

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 12 October 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

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 - 14 SEPTEMBER 2022

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 14 September 2022 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 5 – 18

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

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

Community Select Committee – 5 September 2022

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 20 September 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 21 September 2022

Pages 19 – 34

4. SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUNDING

To consider details of the proposed procurement process for a contract to undertake decarbonisation works to 399 Council homes, in conjunction with funding awarded from a bid made by Stevenage Borough Council to the Government for the Social Housing Decarbonisation funding Wave 1.

Pages 35 – 40

5. CLIMATE CHANGE - ANNUAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 2022

To consider the Climate Change annual update, providing an overview of the action that Stevenage Borough Council is taking to address climate change.
Pages 41 – 60

6. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - ALLOCATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

To inform Members of the amounts of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) secured and projected; to seek agreement to the maintenance of the current CIL Charging Schedule for 2023/24; and to consider a proposed change to the approval process for CIL expenditure and allocation.
Pages 61 – 66

7. COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE

To update Executive on the steps that Stevenage Borough Council has taken already in responding to the cost of living crisis in this country, and to agree the actions that will be taken to further support local residents, businesses and community groups, and the Council, over the coming months.
Pages 67 – 82

8. FUTURE COUNCIL 2025 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

To consider an update on the Future Council 2025 transformation programme, including proposals for the Council to implement a Five-Star Customer Service programme which responds to the key principles agreed by the Executive in August 2021.
Pages 83 – 108

9. REVISED COMPLAINTS POLICY AND NEW UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

To consider a proposed revised Council Complaints Policy and a proposed new Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.
Pages 109 – 134

10. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24

To consider a proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24.
Pages 135 – 152

11. QUARTERS 1 AND 2 CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

To consider the Quarters 1 and 2 Capital Monitoring report 2022/23 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.
Pages 153 – 170

12. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

13. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

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

14. LAND DISPOSALS

To seek approval to conduct a procurement exercise to dispose of sites in order to meet the capital receipt requirements set out in the Council's approved Capital Strategy, and to enable a place shaping scheme to take place in the Bedwell Ward.

Pages 171 - 194

15. 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, 12 October 2022 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 14 September 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Richard Henry (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Simon Speller and Jeannette Thomas.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 5.08pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and highlighted that Members would be able to offer their own tributes during the Council meeting that would be taking place on Thursday, 15 September 2022 at 7pm. The Leader also offered her condolences and best wishes to King Charles III.

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 12 JULY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 July 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 meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees be noted –

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 23 June 2022

Community Select Committee – 7 July 2022

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 13 July 2022

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 19 July 2022

4 GARAGES INVESTMENT BUSINESS CASE

The Executive considered a report in respect of a proposed Garages Business Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the Council had an extensive garage stock comprising of more than 6,000 residential and

commercial garages. Demand for garages in Stevenage continued to be high, whether used for storage or parking, and there were in excess of 2,000 residents on the waiting list. The rental of the garages was one of the biggest income streams for the Council and was essential for the General Fund and supported the delivery of important front-line services.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the report outlined the case for additional investment in the garages stock. There was currently a backlog of major works to 100 void garages. The report recommended that £234,000 be used from the Garage Improvement Programme to fund works to the backlog of void garages so that these could be brought back into use, and in turn help to meet the demand.

It was noted that the additional costs would be offset and exceeded by the additional revenue secured through rental income. The £234,000 investment was predicted to yield cumulative income of £312,000 by year 5. This additional rental income would also help to offset the loss of rent in the 442 garages affected by the residual sprayed asbestos.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the second section of the report focused on the need for additional funding to formalise the programme of asbestos surveys in garages. Two options were available for asbestos management, depending on whether the survey work was contracted out or carried out in-house. The recommended option was that this work should be undertaken in-house, starting with the recruitment of a temporary asbestos surveyor. This aligned with the insourcing objectives set out in the Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy. Once the survey work was completed this would identify the requirements and then a further report will be brought to the Executive.

