town Investment Plan programme, but a balance had been struck between retaining some flexibility on the final interventions to be delivered to enable wider public engagement and co-design, and the identification and provision of some elements at an earlier stage as a series of "quick wins".

The Chair invited Mr Adrian Hawkins OBE (Chair of Stevenage Development Board to comment on this Business Case. Mr Hawkins stated that the 45km of cycleways in the Borough was a visionary investment by the architects of the New Town, and was now part of the town's heritage for all to enjoy. The Stevenage Development Board had felt that this was a good opportunity to encourage people to cycle and walk, particularly in the light of recent increases in the cost of energy and fuel.

The Executive acknowledged that, as well as cycling, pedestrians and runners also used the Borough's cycleways, in order to improve their health and wellbeing. It was further acknowledged that the proposed Arts & Heritage Trail would also help mental wellbeing, especially important following on from the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity (including Arts & Heritage Trail) 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).
3. That the engagement to date with cycling user groups, and the approach for further consultation and engagement for the next stage of the project development, be noted.

4. That it be noted that this business case is in outline, and that a further update with detailed cost plans and finalised project scope will be reported to Executive within the next 18 months.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

**5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

**6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

**7 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 16 March 2022**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

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

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

**Time:** End Time: 5.18pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Phil Bibby CC (observer) and Robin Parker CC (observer).

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 MINUTES - 2 FEBRUARY 2022 AND 9 FEBRUARY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 2 February 2022 and 9 February 2022 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 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees be noted –

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 25 January 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 February 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 15 February 2022

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

The Executive considered an overarching verbal update report from the Strategic Director (TP), together with a short presentation from the Corporate Policy & Research Officer, providing information concerning the latest epidemiology statistics relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Strategic Director (TP) advised that he hoped that this would be the final standing Covid-19 update to the Executive. If a new and significant Covid variant should come to light, then the position would be reviewed.

The Strategic Director (TP) stated that the Government had set out its “Living with Covid” plan, and from 24 February 2022 the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test had ceased. On vaccinations, the Government had confirmed that children aged between 5 and 11 in England would be offered a low dose vaccine in the Spring. A Spring Covid booster campaign was also anticipated for the Over 75s, those in Care Homes, or those who were immuno-suppressed.

In relation to Stevenage, the Strategic Director (TP) commented that the SBC Environmental Health Team were on standby to support Stevenage Doctors’ Surgeries to help reach out to those who were not fully vaccinated in order to improve protection within the community. The Council’s work with the homeless to encourage uptake of the vaccine continued. There were some specific rules in place for Independent Living Schemes, as specialist support officers were still required to conduct lateral flow tests before work and were required to isolate for ten days following a positive Covid test result. The SBC Business Continuity cell was still in place, and staff were required to isolate by remaining at home for five days following a positive Covid test result.

Officers responded to questions raised by Members as follows:

- the Covid infection level in parts of China and other countries was relatively high, primarily due to low vaccination take-up rates in some age groups, lower exposure to the virus related to the a zero tolerance policy on outbreak control, and the transmissibility of the Omicron variant;
- there was a dearth of information from the Government about the possible introduction of charging for Lateral Flow Test kits from 1 April 2022;
- whilst a good number of people had been vaccinated at recent Bedwell pop-up vaccination clinics, there was no significant change in the vaccination rate in that ward, which was still about 10% below the rates in other wards;
- even though the level of serious Covid infections had reduced, the importance of maintaining the message encouraging the unvaccinated to get vaccinated was acknowledged.

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

## **5 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE - STEVENAGE ENTERPRISE CENTRE**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of the Towns Fund Business Case in respect of the Stevenage Enterprise Centre, which it was proposed would be located on the corner of Queensway and Park Place.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration advised that this was the final of the nine Towns Fund Business Cases. The project aimed to deliver a new commercial facility in the town centre, providing flexible workspace, small laboratories, and opportunities for community facilities. As the Council continued to support the Town Centre to diversify, this project would bring jobs to the heart of the town, which in turn would support existing businesses by increasing footfall and spend.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration explained that the project had received strong support from the Stevenage Development Board in December 2021. Since then officers had been working through some legal points to ensure that any scheme that came forward could comply with the subsidy control regulations. The Council's role for this project was likely to be as Accountable Body rather than lead partner or delivery organisation, and as such SBC would continue to work with the likely developer to refine the proposals.

The Strategic Director (TP) stated that the project was being promoted by a developer. To bring the project forward the developer would need to exercise an option on the land, to secure planning consent, and to secure an operator for a Life Sciences use of the Centre. The developer was reporting a strong level of commercial interest in operating the facility.

The Strategic Director (TP) commented that, were this project to come forward, it would create: 57,000 square feet of employment use within the town centre and 59 new jobs, as well as generating approximately £3M a year into the local economy. It would also help support the growth of the Stevenage Cell and Gene Cluster.

The Strategic Director (TP) advised that the Business case requested £4M from the Towns Fund, with match funding required for a further £8.7M. The Council had received independent commercial and legal advice on this matter. Two options had been identified, the first being a direct grant award in return for particular features which would benefit the local community (jobs, skills, training events, etc.), and the second being using the resource to own a share in the facility overall. These options would ensure that Council budgets would not be put at financial or commercial risk.

It was noted that the project had received the support of the Stevenage Development Board, and that the potential Gross Value Added (GVA) economic impact of the project, as set out in the Business Case, was significant.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the endorsement of the project from the Stevenage Development Board be noted.
2. That the business case for the Stevenage Enterprise Centre be approved, and 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).
3. That it be noted that, due to ongoing commercial discussions, this project will be subject to an updated business plan to be approved by the Executive prior to drawdown of funding.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 6 EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of a proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities reminded Members that the Equality Act (2010) was the legal framework by which the rights of individuals and the advancement of equality of opportunity for all were protected. The Policy and Strategy documents set out how the Council would continue to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across its services, communities and workforce over the next 4 years (2022–2026) and meet the legislative requirements of the Equality Act.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities advised that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy reaffirmed the Council's long-standing commitment to fulfil its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The Policy would be based on the six objectives set out in Paragraph 3.1.5 of the report. Alongside the Policy, it was proposed that an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Annual Action Plan were introduced to enable the meaningful delivery and monitoring of the Policy objectives. Development of the Action Plan would require a period of self-assessment and ongoing dialogue with internal and external stakeholders, and it was proposed that an EDI Action Plan was presented to the Executive for approval in Autumn 2022.

Members stated that they would be pleased to work with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities on the production of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan. It was noted that the work of the Stevenage Equalities Commission, together with relevant census data, would help to inform the Action Plan.

In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the 16 organisations listed in Appendix B to the report were those that had contributed in the work on the draft Strategy, either through meetings with officers or responding online.

The Chair asked for officers to give consideration to undertaking some research work on how the rising cost of living (due to increasing fuel, energy and food prices) was impacting the population of Stevenage, and to develop some mitigation measures to help residents alleviate the impact.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, as attached at Appendix B to the report, be approved.
3. That an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan be brought back to the Executive for consideration in Autumn 2022.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*  
*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 3 2021/22**

The Executive received a presentation from the Chief Executive concerning the Quarter Three (October to December 2021) Corporate Performance report 2021/22.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) performance highlights in Quarter 3, 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 3, the Chief Executive advised that, of the 45 Corporate Performance Indicators, 29 were at Green status; 3 were at Amber; and 13 were at Red.

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.

In relation to the focus on Voids, the Chair asked if it would be possible for officers to prepare a ward by ward report on long-term voids (including the length of time that the property had been void and reasons why) which could be provided to all Members with updates throughout the year.

In reply to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the SBC standard for void properties would need to be aligned to the imminently expected Government's updated Decent Homes standard.

In respect of the focus on Customer Services, the Chair commented that the Portfolio Holders for Housing, Health & Older People and Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council would be maintaining an oversight of this area, with the aim of securing an improvement in performance by Quarter 4.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for Quarter Three 2021/22, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
2. That the continued impacts of Covid-19 on the Housing Options and Homelessness services, and actions to recover performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.75 to 3.96 of the report), be noted.
3. That performance challenges relating to housing voids be noted and actions to improve performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.97 to 3.114 of the report) be endorsed.

4. That the challenges relating to garages with asbestos, the letting of Council garages, and the planned measures to improve performance (set out in Paragraphs 3.115 to 3.136) be endorsed.
5. That the key customer service related challenges (including performance within the Customer Service Centre, Complaints and Website) be noted, and the associated improvement activities (set out in Paragraphs 3.137 to 3.180) be endorsed.
6. That the Executive Action Tracker, as attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **8 APPROVAL OF THE DISCRETIONARY 'ENERGY REBATE' SCHEME**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval of a discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that, unlike the main scheme for eligible residents of properties in Council Tax Bands A-D who would receive £150 based on occupancy on 1 April 2022, the discretionary scheme could be more flexible in respect of the date, and an amount 'up to' £150 per household could be awarded. Applications must be submitted by the liable person and prepayment checks in line with the requirements of the main scheme would be carried out on all applications.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the funding allocated would permit 1,076 grants of £150, or more if the grants were smaller (i.e. 1,615 cases @£100). The Council currently had 4,580 properties in Bands E-H, but it was not known how many households in the Borough were not individually liable for Council Tax, for example those living in multiple occupation dwellings, or via other arrangements.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the proposed discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme, as set out in Paragraph 4.1 of the report, be approved.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, to make revisions to the scheme criteria, as specified in Section H of the proposed scheme.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **9 3RD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2021/22 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/22 (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account).



The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the report highlighted a 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £14,680. This included improvements in recycling income of £82,800 and a net increase in development control income of £67,000 (net of increased costs), which was offset by the cost of the garage voids surveyor and the £41,000 increase in Bed & Breakfast costs. There was also a £65,000 underspend on ICT costs, but it was recommended that this should be transferred to an allocated reserve to fund improvements resulting from the SOCITIM report. All the variances were outlined in Section 4.1 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that there was an £80,000 corresponding reduction in 2022/23 expenditure (before any assessment of increased fuel costs currently being calculated), which included an improvement in recycling income of £110,000 offset by an increased contribution to the income equalisation reserve to offset any price and tonnage fluctuations. Not all of the £80,000 was anticipated to be on-going beyond 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the Council had received some grants for Cyber Security, Domestic Abuse and Bio-Diversity, and these were set out in Paragraph 4.1.19. of the report.

In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that there was a 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter projected net saving of £391,960. This included a request to carry forward £325,000 of decant costs for redevelopment schemes. There were also a number of increases in spend, as outlined within the report.

In reply to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) explained that the estimated total value of revenue allocated reserves as at 31 March 2022 would be £7.1M. This value had decreased by circa £8M since 31 March 2021 (£15.2M total allocated reserves), primarily due to NNDR repayments required to the Collection Fund as a result of the Government granting business rate reliefs giving less income (but the Council was compensated with S31 grants instead).

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2021/22 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £14,680 be approved.
2. That it be noted that the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.21 of the report.
3. That the changes to the 2022/23 General Fund budget of £80,000 reduction in spend, as set out in Paragraph 4.2.24 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2021/22 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter projected net saving in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget of £391,960 be approved.