The following comments were made by Members:

- The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change suggested that it might be helpful for a meeting to take place with all relevant officers to co-ordinate the strategic element of the Garage Improvement Programme with the actual works taking place on the ground;
- The Leader was looking forward to the Executive receiving a report regarding the strategic management of the Council's Garage Stock which was expected in early 2023; and
- Officers were requested to ensure that Ward Members were consulted in advance on any works to Garage Blocks within their wards.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the virement of £234,000 of funding from the current underspend in the Garage Improvement Programme (GIP) to fund the backlog in works to the void garages be approved.
2. That £55,000 of General Fund balances be used to fund the investment in

asbestos management surveys, to ensure compliance.

3. That it be noted that a further growth bid may be required to manage any asbestos identified and that this will come back to Members at a later date once the survey work has been completed.
4. That it be noted that officers will develop a revised garages investment strategy / asset management strategy that can be considered at a future meeting of the Executive.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

5 STATION GATEWAY AREA ACTION PLAN - PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Executive considered a Preferred Option Report for public consultation concerning the Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP).

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change advised that the “Preferred Options” stage was the second stage of development of the Area Action Plan. This version of the AAP had been informed by the Issues & Options consultation response, as previously reported to the Executive in February 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change recommended that the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report be approved for consultation for a minimum 6-week period, and to work closely with other local partners and Stevenage Development Board to help ensure the vision for the area was developed in greater detail.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change explained that, once the Preferred Options public consultation had been progressed, officers and Members could commence consideration of the final Submission version of the Station Gateway AAP. Representations from the Preferred Options AAP consultation would be considered and incorporated within the final version of the AAP.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change stated that the preferred option could end up being a blend of the existing available options. He hoped that public engagement and consultation on the AAP could be undertaken as widely as possible.

In reply to a Member’s question, it was confirmed that Govia Thameslink and Network Rail were broadly supportive of the need to upgrade Stevenage Railway Station (whilst acknowledging the resource/funding implications). Officers would continue to engage with them throughout the AAP process.

The Executive debated consultation on the Preferred Options document. Following discussion, it was agreed that, as well as consulting key stakeholders, engagement with the public should be as wide as possible, including community and local

disability groups. Consultation should be much wider than the minimum required under Town & Country Planning legislation.

The Leader requested that a concise version of the Preferred Options Document be made available for the public as part of the consultation process, and that awareness of the AAP be raised through social media channels.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document, prior to the document going out to public consultation, be agreed.
2. That it be agreed that the public consultation methods for when the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document goes out to public consultation, include the breadth of engagement/consultation outlined in the Minute preamble above.
3. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, to make final amendments to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report prior to going out to public consultation.
4. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee regarding the Preferred Options Report be noted.
5. That it be noted that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, including the Stevenage Development Board, to test the Preferred Options ahead of final preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 CONFIRMATION OF TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E(G)(I) (OFFICES) AND CLASS E(G)(III) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION

The Executive considered a report seeking confirmation of two Article 4 Directions to require Changes of Use from Class E(g)(i) (Offices) and Class E(g)(iii) (Light Industrial) to Class C3 (Residential) to obtain planning permission.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change reminded Members that the principal aim of the Directions was to protect employment uses within the designated Employment Areas. Two Directions had been in place, but had they expired on 31 July 2022, because of Central Government decisions to change the Use Class Orders and encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites to residential use.

The Planning Policy Manager commented that positive responses to the initial consultation exercise had been received from consultees, including the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The Secretary for State had requested evidence and reasoning to support the requirement for the Article 4 Directions, which would be

provided in the next few days.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the responses from consultation, 20 July to 17 August 2022, on the serving of the notice of the revised Article 4 Directions, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be noted.
2. That the Article 4 Directions [set out in Appendices A and B to the report] under Article 4 (I) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), to remove permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), be confirmed, effective from 1 October 2022.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

7 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 1 2022/23

The Executive considered a report outlining Corporate Performance for Quarter 1 (April to June 2022) of 2022/23.

The Chief Executive explained that the Council had broadly retained the same performance indicators for 2022/23 as they provided the right management oversight of key areas of focus and the delivery of our priorities. In addition, for 2022/23 a new housing compliance suite had been introduced which would provide oversight of how the Council was performing against key quality and safety measures including:

- Fire risk assessments;
- Electrical certificates;
- Gas certificates; and
- Legionella inspections.