5. That the HRA carry forward request of £325,000 for decant costs on redevelopment schemes be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **10 3RD QUARTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT 2021/22**

The Executive considered a report in respect of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Capital Programme Monitoring 2021/22 (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account - HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the General Fund Capital Programme had increased by £8.058Million, which included the already approved borrowing for the Wholly Owned Company of £8.715Million (based on current profiled schemes). This translates into a £657,000 decrease in spend for Member approval. There is some slippage on a number of Finance and Estates projects totalling £1.099Million.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources reported slippage of £142,000 concerning ICT projects, with £95,000 relating to the General Fund and £47,000 relating to the HRA. This was partially offset by a request to bring forward budget from 2022/23 for the Kenilworth scheme of £538,000 in order to accelerate delivery. An update on General Fund receipts was provided in Section 4.3 of the report, which showed that there was a reduction in reported General Fund receipts of £120,000 and Locality Receipts of £100,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that the HRA capital programme had reduced by £10.062Million on the Capital Strategy reported to the 24 February 2022 Council meeting. This was mainly due to slippage identified across a number of sites within the Housing Development programme, totalling £10.015Million. There was a corresponding increased budget requirement of £10.015Million for 2022/23. The remainder of the slippage related to ICT funding in the HRA.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that there were 24 Right to Buy (RTB) sales by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (13 RTB sales by the same point in 2021/22). The forecast for the year remained unchanged at 35 sales on the basis of expressions of interest received, and a further 11 sales had taken place to date in Quarter 4, bringing the current total to 35.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) clarified that one of the reasons for the total amount of Capital Programme slippage of £1.099M related to delays in procuring works for the Business and Technology Centre.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the inclusion of the additional £7.235Million to increase the Housing Wholly Owned Company budget to £15Million, as approved by the Executive in January 2021 and Council in February 2021, and as detailed in Table One and Section 4.2.3 of the report, be noted.

2. That the changes to the other 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme budgets, totalling net slippage of £656,000, as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
3. That the 2022/23 General Fund Capital Programme net increase in expenditure of £656,000, as summarised in Table One and detailed in Section 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme slippage of £10.062Million, as summarised in Table Five and set out in Section 4.4.1 of the report, be approved.
5. That the 2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme net increase in expenditure, as summarised in Table Five and set out in Section 4.4.1 of the report, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **11 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

### Ukraine Crisis

The Chair provided an update on the impacts of the Ukraine crisis on Stevenage, and the work of the SBC Ukraine Crisis Working Group in preparing for the impacts.

The Chair advised that, at County level, the HCC Local Resilience Forum had taken responsibility for the matter, and the Hertfordshire Leaders' Group would be holding fortnightly meetings with the Police & Crime Commissioner to monitor the Ukraine crisis.

In Stevenage, the Chair stated that a Ukrainian Crisis Working Group had been established and continued to meet on a weekly basis to co-ordinate and oversee all of the Council's work relating to the implications of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine. Richard Protheroe, Strategic Director, was the Lead Officer and was chairing the Working Group, and was leading the Council's response. As Leader of the Council, the Chair was the Lead Member.

The Chair explained that, since 28 February 2022, the United Nations (UN) had estimated that 3 million people had left the Ukraine with the UN Refugee Agency commenting that the movement of people was "the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II".

The Chair commented that the Ukraine Family Scheme was open to Ukrainians who were family members of British Nationals and UK settled persons, and had so far issued over 4,000 visas. The UK Government had updated the scheme so that applicants who had passports could undergo biometric checks in the UK, meaning they did not need an in-person appointment before arriving in the UK. It was anticipated that this should help speed up the process and avoid applicants being required to attend Visa Application Centres (VACs) across Europe.

The Chair stated that, in addition to the existing visa routes, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had announced plans for a new sponsorship scheme for Ukrainians without any family ties to the UK. The “Homes for Ukraine” scheme allowed individuals, charities, community groups and businesses across the UK to offer a room or home rent-free to Ukrainians escaping the war, regardless of whether they had ties to the country. It was reported that over 100,000 interested sponsors had signed-up to the scheme in the first 24 hours.

The Chair added that, under the “Homes for Ukraine” Scheme, the Government was only currently accepting visa applications from interested sponsors who already had a named person they wished to sponsor. Sponsors who were in this position would be able to apply to the scheme on Friday, 18 March 2022. People wanting to be sponsors could register their interest in the “Homes for Ukraine” scheme website from Monday, 14 March 2022.

The Chair advised that the Government was also advising interested sponsors to get in touch with charities, faith groups or local community organisations who, due to extensive networks with communities and individuals across Europe, were starting to make connections between individuals. Details provided by the Government on the “Homes for Ukraine” Scheme so far included:

- Anyone with a spare room or home could offer to house a Ukrainian, but the sponsor must be willing for the Ukrainian individual or family to stay with them for at least 6 months;
- Sponsored Ukrainians would be granted three years’ leave to remain in the UK, and would be able to work, claim benefits and access public services during this period;
- Sponsors would not be allowed to charge rent and the Government would be offering an optional ‘thank you’ payment of £350 per month to people who could accommodate one or more household (subject to the accommodation they had);
- The ‘thank you’ payment would be limited to one payment per residential address. The payment would continue for up to 12 months;
- The sponsor would not be expected to cover the costs of food and living expenses, although they may wish to offer this philanthropically;
- The Government would also provide a full support pack for sponsors, with signposting to relevant services and where they could get help;
- The Government had advised that those arriving would have met standard security checks, and that sponsors and all adults in the sponsoring households would also be subject to security checks and may be subject to safeguarding checks too;
- Early indications suggested that there would be a role for councils in checking that the accommodation being offered was appropriate in the circumstances;
- The Government had also advised it would be asking local councils to provide wrap-around support and were providing new funding for the councils to do so (understood to be £10,500 per refugee); and
- Additional payments would be available to support school-age children who needed to be accommodated within the education system.

The Chair stated that forthcoming Government guidance was anticipated to include: information on the checks the Government would be undertaking on both sponsors and people seeking to come to the UK; information around the status of the arrangement they would be entering into (including expected accommodation standards); details on how organisations could sponsor an individual/family; and the role of the local council in providing wider support, including which level of local government would receive and distribute funding.

The Chair commented that SBC's Ukrainian Crisis Working Group would continue to build upon its relationships with local community groups to get a sense of the level of interest in the "Homes for Ukraine" Scheme and the support that the Council could provide to make this work in practice. It would also continue to plan for how housing services could sensibly support the Government's plans for accommodation inspections.

In respect of charitable giving, the Chair advised that SBC, along with the Local Government Association, the Herts Strategic Migration Steering Group and local partners, would continue to encourage those from local communities who wished to support Ukraine migrants to make financial donations to the following organisations:

- The Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal;
- The British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal;
- The UNHCR refugee agency;
- UNICEF;
- The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain; and
- Save the Children.

It was noted that an SBC webpage continued to be updated to promote these charities, as well as guidance on the visa application process.

In relation to fuel and gas, the Chair informed Members that UK Motoring groups had advised that petrol prices were likely to decrease due to the costs of wholesale fuel and global oil easing. Brent crude was down 3% at \$109 per barrel early on Monday (16 March 2022) having previously hit a near 14-year high last week. The SBC's Ukrainian Crisis Working Group would continue to monitor the situation with regard to the Council's vehicle fleet and the impact of passed-on transportation costs for goods and services. Following sanctions by the UK on the Russian subsidiary Gazprom, there were continued calls by the public sector for the Government to clarify the approach to ending contracts and pursuing re-tendering exercises lawfully.

In respect of the broader cost of living challenge, the Chair stated that the war in Ukraine threatened supplies of key staple crops. Whilst the anticipated drop in fuel prices could contribute to reductions in transportation costs for food and drink, the UN World Food Programme had warned that this would not negate the impact of the price increases on an already pressurised global food system. The impact on grain supplies would be felt long-term if Ukrainian farmers missed the crucial May planting season for their crops, and this impact would be exacerbated if Russia curtailed wheat supply in response to western sanctions.

With regard to Cyber Security, the Chair explained that the Russian state was known to use cyber warfare in conjunction with traditional warfare. It was noted that all SBC staff and Members were required to undertake mandatory Cyber Awareness training by 6 April 2022.

The Chair advised that a Briefing Note detailed the above matters would be placed on the Council's website.

The Chief Executive informed the Executive of the outcome of a Department of Levelling Up and Home Office Briefing on the matter held earlier in the day, as follows:

- the UK public had been commended for their response to the war so far, with the Government looking how it could support sponsors of Ukrainian refugees going forward;
- it was recognised that further work was needed around the relevant security checks;
- support for the refugees would be a collaborative effort from a variety of agencies;
- the first phase of the sponsorship scheme would go live from 18 March 2022;
- questions were asked about: how many refugees would be helped by the sponsorship scheme, noting that there was currently no Government cap on numbers; school places and adequate healthcare provision; and appropriate visa checks; and
- it was very much an evolving process, as a significant amount of guidance had yet to be drafted, and would be disseminated in the coming days.

## **12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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

## **13 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 2 FEBRUARY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 2 February 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

## **14 WRITE OFFS**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of an update regarding a potential rent arrears debt write off, and seeking approval to approve a housing

benefit debt write off.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

**15 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank



## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 10 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 6.46pm

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

There were no apologies and no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

##### 2. **Towns Fund Business Case – Garden Square and Diversification of Retail Space**

The following comments and questions were raised which the Assistant Director Regeneration responded to:

- The first phase of the project although temporary would be in place for 2 to 5 years. Public consultation was currently underway to gather as wide a range of ideas as possible for the first phase with the idea to introduce the types of leisure and cultural activities in the Garden Square that would be there once the programme had been fully delivered;
- The bus shelters could potentially be used for temporary art exhibitions in the early stages if they were structurally suitable and in an appropriate condition. Ideas were being sought through the consultation;
- Communications would ensure that it was clear to the public that this was the first phase and temporary only;
- Maintenance works had been carried out to the trees in the current bus station area but there was no proposal to remove them as part of this project;
- In relation to the questionnaire, in order for the consultation to be meaningful, schools and other organisations should be consulted to ensure all age groups were represented. Officers advised that this initial consultation had gone to a wide range of groups and organisations and around 220 responses had been received to date. A

further consultation would be carried out after the election on the design concepts following consideration of the responses;

- The majority of the land for the Garden Square project was owned by and would be the responsibility of Stevenage Borough Council;
- Officers advised that improvements were to be made to the access to the Westgate Multi Storey Car Park;
- Members suggested that an area for an elevated space for speakers or performances would be welcomed.

### **3. Towns Fund Business Case – Science Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC)**

The following comments/questions were raised which the Assistant Director Regeneration responded to:

- In terms of the location of the SITEC, officers confirmed that it was originally envisaged to be a town centre facility, although there was a suggestion to have an extension to the existing College site. The Development Board was considering the option of a standalone site and location for the Centre;
- The Centre was essential to the Town in order to grow the Town's own talent. However, it was important to note the importance of not just high level but also the lower level of engineers which were desperately needed to fill the skill shortage at this level. Officers agreed that there was a skill shortage at level 3 and above and there was also a significant difference between the earnings of those living in Stevenage and those working in Stevenage;
- In relation to the commercial sustainability, officers advised that a full business model would be required as part of the Full Business Case. The initial work showed that the facility would be viable and would include a mix of educational levels. Viability would be tight and would be considered fully as part of the next stage of the project also;
- It was noted that this would be a facility for adult learners as well as students and would serve the North Herts area although there would be an obvious advantage for Stevenage residents due to the location;
- In terms of improving the aspirations of the Town, it was agreed that it was important for these opportunities to be seen by as many people in Stevenage as possible and local students would be encouraged to take advantage of the Centre;
- Members agreed that it should be made clear that the centre was for the use of females as well as males as the numbers of females in the area of STEM employment was still under represented.

### **4. Towns Fund Business Case – Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity (Including Arts and Heritage Trail)**

The following comments/questions were raised which the Assistant Director Regeneration responded to:

- In relation to the map, the heritage trail seemed to be narrowly concentrated around the town centre and into the Old Town. It was suggested that the boundary should be widened and the sub-regional context should be considered. Officers advised that due to the scale of funding, additional funding was being looked at from both public funds and private developments to take this forward;
- Officers agreed that it was still important to note that there was a recognition that private car journeys still had a part to play although it would be essential to look at reducing the carbon footprint where possible;
- Officers agreed to look into a previous report into cycling connectivity and the cycling network to see if there were any learning points from the 2009 report.

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

None.

4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

6 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

None.

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

None.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 16 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Stephen Booth, Matt Creasey, John Duncan, Alex Farquharson, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.50pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 2 MINUTES - 30 NOVEMBER 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of Community Select Committee meeting held on Wednesday 30 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 3 REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRE-SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE NEW TOWNS HERITAGE CENTRE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report setting out the recommendations of the Community Select Scrutiny looking to support the Towns Deal funding bid for a New Towns Heritage Centre in Stevenage.

Members noted the scope, focus and process of the review.

The Committee had met on 6 occasions to undertake the review including 2 site visits to Milton Keynes and Colchester.

In relation to the external witnesses that had been interviewed as part of the Review, the Scrutiny Officer agreed that John Mead should be added to the list.

Following the Review, the following comments and additions to the conclusions and recommendations were made:

#### Curation

- We need to match aspirations with the resources we have available and that we are prepared to procure to deliver those aspirations
- If there are to be charges made for entry to any exhibits then any offers have to be fair across the whole community, i.e. not targeted at one group for example retirees if offer a cheaper day or time slot over another group who would not be able to access the same offer. The concept of inclusivity is important to maintain.
- Members who attended the site visit suggested that the example given in the report for separate charging was only for certain unique exhibits not for

general visits.

### **Hub and Spoke**

- It was agreed that the hub and spoke concept for arts around the town could be extended to other New Towns with the New Towns Visitor Centre in Stevenage being the hub and the other new towns the spoke as they are all unique in their own way but have a shared overlapping history.
- It was recommended that an extra bullet point be included at paragraph 3.1.8 of the report to reflect that the New Town's experience should extend beyond the Town boundaries so that exhibits and costs can be shared amongst the new towns.

### **Management/Governance Structure**

- It was agreed that the question mark should be removed from paragraph 3.1.4 as this was a statement not a question "...*In this way SBC would still be a major player but the independent voice of the board and would assure investors that independent voices are given equal voice.*"
- It was noted that collaboration is important. The Council needs to shift to a facilitation/convening role. Having an independent clear governance structure will be important for the future and will help the new towns heritage centre be able to bid for additional funding sources that would not be open to it if it remained in the current Council only control model. Officers would be looking into charitable status and other governance models including not-for profit social enterprises that would help with future funding options.
- The Chair stated that it would be important to make sure that the Council contains an active role in any new structure, as there was a danger that independent organisations who have talented people involved can leave and when they do this can threaten the future of the body without their presence and driving force, so the Council would look to retain a significant presence for continuity.
- A Member suggested that the Council should consider issues such as communal copyright for the museum so that local social history is captured and shared, as locally we are losing historical data at a County level.

### **Financial security**

- Members discussed concerns around the financial security of the New Towns Heritage Centre. Some were concerned that overtime it could become over reliant on grant funding and may need a covenant to protect the Museum part of the building, others suggested that it would be well supported being part of the civic hub as this will be hosting the Council, Library and the NHS so the costs were shared and the idea of small commercial operations to support the Heritage Centre such as a Café and book/gift shop would also bring in extra revenue to support the activities at the centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that with the additions of the issues raised above that the report be noted.

4

## **COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report on the Committee's Work Programme for the new Municipal Year 2022/23.

He advised Members that a survey was conducted with all Scrutiny Members on

improving scrutiny work. All Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey for their views on the Scrutiny work and possible work programme items. A total of 8 responses were received from the 23 Scrutiny Members. Members responses were all summarised in the Officer report.

During discussion the following points were raised regarding possible items to include in the work programme:

- It was acknowledged by the Scrutiny Officer that there had not been an equal share of his and Committee time between the Community Select Committee (CSC) and the Environment and Economy (E&E) Select Committee. The context had been that the E&E Select Committee had completed a large review into the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic on Stevenage and then went straight into a review of the Climate Emergency, as such the CSC had only been able to hold a truncated session over a couple of months on the New Towns Heritage Centre and one off sessions on Public Health and Crime and Disorder and updates on damp and mould and the work of the Neighbourhood Wardens. The Scrutiny Officer agreed that he would attempt to get a more equal use of his time between the two select committees.
- Members considered looking at their locality budgets and the ability to review how much money is remaining in the budgets each year. The Operations Director, Rob Gregory agreed to look into the way the locality budgets scheme is operating with a report back to Members
- Members asked why it had taken so long for the review of the Community Centres to be completed? Members suggested that they are likely to be struggling due to all of the current financial pressures so a look at them could be timely. The Director suggested that there would be an opportunity for Members to consider this by way of a Portfolio Holder's Advisory Group (PHAG) during the next municipal year.
- Members agreed to continue to hold a Public Health themed meeting and this could be linked to overall health and wellbeing, look at health inequalities
- Regarding Housing Members stated that they would be interested in looking at the allocations banding system as they were still concerned about the process with what look like anomalies and they also indicated that they would like to take a look at repairs and voids standards, which could start with a broad overview presentation from officers and then a more narrow area could be decided on to specifically scrutinise, such as the standard of void properties and response levels?

It was **RESOLVED** that the Community Select Committee's work programme should include:

- An officer presentation updating Members into the way the Local Community Budgets scheme is operating
- A Portfolio Holder's Advisory Group (PHAG) meeting on the Community Centres
- The statutory meeting on Crime and Disorder and continuation of a standing item on Public Health looking specifically at Health Inequalities for Stevenage
- An update on the Housing Allocations Policy

- A main review item on Housing Repairs and Voids standards, the review to begin with a broad presentation from officers on the service and then Members to agree a more narrow scope for a review

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

None

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None

**CHAIR**



# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 22 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Michael Downing, Alex Farquharson, Wendy Kerby, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.56pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Myla Arceno, Chris Howells, Sarah Mead and Loraine Rossati.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES - 9 FEBRUARY 2022 AND 15 FEBRUARY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2022 and 15 February 2022 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### 3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

#### 2. Minutes – 2 February 2022 and 9 February 2022

Noted.

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

Noted.

#### 4. Covid-19 Update

The Chair asked the Committee to submit any questions they had regarding the Covid-19 update to the Strategic Director (TP).

#### 5. Towns Fund Business Case – Stevenage Enterprise Centre

The Committee was informed that this was the final of the nine Towns Fund Business Cases for submission to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. It was for a life sciences-based facility, which it was hoped

would help create jobs and investment in the town. The project was at an early stage, and a refined Business Plan would be required prior to any draw down of Towns Fund monies.

The following questions/comments were made by Members:

- in response to a question, the Assistant Director (Regeneration) confirmed that the equalities and diversity implications of all the Towns Fund projects were considered at overall programme level, as well as through specific Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) prepared for each scheme. Once the Enterprise Centre project was further advanced, a fuller EQIA would be produced. Officers had impressed on the potential developer the need for the facility to be inclusive and available for use by community groups and residents;
- in reply to a further question, the Assistant Director (Regeneration) advised that the Centre would be owned by SBC. An interested developer has an option for the site (supported by a private investor), and discussions were ongoing with potential operators of the facility. It had been identified that there was market demand for life sciences space, and it would be up to the operator to consider a mix of short/long terms leases for the use of space within the Centre. It was confirmed that there would be no impact/risk on SBC finances, as it was proposed that the project would be funded through external investment, as well as a Towns Fund contribution. However, a due diligence exercise would need to be undertaken prior to the expenditure of Towns Fund monies.
- officers were requested to give consideration to a proposal that the Committee be consulted on the Towns Fund schemes in future when significant project milestones were met; and
- in response to a final question regarding the possible overlap between the Enterprise Centre and the existing Business Technology Centre (BTC), the Strategic Director (CF) stated that the BTC was a Council-owned asset and was a commercial arrangement between SBC and WENTA, carried out through a procurement exercise.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy & Strategy**

The Corporate Policy & Research Officer advised that the proposed Policy and Strategy re-affirmed the Council's commitment to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and in publishing a clear and updated set of equality objectives under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In response to a Member's question, the Corporate Policy & Research Officer explained that the "Equality Framework for Local Government" referred to in Paragraph 3.1.4 of the report was a framework published by the Local Government Association and contained criteria for good practice. SBC would be self-assessing against the framework in order to provide a baseline for ongoing work on the proposed EDI Action Plan.

A Member referred to the 9 protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, as listed in Paragraph 3.2 of the Policy and in the Strategy, and

was concerned that a socio-economic duty was not included in that list. Although the Policy encouraged Members and officers to consider the impact of their decisions on people who were less fortunate because of their social/economic background, the Committee agreed that this statement should be strengthened to require (rather than encourage), and asked officers to obtain the agreement of the Executive Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety & Equalities to this change.

## **7. Corporate Performance – Quarter 3 2021/22**

The Strategic Director (CF) stated that two-thirds of the Key Performance Indicators were at green status, but that work had continued to address those at red status via areas of focus on Temporary Accommodation/Homelessness; Voids; Garage Voids; and Customer Service Centre. The challenges faced by these areas, together with actions for performance improvement, had been presented to the Executive.

The Strategic Director (CF) added that the officers were investigating the Executive's request for the provision to all Members of a ward by ward report on long-term voids (including the length of time that the property had been void and the reasons why).

The Strategic Director (CF) responded to a series of questions as follows:

- she explained the colour coding in the performance charts, commenting that the red symbol was a triangle and not an arrow;
- she would come back to Members outside of the meeting regarding whether the statistics for Performance Measures CS8 (Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population) and N115b (The rate of violence against the person per 1,000) related to reported incidents and/or convictions;
- the Assistant Director (Digital & Transformation) would be looking at introducing measures to improve Customer Service Centre telephony response times;
- she explained that the colour coding for the various quarters set out in the performance charts related to performance within each quarter, rather than cumulatively;
- she agreed to request the relevant Assistant Director to respond to Members in respect of the ongoing discussions with the Lawn Tennis Association regarding tennis development across Stevenage (referred to in Paragraph 3.47 of the report); and
- she agreed to arrange for a briefing note to be prepared and sent to Members in relation to ongoing Suicide Prevention work (referred to in Paragraph 3.48 of the report).

A Member commented that officers should give consideration to a review and possible simplification of the performance measures set out in the report for future presentation, linking them more directly to the Council's priorities.

## **8. Approval of the Discretionary “Energy Rebate” Scheme**

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that the Discretionary Scheme had been designed to assist hardship cases for those residents living in properties in Council Tax Bands E to H. However, new Government guidance indicated that discretionary funds could be used to assist residents living in properties in Bands A to D, and so officers had requested clarification from the Government regarding use of the funds.

In reply to a question, the Strategic Director (CF) commented that the discretionary scheme was intended to benefit those residents who were already in receipt of Council Tax support, housing benefits and/or Universal Credit.

## **9. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring report 2021/22**

Noted.

## **10. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Capital Programme Monitoring report 2021/22**

Noted.