The Chief Executive then gave a presentation concerning the Quarter 1 report, and summarised the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) performance highlights throughout the Quarter, 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

The Chief Executive reported that, as at Quarter 1, of the 63 Corporate Performance Indicators, 38 were at Green status; 4 were at Amber; 9 were at Red; and 12 were outstanding (mainly relating to Voids, Household Waste and Decent Homes), the reasons for which he outlined in his presentation.

The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the Temporary & Emergency Accommodation performance indicator had improved from red to green status during Quarter 1, with the number of households in such accommodation reducing from 203 to 174. He outlined the Quarter 1 improvement activities carried out for the Voids, Customer Services and Managing Homes (Rent Collection) service areas,

and provided a synopsis of other red indicators.

Officers were asked to investigate the potential for increasing the level of commercial sponsorship of Council events and initiatives.

In reply to a question, the Chief Executive commented that the shortage of staff in certain areas was an issue at county, regional and national levels across many elements of the public and private sectors. There had been no indication that this situation might occur following the Covid crisis, but officers were endeavouring to develop creative solutions to seek to reduce the associated service impacts.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development drew attention to the possibility of an increased need for emergency and temporary accommodation due to the cost of living crisis, and confirmed that officers would be dealing with any related rent arrears issues on a case by case basis.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme (set out in Appendix A to the report) and service performance across the key themes for Quarter One 2022/23 (set out in Appendix C to the report), be noted.
2. That the strategic risk updates, and new emerging risks, be noted.
3. That the performance challenges in relation to housing voids, repairs and customer service be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
4. That the Executive Action Tracker, as set out at Appendix D to the report, be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

8 GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2022/23 - 2026/27)

The Executive considered a report in respect of an update on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022/23 – 2026/27.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the report illustrated the Council's continued funding loss, noting that in 2010/11 SBC received £6.24Million in Government funding. Converting that to 2021 values, (using the Bank of England inflation tool) the sum equated to £7.45Million, which was considerably lower than the Council's 2022/23 finance settlement of £3.16Million.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT referred to the in-year inflation pressures arising from the pay award and utility increases, giving an estimated extra increase in inflation of £827,000 for 2022/23 over that previously budgeted. Due to the level of balances and allocated reserves (income equalisation

and NDR gains), no in year savings were considered necessary at the current time. However, projected costs were now higher for 2023/24 than previously estimated and the report provided a comparison between the difference between council tax additional income and inflation - £374,000 of council tax income (for 2022/23-2023/24) against inflation of £3.08Million or £5.2Million for the MTFs period.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the MTFs included some income pressure projections above those previously reported (and not covered in the 1st Quarter monitoring) of £500,000 and £200,000 relating to additional car parking and garage income losses for 2023/24 which had been added to the funding gap.

In terms of Business Rates, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that these were about £300,000 lower than the original estimate, which seemed to be related to 2017 rating list adjustments. However, the Council Tax base was ahead of the budgeted figure already, not because of an increase in houses (which was below the estimate), but due to the continuation in the reduction of the Council Tax Support Scheme caseload.

Due to the pressures identified in the report, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT explained that the Making Your Money Count (MYMC) target had increased from £1.8Million for the next 3 years up to £3Million. The gap for 2023/24 was £2Million, but weighing up the ability to provide services and make savings at the same time and noting that there could be one off pressures in 2023/24 (such as parking losses), a target of £1.5Million was recommended for that year. Due to the level of savings required, it was recommended that the Council took a blended approach of options from across all the MYMC workstreams.

The Executive was informed that the risk assessment of balances was set at £3.57Million and the General Fund was predicted to be (if it made the savings) £4.37Million with £1.77Million of income equalisation and NNDR gains, which could be used if the financial situation was worse than predicted and which provided further financial resilience to the General Fund.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director (CF), assisted by the Strategic Director (TP), advised Members that the level of parking in the Council-operated car parks had increased in recent weeks, although was still much reduced from pre-Covid pandemic levels. The Marshgate car park was under development for the Autolus project which, when completed, would return 50 parking spaces to the Council for public use. The new Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) at the Railway Station would further increase capacity. There were also about 700 spaces unoccupied in the St. Georges Way MSCP and 100 at the Westgate MSCP. There were therefore sufficient spaces for the public to use, but they may be in different locations from where they had parked previously.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the change to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) principles, as outlined in Paragraph 3.12 of the report and as amended in Paragraph 4.9.9 of the report, be approved.