## **10a. Urgent Business – Update on Ukraine Crisis**

In response to a question, the Strategic Director confirmed that the SBC Ukraine Crisis Working Group was an officer body, set up to gauge the detrimental impacts of the crisis on SBC services, finances, contracts, energy costs, fuel costs, materials costs etc., together with actions to mitigate against these impacts. The Working Group met on a weekly basis.

## **4 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report requesting the Committee to agree its Work Programme for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

The Scrutiny Officer drew attention to the outcome of a Members’ survey regarding ideas for improving scrutiny set out in Section 4 of the report, and suggestions for future scrutiny reviews outlined in Section 5. In respect of the latter, he referred to a request for a scrutiny review of the Council’s Constitution (which he proposed would be considered via a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group); and a request for a review of Communications, including customer complaints and social media (which he proposed would be considered as a one-off performance review). He asked Members to bear in mind the limited capacity/resources available to support scrutiny reviews.

The following points were raised by Members during the discussion on the report:

- continued consideration of the Committee’s Action Tracker in the summer of 2022 was welcomed;
- it was noted that, although the Committee could support work on the review of

- the Council's Constitution, the ultimate responsibility for approving and adopting a revised Constitution rested with the Full Council;
- consideration should be given to the introduction of a Gap analysis approach to major reviews (similar to previous Best Value reviews);
  - scrutiny resources should match its supposed importance in the Council;
  - more emphasis should be placed on Executive Portfolio Holders being invited to attend Committee meetings to be questioned and challenged on specific items; and
  - a greater use of expert/external witnesses to assist the Committee in its work, and the possible use of "critical friends", would be welcomed.

As part of the Constitution Review, and in response to a Member's request, the Borough Solicitor (Monitoring Officer) was asked to prepare a Briefing Note for Members on the legal requirements for a constitution; what it should contain; possible Local Government Association model constitution; and what authority it carried.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be noted.
2. That, having considered the ideas put forward by individual Members set out in Section 5 of the report, the following matters be added to a work programme of potential Scrutiny review items for 2022/23:
  - Council Constitution review (as a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group)
  - Communications review
3. That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings carrying out policy development work identified so far for the Committee, as set out in Section 7.1 of the report, be noted.

## **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 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as

amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

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

## **8 PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 9 FEBRUARY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **9 PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

### **12. Part II Minutes – Executive – 2 February 2022**

Noted.

### **13. Write Offs**

The Strategic Director (CF) answered a number of Members' questions regarding this item.

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

None.

## **11 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

## **CHAIR**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 23 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair)(Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Maureen McKay, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

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

**Time:** End Time: 06:50 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sarah Mead and Wendy Kerby.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - 10 JANUARY 2022 & NOTES OF INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE ON 17 JANUARY & 3 MARCH 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the committee meeting held on Monday 10 January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Members noted the notes of the informal Committee meetings held on Monday 17 January and Thursday 3 March 2022.

#### 3 **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme for the new Municipal Year 2022/23. He advised Members that a survey was conducted on improving scrutiny work. All Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey for their views on the Scrutiny work. A total of 8 responses were received from the 23 Scrutiny Members. These were all summarised in the Officer report.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- A one-off performance review on Parking would be added on to the Work Programme for 2022/23.
- Members noted the issue regarding the Council garages affected by asbestos, and officers advised that a strategic options analysis is currently being

undertaken to identify some costed options for future consideration, and could also feed in to the session on Parking.

- Members noted that the climate emergency review would continue into the 2022-23 Municipal Year. Members noted that the target for net zero emission by 2030 would be challenging to achieve and is reliant on a range of external factors e.g. funding. Members discussed issues around the Council's response to fence repairs, and requested that a report update should be provided to Members on how the Council was tackling the issue.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Work Programme for the new Municipal year 2022/23 be noted and that the following items will be included in the Committee's Work Programme for 2022-23:

- Continuation of the Climate Emergency Review (as the Committee's substantive piece of work for the year)
- A one-off single meeting performance review on parking
- An officer information update on fence repairs
- A Portfolio Holder's Advisory Group (PHAG) on Sustainable Travel Towns

#### 4 **EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSE TO THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19**

The Committee received the Executive Portfolio Holder response on the review of the economic impact of Covid19. Members welcomed the response of the Executive to the report and the recommendations. Members suggested that in future the Executive response should be circulated to Scrutiny Members as soon as it is ready not waiting for the next formal meeting of the Committee, as in this instance it delayed the publishing of the response for 2 months.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive response on the review of the economic impact of Covid19 be noted.

#### 5 **INTERIM REPORT - CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Committee received a report in relation to the interim review findings and emerging recommendations of the climate emergency scrutiny review. The report included the emerging recommendations at this stage of the review. The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the Committee had heard from a range of witnesses and it had received information and evidence through expert presentations, external witnesses, SBC officers and a number of Executive Portfolio holders. However, there were a number of witnesses still to interview in the next municipal year and officers would meet with the Chair & Vice-Chair to consider the best way to complete the review in the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

Members were happy with the progress the review had made and the recommendations that they had made so far.

Members noted that trees play a vital role in combating the climate change



emergency, and one of the best measures towards its net zero target for 2030.

Members commented that the review would need to address the issue of the current policy of trees in relation to the Council's Planning and Development responsibilities and also the size of the financial funding required to help the Council achieve net zero. Members were also keen to hear how the Council was engaging with young people on this issue.

Comments were received from David Thorogood the Environmental Sustainability Coordinator regarding the interim review recommendations. These comments had not been received in time to be included in the interim recommendations but would be included and considered with the Chair and Vice-Chair outside of the meeting and would be reported to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the interim review findings and emerging recommendations be noted and when completed would be circulated to the relevant Executive Portfolio Holders for comment.

**6 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

**7 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

There were no exempt information.

**8 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank

# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 29 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Matt Creasey, Alex Farquharson, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6:00pm  
End Time: 6:55pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 CRIME & DISORDER PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jackie Hollywell, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities. Councillor Jackie Hollywell along with the Community Safety Manager was invited to the meeting to update the Members about the work that the Community Safety Officers and partners, including the Police had been engaged in during the time of the Covid19 pandemic.

The Community Safety Manager provided a presentation in relation to the Crime and Disorder. She provided the following key updates:

- The No More Service programme was first established in 2012, and expanded through years. The Programme evolved, and also established No More Service Youth for 11-21 years old county-wide.
- Evolve which was an 8 week domestic abuse perpetrator programme county-wide, and funding was secured from the PCC and the Home Office.
- There were also a Drug and Alcohol and Officer Support Programme and High Risk Offender Support. Both programmes covered Stevenage area.
- Established closed working relationship with the probation and SBC Housing to aid individuals coming out of prison in to private rent deposit scheme with NMS support.
- The Team had recruited more staff during the Covid19 to fulfil the required support needed.
- The Team had been busy working throughout a pandemic and responding to the challenges that had come with it.
- The Team dealt with the 104 High Risk Offenders, 168 No More Service Adults and 129 No More Service Youth cases.

- On average each case cost £700 for 12 months work, which was quite low compare to the work done on each case.
- EVOLVE was a 1 to 1 programme for domestic abuse perpetrators for eight weeks across Hertfordshire, which run parallel to the NO More Service, and it was a voluntarily service. The Team was currently supporting 23 domestic abuse perpetrators across County.
- No More Service Youth had supported 129 clients from April 2021 to January 2022, with 72% of all service users were male and 28 were female.
- No More Service Youth provided training on anger management intervention, challenging thinking, behaviours and attitudes, voluntary drug/alcohol testing, Grooming Awareness, Health Relationship and other appropriate training.
- Suicide Prevention Work was funded by the PCC. A Member of the Team was a qualified Suicide First Aid Trainer, and had delivered training to SBC staff, as well as partner agencies such as Herts Police, North Herts District Council and Women's Aid.
- NMS Team partnered with Junction 7 Creatives to create weekly sessions for service users to create art in a safe environment and had a chance to socialise with other service users.
- Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) was funded by the Hertfordshire County Council. The service was busy during the pandemic and supported 1209 referrals from April 2021 to February 2022. The highest referrals were for Stevenage with 359 cases and the lowest were for St Albans with only 29 cases.
- The SADA had established a close working relationship with the Cambridgeshire County Council, and the SADA service was commissioned to collate and share feedback from young people and adults who experienced domestic abused within Cambridge and Peterborough.
- There was an increase in the complex needs client referrals from a total of 289 in 2020/21 to 402 clients in 2021/22.
- Safe Space provision supported 52 families from April 2021 to February 2022 compared to 33 families last year.
- Safe Space supported 65 children, and had a total of 23 Safe Space properties.
- Family Intervention Project established in 2011 with HCC funding, and was part of the Intensive Family Support Team.
- The Family Intervention Teams provided support in area, such as unemployment, Mental Health, Domestic Abuse, Teenage Pregnancy, Debt, Poor Health and Substance Misuse.
- The Team was working close with the Herts CCTV Partnership to prevent crimes.

In response to a question from a Member, The Community Safety Manager advised that there were challenges with the funding of these projects, but she had got supportive and dedicated Team who go above and beyond to complete their tasks. She explained all of the work done by the Team had some sort of partner involvement, and the Team encouraged partners to be involved in the process.

She explained that the funding for projects were usually for a year, and three years maximum, and the funding for this period would end in 2023, and that she was

looking to sustain that funding for 2024 and 2025. Suicide Prevention and Domestic Abuse training were sold to partners including the Police and the North Herts District Council.

Members noted the challenges faced by the Team during the pandemic, and praised the Team's hard work

The Executive Portfolio Holder highlighted the issue around the funding for these projects and explained that the projects should be recognised, and the Government needed to do a long term commitment on funding these projects. Members agreed that the core funding had been reduced in the last decade and was the reason that the Team constantly looking for funding these projects.

It was **RESOLVED** that the crimes and disorder update be noted.

3 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

4 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

There were no exempt information.

5 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Environment and Climate Change  
**Date** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022



## CLIMATE CHANGE – UPDATE JUNE 2022

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257  
**Lead Officer** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257  
**Contact Officer** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report builds upon the update provided to the Executive at its meeting in October 2021 and provides Members with an overview of the action that Stevenage Borough Council is taking to address climate change. The report also outlines further action being taken in partnership at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and references the emerging activities of the recently established East of England Regional Climate Change Forum.
- 1.2 The report highlights the continuing need for substantial legislative and financial support from Government.
- 1.3 The report provides the first opportunity for the new Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change to share thoughts on the state of SBC work, on areas for greater focus; to outline future work on engagement and strategic communications with various stakeholders; and to propose a neighbourhood level and street level approach in addition to current activities and programmes.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the content of this report are noted and that Members highlight any further matters for officer consideration.
- 2.2 To receive further details on the community engagement and stakeholder relationships at the July Executive.

## **3 BACKGROUND – INTERNATIONAL / GLOBAL**

- 3.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 introduced the UK's first legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels by 2050. Strong progress has been made. Between 1990 and 2017, the UK reduced its emissions by 42% while growing the economy by more than two thirds.
- 3.2 On 27 June 2019 the UK government amended the Climate Change Act and set a legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050.
- 3.3 Acknowledging that the 2050 net zero target is not sufficient, Stevenage Borough Council in June 2019 declared a climate emergency, and agreed a motion for the Council to achieve zero carbon for town and Council by 2030. This has been reflected into a Strategy (approved September 2020) and a live Action Plan has been developed to implement the Strategy. To achieve this strategy in full, the Council will require substantial external support and funding from Government to implement the scale of change required in the town.

### **COP 26 what was agreed and what happens next?**

- 3.4 COP stands for "Conference of the Parties", and the one in Glasgow was the 26th annual summit. Ahead of it, 200 countries were asked for their plans to cut emissions by 2030. The goal is to keep cutting emissions until they reach net zero by mid-century. Next year's COP27 summit is in Egypt. It aims to reduce the worst impacts of climate change, but some leaders and campaigners say it does not go far enough.
- 3.5 The agreements made at COP 26, which although not legally binding, will set the global agenda on climate change for the next decade. The biggest announcement was relating to Emissions. It was agreed countries will meet next year to pledge further cuts to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) - a greenhouse gas which causes climate change. This is to try to keep temperature rises within 1.5C - which scientists say is required to prevent a "climate catastrophe".
- 3.6 For the first time at a COP conference, there was an explicit plan to reduce use of coal - which is responsible for 40% of annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, countries only agreed a weaker commitment to "phase down" rather than "phase out" coal after a late intervention by China and India.



- 3.7 Lots of funding for both developing countries to transition away from polluting to investments in new low carbon technologies were made. Over £200bn was pledged. The world's biggest CO2 emitters, the US and China, pledged to co-operate more over the next decade in areas including methane emissions and the switch to clean energy. Leaders from more than 100 countries, covering around 85% of the world's forests - promised to stop deforestation by 2030. A scheme to cut 30% of methane emissions by 2030 was agreed by more than 100 countries, but not China, Russia or India. Methane is currently responsible for a third of human-generated warming.

### **BACKGROUND - LOCAL**

- 3.8 The Council is estimated to be responsible for about 1% of the direct emissions in the geographical area of Stevenage. This rises to 10% when including the 8,000 Council homes that are managed by Stevenage Borough Council. By the use of existing regulations and powers, the Council can influence change over another 10%-20% of the emissions of the town. This leaves the remaining 70%+ that individuals and organisations will need to directly address. As such SBC and other local Councils will need to make the case to Government for increased powers and funding to help reach our shared ambitions to achieve net zero. The funding required is so large most individual businesses or residents cannot fund it themselves.

To achieve the Council's collective ambition for a zero carbon Stevenage by 2030 the Council, central government and local residents and businesses over time. Given local government spending cuts, central government will need to commit more resources to allow the Council to meet its goal.

- 3.9 All levels of government and stakeholders acknowledge that these ambitions for climate change can only be realised with the support and action of local residents and businesses. We all must make changes to how we consume and travel to protect our environment. It is an emergency and the time for action for us all is now.
- 3.10 The Council has identified its fleet emissions, building emissions and the way in which we work (covering 80% of SBC's emissions), as those elements SBC can directly make the most impact alongside regulations. The Council's 'asks' from government support the areas residents and businesses are most affected by and for which they can make the most change towards.
- 3.11 In March 2022, Stevenage Borough Council allocated additional budget funding for a permanent Climate Manager, to help co-ordinate and lead activities in Stevenage. The recruitment of a permanent post holder for this will commence in June 2022.

### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

- 3.12 Since providing an update report to Executive in October 2021, several projects have progressed, including
- Stevenage Bus Interchange: Works have completed on this new and enhanced facility, which increases capacity for sustainable travel by bus and improves user experience

- Zero-Emissions Bus Bid: £13m funding bid to central government for £6m funding for 30 single deck, battery electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network.
- Towns Fund: Business case approved for £3.75m for walking and cycling projects
- Station Gateway: New MSCP designed, with 25% - 50% capacity for EV charging and 100+ cycle spaces
- Successful housing bids for over £2m of investment in:
  - Local authority delivery fund (LAD1b) until May 2022 - £932K to increase EPC Band D properties to EPC Band C, measures included where required solar PV, loft insulation, cavity insulation, external wall insulation, ventilation and draft proofing
  - Local authority delivery fund (LAD1b) additional funding until May 2022 - £465K to increase EPC Band D properties to EPC Band C, measures included where required solar PV, loft insulation, cavity insulation, external wall insulation, ventilation and draft proofing
  - Social Housing Decarbonisation fund (SHDF) until April 2023 - £1.836m to increase EPC Band D properties to EPC Band C, measures included where required solar PV, loft insulation, cavity insulation, external wall insulation, ventilation and draft proofing

**Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the Climate Change update June 2022 be noted.**

#### **4 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE JUNE 2022 - GLOBAL**

4.1 The global pandemic and associated ‘lockdowns’ have had a significant impact on climate change during 2020 – 2021. This included an estimated 85% drop in long haul air travel and reductions in all type of commuting, and meant that emissions declined at the fastest rate on record in 2020, an estimated 13% drop. The drop in 2020 marks a record eighth consecutive year of reductions in the UK and much will depend on the recovery in 2021 and beyond to see how much of these carbon savings can be maintained and further improved, in a way that does not exacerbate energy poverty to lower income households, or limit access to employment and good quality housing. The dramatic increasing in energy prices for individuals and businesses alike will result in behavioural and production changes. While this may limit energy use in the short term, there will be profound effects on us all, particularly highlighting the urgent need for government-level initiatives to promote insulation and energy efficiency measures and alternative forms of sustainable energy production.

##### **Emissions in Stevenage**

4.2 The carbon emissions in the Stevenage Borough Council geography dropped by 3.1% in 2019, over 2018 to 340.8 ktCO<sub>2</sub> (Kilo-tonnes of carbon). 350 ktCO<sub>2</sub> is broadly equivalent to 350,000 return flights from London to New

York, or 1.2 billion miles driven in a diesel car, and it would need 17.5 million new trees to offset its carbon. The 2018 figure (351.8\_ktCO<sub>2</sub>) is our baseline as it is the level of emissions when SBC announced its climate change emergency. These are figures produced by central government taking into account a complex array of energy use data and are about a year behind. The Council is working across Hertfordshire to agree an approach to common baseline which can be used to track progress and monitor effectiveness.

- 4.3 The Climate Change Strategy is based around 8 themes, reflecting the breadth of services offered by the Council. The 8 themes are shown below and the Council's delivery against those themes is set out below. The traffic light colouring (red, yellow, and green) depicts the progress made against each one.

## People

SBC will produce a Climate Change Comms Plan to help education and inform our residents.

Continue to work with youth groups, Youth Council and local schools to help both understand their Climate Change concerns and also empower them to make changes.

## Biodiversity

Tree protection and Planting Strategy

Biodiversity Plan and Actions

Plant over 2,000 trees by 2030

Construct at least 3 new lakes or ponds by 2030

## Transport

Electric Taxis and support to drivers to transition their fleet.

Electric Buses, with expanded routes and frequencies.

With HCC, introduce work-place parking charges

Living Streets trials

Decarbonising the SBC fleet before 2030.

Bike and E-bike hire

## Energy & Water

Promote cross county purchase of renewable energy supply

Identify opportunities for local renewable energy generation.

Test a Combined Heat & Power Station as part of new swimming pool development.

With Affinity Water & HCC, support their move to zero carbon

## Businesses

Lobby government to support our businesses and a Green Recovery

Using our network's shared knowledge to support SME to adapt to climate change opportunities

Share knowledge and improved ways or working across our business community to reduce carbon.

## Homes

Energy efficient housing and subsidies for public and private homes

Planning Policy for zero carbon homes on all large scale developments

Zero carbon development at the Station Gateway

Fully electric / zero carbon heat and power on SBC lead developments

## Construction & Regeneration

Design a Carbon Neutral new Civic Hub

Work with Regeneration Partners that are committed to zero carbon operations

Fully electric SG1 residential development

Zero carbon state schools

## Waste & Recycling

Develop a new Waste Strategy promoting reduction, reuse and recycling

Zero waste to landfill or incineration

With HCC produce biogas

Some key work in progress:

## People

- Implement the Collaboration and Communication Plan, support our residents to make choices to lower their carbon usage
- Lobbying government directly through the UK100 Programme to fund and support Local Authorities to decrease our collective emissions
- One of the first councils in the UK to partner with Energy Saving Trust to provide an energy efficiency app to residents and help them make energy savings. Unique and easy-to-use the Hertfordshire Energy Advice Tool (HEAT) app gives a virtual tour around a typical home, asking questions and giving advice along the way. Potential savings of £70 per year

## Biodiversity

- Biodiversity Action Plan in place, delivered a range of works including the management of around 33 ha of meadow grasslands for wildlife (Weston Road Meadow).
- 5 community orchards
- Council adopted Biodiversity SPD to ensure new development enhances biodiversity
- New trees policy implemented for Stevenage to replace on a 2 for 1 basis
- £100k funding for biodiversity projects secured
- Leading partner through HS CCP for Biodiversity, including a Countywide baseline analysis

## Transport

- £13m funding bid to central government for £6m funding for 30 single deck, battery electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network.
- New EV charging facilities on Swinggate in the town centre, Old Town and proposal for 12 new EV charging stations in the neighbourhood centres.
- Planning permission granted for new 1 station EV charging station at junction 7 on the A1 (M).
- Local Cycling Walking Investment Programme (LCWIP) in place
- Sustainable Travel Town bid approved
- North Road cycle project at £1.8m from Graveley Road to Old Town
- New bus interchange, close to the train station, improved facilities connections to support modal shift.

## Energy & Water

- SBC main energy contract changed to zero carbon saving carbon
- Working with Affinity Water to support their 2030 net zero target

## **Business**

- Mapped all large businesses carbon commitments
- Establishing a Stevenage Together and Smartgo Stevenage sub group on Climate Change.

## **Homes**

- SBC successful bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund will see around 400 social homes with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower receive upgrades to improve their energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. This includes fitting, if required, wall and loft insulation, double glazing and solar panels. Resolution to grant SG1 planning application with over 1,800 units, with zero gas
- Planning permission granted North of Stevenage planning application with a 38 ha country park, SUDS, and 2250+ new trees
- Committed to electric boilers in our new housing schemes from 2023 onwards.
- £2m+ investment in lowering carbon and energy costs in SBC housing stock.

## **Construction and Regeneration**

- SG1 application, baseline for electric only heating with higher standard for schemes
- £3.75m funding secure for walking, cycling and heritage trail
- Securing £37.5m Towns Funding
- Housing Development, triple glazing, solar power and other low carbon housing
- Regeneration refurbishments in the town centre, at North Queensway and Town Square North Block hosting 'Co-Space' flexible work space.