2. That, for modelling purposes, Council tax increases be set at the threshold allowed assumed at 1.99%, subject to any change in Government rules, in order to help achieve a balanced budget, as set out in Paragraph 4.6.8 of the report.
3. That the updated inflation assumptions used in the MTFs, as set out in Section 4 of the report, be approved.
4. That the approach to Making Your Money Count budget options, as set out in Section 4.8 of the report, be approved.
5. That an amount of £300,000 for 2023/24 be approved for inclusion in the budget setting process to support the Transformation Fund, to help deliver the MYMC Target, as set out in Paragraph 4.8.3 of the report.
6. That a Making Your Money Count Target of £3.03Million (of which £1.5Million relates to 2023/24), be approved for the period 2023/24- 2025/26, as set out in Section 4.9 of the report.
7. That the revised fees and charges for Engineering charges, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.
8. That General Fund growth be only approved for the Council's FTFC priorities and the growth allowance included in the 2023/24 budget is £75,000, and growth above that level will need to be funded by further savings in addition to the £3.03Million target identified.
9. That a minimum level of balances for the General Fund of £3.57million be approved for 2023/24, as set out in Paragraph 4.10.8 of the report.
10. That if there is an underspend in 2022/23, £200,000 be used to 'top up' the regeneration reserve, as set out in Paragraph 4.11.3 of the report.
11. That the MTFs be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect any material financial pressures so forecasts are updated and re-presented to the Executive for approval.
12. That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the MTFs and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

9 FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered the First Quarter Revenue Monitoring report 2022/23 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised there was a net overspend for the General Fund budget of £119,000. Car parking income would be circa £208,000 lower than the already reduced base (it had been reduced by £695,000 in the 2022/23 budget).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that in addition were several cost of living pressures, the main one being inflationary increases projected for utilities and fuel. The latest information suggested an increase of £177,000 for utilities (gas and electricity) and £107,000 for fuel (petrol and diesel). There were another £111,000 worth of variances from across the General Fund which would be assessed as part of the Quarter 2 report to see whether they could be mitigated or whether there would be an on-going impact.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT informed the Executive that an offer had been made to the trade unions for an £1,925 per employee pay award for 2022/23. If this was accepted it would add £662,000 to the Council's General Fund staffing costs, although it was hoped that the award would help the Council to retain and recruit staff.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the HRA was reporting adverse variances of just under £250,000. There are four large variances, the first being the adjustment to the Leaseholders actuals for 2021/22 of £334,000 due to the actuals for the year being lower than the estimate, resulting in the charges being refunded back to leaseholders.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the second adverse variance was rental income being £638,000 lower than budgeted, which included additional void losses being higher than estimated, and the delayed completion of new homes.

The Executive noted that the final two were positive variances which partially offset the above pressures from lower borrowing costs from the delay in taking out new borrowing and improved interest income following the changes in bank rates over recent months.

It was **RESOLVED**:

General Fund

1. That the 2022/23 1st Quarter projected net increase in General Fund expenditure of £119,930 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 4.1.20 of the report.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

3. That the 2022/23 1st Quarter projected net increase in HRA expenditure of

£249,890 be approved.

4. That it be noted that the cumulative increases made to the HRA net budget remains within the £250,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

10 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF 2021/22 INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL CODE

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

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the average investment balance for the year was £80.908 Million, earning interest of £286,304 and achieving an average interest rate of 0.35%. This compared with an original budget assumption of £202,910 investment interest based on an average investment rate of 0.25%.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that cash balances (£68.75 Million as at 31 March 2022) had enabled the Council to use internal borrowing in line with its Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy. This position was kept under review taking into account future cash balances and forecast borrowing rates.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that, in 2021/22, the Council spent £61