## **Waste and Recycling**

- Work on waste policy to help improve collection methods and clarity for customers
- National waste strategy under consultation and SBC Strategy completed in 2021
- Commitment to Food Waste collections for residential properties in Stevenage from 2025

## **Working with partners:**

### **Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and at the East of England level.**

- 4.4 A crucial element of the Council's approach is to work with other local government partners to help secure investment, business cases and to find ways to collectively reduce carbon footprint and improve sustainability.
- 4.5 The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) consists of all 10 districts and the county council, plus the Local Enterprise Partnership. HCCSP is a strategic group which acts as the lead partnership organisation for partners to collaborate and identify joint work programmes on environmental, climate change and wider sustainability issues, and where projects to address the climate challenge are best addressed across a wider footprint.
- 4.6 SBC are proactive participants in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), with the Chief Executive the lead Officer sponsor for the HCCSP work plan and the Council is supporting on two of the four main themes for which detailed action plans are being developed:
- Biodiversity
  - Carbon reduction
  - Transport
  - Water.
  - New : Behavioural Change
  - New: Climate Change Adaption
- 4.7 Much of the strategic work is being focused through HCCSP to harness the power of a county of over 1.2 million people. The themes fed into the Council's own 8 themes and it is through this work with HCCSP that the Council is delivering on its own objectives at a greater scale. Large amounts of work have been done already, including producing and agreeing the 4 Action Plans and some important quick wins.
- 4.8 The Regional Climate Change Forum is organised by the East of England LGA, which the Council's Chief Executive leads on and its key deliverables and areas of focus are:
- Identifying the scale of the challenge in the region (e.g. specific issues/impacts unique to the EoE)
  - Understand our collective preparedness to meet the challenge – are there any gaps? What is the legislative framework
  - Developing regional strategy/themes/action plan/areas of focus
  - Exploring collaboration opportunities at regional level (e.g. joined up communications, behaviour change approaches, joint commissioning etc.)
  - Best practice information sharing
  - National lobbying activity
  - Regional funding bids



## **5 HOW WE ARE WORKING**

### **Engagement**

- 5.1 To inform the strategy and action plan, extensive consultation has taken place. An open consultation in 2019/2020 achieved wide and broad engagement across the town, with 1,600 responses helping shape the strategy. Key priorities identified by residents included making a change to their method of travel and eating habits.
- 5.2 Further work on engaging with young people through the Green Schools network is being explored, alongside work with North Herts College.
- 5.3 Through work with the Environment & Economy Committee, there has been technical work with the University of Hertfordshire and extensive discussions with stakeholder groups like HEART.
- 5.4 The research work with the University of Hertfordshire, see appendix 1, looks in detail at the most effective ways of reducing carbon output. From this technical analysis, it can be seen that a combination of building insulation and tree planting has the most impact, alongside behavioural change. This research should help with bids and seeking to apply resources to the areas with most impact.
- 5.5 For our local businesses with the Council is working with Wenta at the BTC to support local SMEs on their zero carbon journey and make the most of the opportunities from a lower carbon economy. Local businesses like the IET have invested in their building to reduce both carbon and energy costs, and SBC is keen to share these experiences and learnings.
- 5.6 Developing an updated engagement approach to work closely with interested community groups, and engage widely. SBC is exploring ways to best engage locally at both the neighbourhood and street level, to empower and incentivise local people to make positive change in their local areas.

### **Governance - Climate change Corporate Programme Group**

- 5.7 With the appointment of the new Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change, Cllr Speller, officers are reviewing and expanding the Member governance around climate change. An expanded Member working group is being developed, to be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change. The group includes the Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise & Economy; Housing & Housing Development; Resources and Information Technology; and Regeneration; and the Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee.
- 5.8 A new Climate Change Corporate Programme group will be established, led by the new Climate Change Programme Lead, to report quarterly clearly on SBC's performance in meeting its climate change commitments. This high level group of officers and portfolio holder will keep a track on performance and highlight achievements and areas which require additional support and resources.
- 5.9 The Deputy Leader and Youth Mayor will also work with the Council to ensure the Borough's younger voices are heard and empowered into action.

- 5.10 The Environment and Economy Select Committee have committed to reviewing the delivery of the climate strategy and action plan over a two year period, with an expectation that the climate actions planned and required in each portfolio area will be subject to review.
- 5.11 There is a cross-party member led group within the HCCSP, which Cllr Speller (as Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change) will attend and contribute towards.
- 5.12 Over the last two years, a significant amount of preparation work has been undertaken to engage residents and businesses, work with partners and focus on deliverable actions that can achieve the goals of the Stevenage Borough Council Climate Strategy. The Council is working closely with partners through Stevenage Together, to share experiences on climate change, speak with a single voice to government and support its residents and customers to reduce their emissions.



**6 IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the climate change strategy have been met from the agreed departmental budget. A number of projects referenced within this report have secured third party funding from

government and other sources, such as s106 agreements, to be able to pilot initiatives, or to improve sustainable travel assets.

- 6.2 To give some of the required investment some scale, the average cost to retro-fit a house to be net zero is £26,000 per house. Targeting SBC 8,000, as being some of the oldest in Stevenage would require £208 million, clearly beyond SBC or residents budgets. Similarly the Borough has some older and new private housing which would require more than this again. Currently new EV waste vehicles are 4 times the price on non EV, however it is expected that these costs would fall as demand and supply of these increased.
- 6.3 There are likely to be significant reductions in income to the Council linked to changes in the way people commute and use the Council's car parks. This will need to be carefully managed to ensure the services and provisions for sustainable transport the income funds can continue.
- 6.4 As the report identifies, for councils to meet net zero, by 2023, significant funding will be required from central government and/or third parties to fund the cost of large scale projects, such as implementation of Electric Vehicle charging networks, retrofit of council housing stock and commercial and operational buildings.
- 6.5 As the Council works on options and future projects to achieve the ambition of being a net zero carbon Council and town by 2030, Officers will need to bring forward a number of business cases. If the government does not step in to support the local government sector and the Council is required to provide the investment then a significant reprioritisation of other projects and activities would be required to progress highly complex projects to absorb increased revenue and capital costs.

### **Legal Implications**

- 6.6 There are no direct legal implications associated with adopting the Climate Change Strategy, however it is likely the Government will begin introducing stricter targets with legal implications for those Councils that are not meeting carbon reductions.

### **Risk Implications**

- 6.7 The greatest risks associated with this work are failing to secure sufficient support from residents, businesses and government to protect us all from the effect of climate change.

### **Policy Implications**

- 6.8 The Annual Update on Climate Change supports the Council's own Climate Change Strategy and wider corporate ambitions for a low carbon future.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 6.9 This report highlights the risks, challenges and opportunities that the Council has to address, not only carbon emissions but its wider climate change aspirations.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.10 Climate change affects those in most need both in the UK and around the world. Those in deprivation, hunger or unwell are both most affected by climate change and least able to address it. Therefore the Council is duty bound as one of those in the world that are more able to act, to act now.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

SBC Climate Change Strategy

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 15 June 2022



## ASSESSMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME FOR 2022/23 AND RELATED LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Ben Threadgold  
**Contributor** Assistant Directors  
**Lead Officer** Matt Partridge | 2456  
**Contact Officer** Richard Protheroe | 2938

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To set out the key announcements of relevance to local government in the Government's legislative agenda for the 2022-23 Parliamentary session, and the potential opportunities and implications for Stevenage.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of this report be noted and that Members highlight any related matters for officer consideration.

### 3 CONTEXT

- 3.1 On Tuesday 10 May 2022, during the State Opening of Parliament, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen, set out the Government's agenda for the 2022-23 Parliamentary session.

- 3.2 The speech outlined the UK government's legislative agenda for the coming session. It announced 38 new bills that are intended to be introduced over the next year. Key focuses for local government included: levelling up, planning system reforms, housing regulations and rights for renters, the new Schools Bill, energy, crime and justice, health and transport and infrastructure investment. For the purposes of this report only those Bills directly relevant to Stevenage Borough Council have been taken account of within this report.
- 3.3 The speech was criticised by opposition parties for its lack of immediate response to the growing cost of living crisis, although the Government has subsequently announced (on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2022) a package of support for households that will be partly subsidised by a windfall tax on energy company profits. A planned Employment Bill also did not feature. With regards to the Government's response to the cost of living crisis it is noted that the impact on inflation has also been questioned.
- 3.4 Since the speech the Government has also announced further details on its plans to implement a full dispersal of asylum seeking refugees across the country. The asylum dispersal system is designed to allocate asylum seekers to different parts of the UK, into Home Office funded accommodation, while they await a decision on their claim.

## **4 LEVELLING UP AND REGENERATION BILL**

- 4.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, published on 11 May 2022, aims to drive local growth and empower local leaders to regenerate their areas. It will place a duty on the Government to set Levelling Up missions for a period of five years through a levelling up mission statement. An annual report updating the country on the delivery of these missions will also be produced.
- 4.2 It is worth noting that the Bill gives the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities the power to change or remove missions during the five year period. The changes will be dependent on an assessment of progress and whether the missions will realistically be achieved.
- 4.3 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:
- enshrines in law the 12 "missions" to be achieved by 2030 (see Appendix 1)
  - creation of a new local governance model via three possible levels of devolution:
    - Level 1 – Local authorities working together across a Functional Economic Area (FEA) or whole county area e.g. through a joint committee
    - Level 2 – A single institution or County Council without a Democratically Elected Mayor (DEM), across a FEA or whole county area

- Level 3 – a single institution or County Council with a directly elected mayor (DEM), across a functional economic area (FEA) or whole county area.
- the ability to consolidate existing core local transport funding into a multi-year integrated settlement
- devolution of locally-led brownfield funding, mayoral control of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions where boundaries align and the ability to introduce a mayoral precept and supplement on business rates
- digitisation reforms to the planning system with an aim to make local plans easier to find, understand and engage with allowing local authorities to get local plans in place and limit speculative development (i.e. where a piece of land is purchased for construction without any strict pledges regarding what the end use will be)
- a new approach to environmental assessment as part of the planning process so that the environment is prioritised in planning decisions
- new Infrastructure levy to be locally set and non-negotiable to deliver the housing, schools, GPs and new roads that communities need
- new powers for local authorities to bring empty premises back into use and instigate rental auctions of vacant commercial properties in town centres and on high streets
- changes to the process by which street names can be altered
- pavement licences for al fresco dining to be made permanent
- the definition of long-term empty homes will be amended so that it will apply to dwellings empty for one year, rather than two years as at present. This means that councils will have powers to charge up to double council tax for these homes.
- billing authorities will also have powers to charge up to double council tax for dwellings which are substantially furnished and periodically empty (the explanatory note to the Bill says these are often referred to as ‘second homes’)
- Amendments to the Local Government Finance Act 2003 enabling the Secretary of State to give one or more risk-mitigation<sup>1</sup> directions to a local authority in England.

The council is discussing potential opportunities associated with the Governments levelling-up proposals through existing county level partnership structures. This includes consideration of the level of devolution that the County Council and Districts would be comfortable going for and the future role of the Local Enterprise Partnership which under the levelling-up proposals was formally embedded in the national policy agenda for the first time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Risk-mitigation is described as: “(a) a direction that sets limits in relation to the borrowing of money by the local authority; (b) a direction that requires the local authority to take action specified in the direction. The action specified “may (amongst other things) require the local authority to take action to divest itself of a specified asset”

The District Council Network has shared a response to the local governance proposals with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The response outlines ideas for adapting the governance model for (mayoral) combined authorities to provide a full role for districts to ensure the combined authority functions smoothly and delivers good outcomes for local communities.

Nationally the Government is encouraging local authorities to think about the 'art of the possible'. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, the Government's Levelling Up Director General, encouraged councils to recognise that one size does not fit all and highlighted that the Department would be receptive to locally determined proposals - with Cornwall being held-up as an authority which is making significant progress.

There is also a big push nationally to ensure that data collection and return on investment can be demonstrated effectively. In response, the Council is working to match the 12 missions and their draft metrics against the corporate performance suite for 2022/23. The new performance suite will be presented to the Executive in July 2022.

## **5 RENTERS REFORM BILL**

5.1 The Renters Reform Bill was initially proposed under Theresa May's Government in 2019. It was intended to provide a step-change in protections for private renters, ending no-fault evictions and giving landlords and tenants more rights.

5.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- abolish 'no fault' section 21 evictions by removing the clause from the Housing Act (1988) (a section 21 notice starts the legal process to end an assured shorthold tenancy most private renters have this type of tenancy) empowering tenants to challenge poor practice and unfair rent increases without fear of retaliatory eviction.
- apply the legally binding Decent Homes Standard in the Private Rented Sector giving tenants safer, better quality and better value homes.
- councils will be given greater tools to crack down on non-compliant landlords and poor practice
- a new Ombudsman for private landlords to help resolve disputes out of court and introduce a new property portal which aims to help landlords understand their obligations, while giving tenants and local authorities performance information to hold landlords to account
- introduce stronger possession grounds when there are repeated incidences of rent arrears, and reduce notice periods when there is antisocial behaviour

5.4 A White Paper setting out the details of the Government's proposals is due to be published in the coming months. It is anticipated that the focus on improved conditions will lead to new responsibilities for councils. It will be important that any new burdens are fully funded.



- 5.3 Further information will also be welcomed on the new property portal, and understanding what action can be taken against private landlords and when local councils can intervene.

## **6 SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATION BILL**

- 6.1 In 2020, the Social Housing White Paper set out a range of policies that the Government vowed to bring forward to re-align the relationship between social landlords and tenants. At the heart of the paper was a plan to broaden the remit of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to allow it to be more proactive on consumer matters such as disrepair and safety, while also measuring tenant satisfaction. The Bill seeks to bring those proposals into legislation.

- 6.2 The priorities and areas of focus are primarily focused on an expansion of the role and powers of the RSH, this includes:

- the RSH will be able to intervene with landlords who are performing poorly on consumer issues, such as complaints handling and decency of homes, to rectify issues
- be able to give 48 hours' notice to a landlord before a survey is carried out, enabling the Regulator to act more quickly where it has concerns about the decency of a home.
- arrange emergency repairs of tenants' homes following a survey and where there is evidence of systemic failure by the landlord.
- lift the cap on the fines that the Regulator can issue to a landlord who fails to meet required standards.
- create new Tenant Satisfaction Measures which will allow tenants to see how their landlord is performing and help the RSH decide where to focus its attention.

To increase transparency, the Bill will also enable tenants of housing associations to request information from their landlord in a similar way to how the Freedom of Information Act works for tenants of Local Authority landlords.

- 6.3 As a council with management responsibility for approx. 8000 social housing properties officers would welcome from Government more clarity on how the additional financial burden on local councils to implement and monitoring the Tenancy Satisfaction Measures will be met. Similarly, it will be important that any new requirements or responsibilities for councils under this Bill align with proposals being brought forward in both the Fire Safety Act and the Building Safety Act and are fully funded.
- 6.4 At present, there is a £5,000 cap on fines that the Regulator can impose on social landlords. The Government must consider carefully the implications of removing the cap. Fines on council landlords would in effect end up being paid for, at least in part, out of tenants' rents.

## **7 TRANSPORT BILL**

- 7.1 The purpose of this Bill is to ensure a better and more reliable service for passengers to support economic growth across the country. The aims are

linked to the decarbonisation of the UK by 2050 with mass transit vehicles such as buses and trains being proposed to be the most energy efficient mode of travel.

7.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Enabling the installation of more electric vehicle charge points throughout the UK as part of the transition away from new petrol and diesel car and van sales by 2030 and building public confidence to switch to zero emission vehicles.
- Providing a new body, Great British Railways, with the powers it needs to act as the single national leader of the railways, with clear lines of accountability for decision-making and joined-up leadership to deliver a customer-focused railway, including by improving accessibility and promoting open data.
- Transferring contracting powers for passenger services to Great British Railways, and ensuring we retain the best of the private sector by expanding its role under the new model, introducing new passenger service contracts focussed on getting the trains running punctually and reliably.
- Introducing new laws that safely enable self-driving and remotely operated vehicles and vessels, support the roll-out of electric vehicle charge points and enabling the licensing of London pedicabs.

7.3 Under the Council's Climate Change Strategy (2020) and working in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council, a £13m funding bid was submitted to central government for £6m funding for 30 single-deck, electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network. The opening of the new bus interchange close to the train station has been enabled with the hard infrastructure to be Electric Vehicle ready, and will also help contribute to reducing emissions across the town when electric buses are in use. .

## **8 DRAFT MENTAL HEALTH ACT REFORM BILL**

8.1 In 2019 Professor Sir Simon Wessely delivered his Independent Review of the Mental Health Act, this was followed by a White Paper in 2021. It set out what needed to change in both law and practice in order to deliver a modern mental health service that respects the patient's voice and empowers individuals to shape their own care and treatment. It also made recommendations on how to address the disparities in how the act affects people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

8.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Helping to address the existing disparities in the use of the Act for people from ethnic minority backgrounds – especially for detentions and for the use of Community Treatment Orders.
- Ensuring that detentions only happen where strictly necessary.
- Amending the definition of mental disorder so that people can no longer be detained solely because they have a learning disability or because they are autistic.

- Changing the criteria needed to detain people, so that the Act is only used where strictly necessary: where the person is a genuine risk to their own safety or that of others, and where there is a clear therapeutic benefit.
- Giving patients better support, including offering everyone the option of an independent mental health advocate, and allowing patients to choose their own 'nominated person', rather than have a 'nearest relative' assigned for them.
- Introducing a 28-day time-limit for transfers from prison to hospital for acutely ill prisoners and ending the temporary use of prison for those awaiting assessment or treatment.
- Introducing a new form of supervised community discharge. This will allow the discharge of restricted patients into the community, with the necessary care and supervision to adequately and appropriately manage their risk.
- Increasing the frequency with which patients can make appeals to Tribunals on their detention and provide Tribunals with a power to recommend that aftercare services are put in place.
- Introducing a statutory care and treatment plan for all patients in detention. This will be written with the patient and will set out a clear pathway to discharge.

8.3 The council's community safety activities in conjunction with the SoSafe Partnership, and our extensive work with residents through the No More and the Evolve service, has heightened awareness of the impact that poor mental health has on an individual, their families and the community.

8.4 The delivery of a modern mental health service is a necessity, but equally important is investment in vital early intervention and prevention services.

8.5 Disparities around access to services for people of BAME heritage has been discussed at the Stevenage Equalities Commissions (SEC) forum sessions and a SEC recommendations report is due to be published in summer 2022.

## 9 MODERN SLAVERY BILL

In 2015, the Government introduced the Modern Slavery Act making the UK the first country in the world to have legislation dedicated to tackling modern slavery. The purpose of the Bill is enshrine in domestic law the Government's international obligations to victims of modern slavery, especially regarding their rights to assistance and support, providing greater legal certainty for victims. It is also seeking to ensure law enforcement agencies have stronger tools to prevent modern slavery occurring, protect victims of modern slavery and prosecute perpetrators.

9.1 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Strengthen the requirements on businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual modern slavery statement to set out steps taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains

- mandate the reporting areas to be covered in modern slavery statements; requiring organisations to publish their statements on a government-run registry, extending these requirements to public bodies and introducing civil penalties for organisations that do not comply with the requirements
- strengthen the operation of Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders and Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders, which place conditions on an individual, to prevent and disrupt modern slavery crimes and better protect victims
- these will be backed up by criminal sanctions for any breaches

9.2 The Council signed up to the Co-operative Party Modern Slavery Charter in 2018. The Charter aims to go beyond existing law and guidance by committing councils to proactively vetting their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place.

9.3 The Council has trained its corporate procurement team to challenge any low cost tenders and report any contractors that may be of concern. Officers actively check the Council's supply chains for any signs of potential exploitation.

9.4 The Council requires all of its contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination highlighted as a potential sanction for non-compliance.

## **10 DRAFT VICTIMS BILL**

10.1 The draft Victims Bill seeks to ensure there is an effective criminal justice system that serves society by restoring victims' confidence that their voices will be properly heard and that perpetrators will be prosecuted.

10.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Enshrining the Victims' Code in law (the Victims' Code focuses on victims' rights and sets out the minimum standard that organisations must provide to victims of crime)
- Increasing transparency and oversight of the services that criminal justice agencies provide to victims by granting a greater role for Police and Crime Commissioners and inspectorates to assess delivery
- Enabling improvements in the quality and consistency of support services for victims of sexual violence, domestic abuse and serious violence
- Elevating and increasing awareness of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors so that they can better work together with other agencies to consistently meet the needs of victims.

10.3 Through the Council's community safety work with the SoSafe Partnership, the response to Anti-Social Behaviour and extensive work with residents through the No More and the Evolve services, Stevenage Borough Council is

acutely aware of the impact of crime on a victim, their families and the wider community.

- 10.4 While action to improve victim support is essential and much needed, it is important that the legislation is accompanied by wider action to reduce crime and prevent people from becoming victims in the first place. This must be underpinned by investment in vital early intervention and prevention services.

## **11 DRAFT PROTECT DUTY BILL**

11.1 The Bill aims to enhance national security by introducing new security requirements for certain public locations and venues to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks. It seeks to provide clarity on protective security and preparedness responsibilities for organisations in scope of the Duty.

11.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- establish a new requirements framework which requires those in control of certain public locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures
- an inspection and enforcement regime, which will seek to educate, advise, and ensure compliance with the Duty

11.3 The Council takes threats from terrorism extremely seriously and works hard alongside wider partners to keep our community safe. The Council will continue to monitor the development of the Bill closely, particularly in regards to existing or new council duties.

11.4 If inspection and/or enforcement responsibilities are passed to the Council then these will need to be funded appropriately and time should be permitted to allow for communication, preparation, guidance and training, and recruitment of specialised staff prior to implementation.

## **12 PUBLIC ORDER BILL**

12.1 The Bill aims to ensure the police have the tools they need to manage and tackle protesting tactics and prevent major transport projects and infrastructure from being targeted by protesters.

12.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Introduce new criminal offences of locking-on and going equipped to lock-on, thereby criminalising the protest tactic of individuals intentionally attaching themselves to others, objects, or buildings to cause serious disruption.
- Making it illegal to obstruct major transport works, including disrupting the construction or maintenance of projects, such as HS2.
- Creating a new criminal offence for interfering with key national infrastructure, which covers any behaviour which obstructs or delays the operation of key infrastructure, such as airports, railways, and printing presses.

- Extending stop and search powers for police to search for and seize articles related to protest-related offences.
- Introducing Serious Disruption Prevention Orders, a new preventative court order targeting protestors who are determined to repeatedly protest; breach of the order will be a criminal offence.

12.3 It is worth noting that the measures set out in the Bill have already been rejected once by the House of Lords, when it voted on the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts bill – also known as the Policing Bill – which became law in April 2022. The measures voted down by the Lords were Police powers against locking on, blocking infrastructure, and to introduce “protest ASBOs” – these have now come back as part of the Public Order Bill and it is possible that these might be rejected by the House of Lords once more.

12.4 Whilst targeted protesting is not anticipated in Stevenage in the near future the Council will continue to work closely with police colleagues to monitor the associated risks as part of the SBC corporate risk management reporting responsibilities.

### **13 BREXIT FREEDOMS BILL**

13.1 The Bill intends to remove retained EU law as it still applies in the UK and clarify the status of retained EU law in UK domestic law. Retained EU law is a new category of UK law which was created primarily in order to avoid "gaps" opening up in the UK statute book following Brexit and to provide certainty. The provisions in this Bill are intended to create new powers to strengthen the ability to amend, repeal or replace retained EU law by reducing the need to always use primary legislation to do so.

13.2 The proposal to forego primary legislation allowing only limited Parliamentary scrutiny is a key issue for opposing parties. Another key issue will be how far the Government is required to conduct a public consultation on draft legislation before proceeding with a change. The Council will continue to monitor the changes and potential implications.

### **14 NON-DOMESTIC RATING BILL**

14.1 The Bill intends to review and create a fairer, more accurate business rates system, and support businesses and employees to enhance productivity and energy efficiency by making improvements to their place of work.

14.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- provision to shorten the business rates revaluation cycle from five to three years from 2023
- improve the valuation accuracy and timeliness in a shorter revaluation cycle through new duties on ratepayers with measures to support compliance

- create a power for the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to provide ratepayers with information on the calculation of their rateable value and measures
- introduce new 12-month rates relief on increases to rateable value arising from improvements made to a property
- a new 100 per cent rates relief for low-carbon heat networks that are assessed as separate entities for business rates

14.3 The Council supports measures to improve valuation accuracy and timeliness. This includes new duties for ratepayers to notify the VOA of information concerning the calculation of their rateable value. There should also be measures for further information to be provided to billing authorities where this would enable councils to discharge their functions effectively. The implementation of the new reliefs (including how councils will be fully compensated for income foregone) as well as for any new burdens arising from the administration of these reliefs must be reviewed to ensure that the burden of those reliefs is not funded by local councils.

14.4 Reducing the revaluation cycle from five to three years is likely to mean a business rate reset on any gains for councils, reducing the time any gains above the baseline are retained.

## **15 PROCUREMENT BILL**

15.1 The Procurement Bill seeks to take advantage of Brexit by reforming the UK's public procurement regime to create a more transparent system that better meets the country's needs, rather than being based on transposed EU directives. It also aims to boost business by making public procurement more accessible for new entrants such as small businesses and voluntary, charitable and social enterprises, enabling them to compete for public contracts.

15.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- establishing a single digital platform for supplier registration where businesses will only have to submit their data once to qualify for any public sector procurement
- Introducing new arrangements to buy at pace when needed to protect life, health, or public order,
- Enabling smaller contracts to be restricted to UK suppliers, as permitted by World Trade Organization rules, and ensuring that procurement activities aid jobs and innovation.
- Helping buyers to disqualify suppliers who are unfit to bid for public contracts because of past misconduct, corruption or poor performance.
- Requiring buyers to have regard to the Government's strategic priorities for public procurement as set out in the National Procurement Policy Statement.

- Providing a number of sector-specific features where necessary, including tailored rules to better suit defence and security procurement in order to protect our national interests.

15.3 It is the Council's view that priorities for procurement should be based on local strategic priorities. This includes ensuring that local businesses are encouraged and supported to secure contracts as highlighted within the Co-operative Procurement Strategy which was signed off by the Executive in 2021.

15.4 For example, the Council has chosen to use the Social Value Portal to manage its tendered contracts. Through the portal, social value themes, opportunities and measures are determined which help the Council to deliver locally defined social value outcomes.

15.5 Officers will welcome the receipt of more detail as proposals are developed by Government.

## **16 DRAFT AUDIT REFORM BILL**

16.1 The draft Audit Reform Bill seeks to rebuild trust in the UK's audit, corporate reporting and corporate governance system and the insolvency regulatory framework. This Bill follows the 'Restoring trust in audit and corporate governance consultation' in 2021 which sought views on proposals to strengthen the UK's framework for major companies and the way they are audited.

16.2 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Establishing a new statutory regulator, the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority (ARGA), that will protect and promote the interests of investors, other users of corporate reporting and the wider public interest.
- Providing new measures to open up the market, including a new approach of managed shared audit in which challenger firms undertake a share of the work on large-scale audits.
- Bringing the largest private companies in scope of regulation in the definition of 'public interest entities', recognising the public interest in companies of this size.
- Giving the new regulator effective powers to enforce directors' financial reporting duties, to supervise corporate reporting, and to oversee and regulate the accountancy and actuarial professions.
- Reforming the regulation of Insolvency Practitioners to give greater confidence to creditors and strengthening corporate governance of firms in or approaching insolvency so that 'asset stripping' can be more effectively tackled.

16.3 The Local Government Association's position is that local audit faces a number of problems that need addressing. The independent review by Sir Tony Redmond into the effectiveness of external audit and transparency of financial reporting in local authorities concluded that the local audit market is



fragile and external audit firms missing audit deadlines has become normal. However the Redmond review did not address the complex nature of Statement of Accounts and the ability for the reader to understand them.

- 16.4 With the introduction of a draft Bill, any legislation is unlikely to be in place for some time and therefore the current resourcing issues for the Audit companies and the ability to complete audits for local authorities by the deadlines will remain problematic. At the time this report was written there were nationally a significant number of 2019/20 and 2020/21 audits not signed off, including Stevenage Borough Council.
- 16.5 The introduction of the ARGA as a dedicated system leader for local audit means the accountable body is clear unlike the current position.. For this role to be fulfilled there is a need for a dedicated and specialist team within the ARGA with sufficient knowledge of local audit and local government.

## **17 DATA REFORM BILL**

- 17.1 The Data Reform Bill seeks to modernise the Information Commissioner's Office by providing it with enhanced capabilities and powers, and increase industry participation in Smart Data Schemes which will give citizens and small businesses more control of their data. The main elements of the Bill are to ensure the protection of UK citizens' personal data, enable data to be "shared more efficiently between public bodies", and to design "a more flexible, outcomes-focused approach to data protection".
- 17.2 It is hoped that the Government will consult with relevant data protection expert groups and professionals in local government on the future of the new data rights regime and any other reforms which will impact on councils' delivery of services. Any new regime or body must add value and not duplicate the work of other bodies.

## **18 UK INFRASTRUCTURE BANK BILL**

- 18.1 The UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB) was launched in June 2021. HM Treasury issued a policy document providing detail on the mandate and design of UKIB, its rationale and its initial areas of focus.
- 18.2 Over five years the bank will have £4 billion to lend to local authorities for individual high value and strategic projects, at least £5 million of which will support regional and local economic growth or help deliver net zero carbon emissions. Currently all lending by the bank to local authorities has to be via the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). This Bill establishes the bank as a statutory body which will enable it to lend to local authorities directly.
- 18.3 The Bill will finalise the creation of the UKIB by establishing it in law with clear objectives to support regional and local economic growth and deliver of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and ensuring it has the full range of spending and lending powers.
- 18.4 The main elements of the Bill are as follows:

- Enshrining the Bank's objectives and functions in legislation to ensure that it will be a long-lasting institution with a clear policy mandate to support economic growth, including at a regional and local level, and the delivery of net zero
- Protecting the Bank's operational independence by setting out clear accountability for how it is to be run, including reporting and board requirements
- Providing the Bank with the necessary powers to lend directly to local authorities and the Northern Ireland Executive, enabling the Bank to play a key role in delivering public sector infrastructure projects.

18.5 The establishment of UKIB will potentially give greater choice in financing options to local authorities and potentially entities such as the Hertfordshire Growth Board. The LGA reports that councils regularly flag financing as one of the greatest challenges in achieving their net zero objectives.

## **19 BOYCOTTS, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS BILL**

19.1 The Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Bill (BDS) seeks to prevent public bodies from taking a different approach to the UK Government on sanctions and foreign relations. This includes preventing public institutions carrying out independent boycotts, divestments and sanctions that converge with UK foreign and defence policy.

19.2 It should be noted that there is already a provision in primary legislation (section 100 of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Act 2022) (PSPJOA) that gives the Government powers to issue guidance on BDS-related matters in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It is unclear whether the BDS Bill will go further than the existing provision in the PSPJOA in relation to the LGPS.

19.3 It is the view of the LGA that there is no need for further provisions to cover LGPS investment decisions.

## **20 ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL**

20.1 In May 2022 the Home Office began consulting on proposals to reform the asylum dispersal system across all local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales. The asylum dispersal system is designed to allocate asylum seekers to different parts of the UK, into Home Office funded accommodation, while they await a decision on their claim. The reform proposals include:

- To move asylum seekers from costly hotels to dispersed accommodation
- To require all local authorities to participate in the scheme and have a plan in place at the regional level. The Government are quoting less than half of local authorities are engaged in the dispersed accommodation programme currently (47%)

- The Government are proposing full dispersal now, with all areas to participate and a cap of 0.5% of the ratio of asylum seekers to existing population
- Local authorities will receive a payment of £3,500 per dispersed place in the current Financial Year (beyond the £250 grant currently issued)

- 20.2 In addition, the Full Dispersal model, backed by new Government funding, is supposed to allow accommodation providers, working on behalf of the Home Office, to identify private rental sector properties that can be procured for asylum dispersal accommodation.
- 20.3 Any specific concerns about procuring specific properties or procuring properties in a specific postcode can be raised for consideration. These objections can be raised on four grounds: concerns around social cohesion, if procurement will impact on development or community plans, the issues with the provision of wraparound services and if a property has special characteristics in short supply (e.g a property adapted for someone with disabilities).
- 20.4 The consultation closes in July and works at the level of the Strategic Migration Partnership (ie there is one in place for each of the 12 regions and nations). Through consultation, the Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) will work to agree a regional plan and sufficient dispersal accommodation.
- 20.5 There will be consideration of elements such as existing market demands and other pressures (the Home Office cite the impacts emerging from Ukraine and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). Locally the Council would highlight the extraordinary local homelessness pressures being experienced as well as concerns that if the programme and plan is driven to the cap (for Stevenage, that would be a cap of 440), then alongside market forces (i.e. lower rent), there is a risk that Stevenage and other towns absorb a higher allocation and greater capacity challenges.
- 20.6 The Council have made clear its position over the last year, which is that there should be co-ordinated plans at county or regional level, rather than a focus on some of the areas that have lower private housing market costs such as Stevenage. Equally, officers have strongly encouraged use of a dispersed model, with funding, to enable a planned response rather than 100 – 200 hotel or apartments being co-opted. Whilst the proposed desire to move to a more strategic approach is understood, it is important that local considerations are fully taken into account before related decisions are made. In the meantime officers are continuing to engage with the Home Office and the Strategic Migration Partnership.

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

- 21.1 This paper summarises the Government legislative programme for 2022/23. Many of the Bills that have been highlighted will have direct and indirect implications for Stevenage as a town and Stevenage Borough Council and, potentially, the delivery of its key corporate priorities. It is therefore important

that the related implications are considered and that attention is paid to further announcements and the actual Bills as they are published.

- 21.2 The Senior Leadership Team have given consideration to the legislative programme and will continue to highlight opportunities and perceived threats over the coming months.

## **22 IMPLICATIONS**

### **22.1 Financial Implications**

- 22.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers will monitor further announcements and draft / final Bills as that are published to consider any financial implications should they arise. It is of course hoped that any new burdens will be fully funded.

### **22.2 Legal Implications**

- 22.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers will monitor further announcements and draft / final Bills as that are published to consider any legal implications should they arise.

### **22.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 22.3.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers will monitor further announcements and draft / final Bills as that are published to consider any equality and diversity implications should they arise. Where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed.

### **22.4 Risk Implications**

- 22.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendations. However, officers will monitor further announcements and draft / final Bills as that are published to consider any risk implications should they arise.
- 22.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

### **22.5 Other Corporate implications**

- 22.5.1 Further government announcements may impact on the development of future policy or procedure.

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1: The 12 Missions to Level Up the UK

## **Appendix 1: The 12 Missions to Level Up the UK**

- 1.** By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
- 2.** By 2030, domestic public investment in Research & Development outside the Greater South East will increase by at least 40% and at least one third over the Spending Review period, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
- 3.** By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
- 4.** By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.
- 5.** By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.
- 6.** By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.
- 7.** By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.
- 8.** By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.
- 9.** By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
- 10.** By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas.
- 11.** By 2030, homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst-affected areas.
- 12.** By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank



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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank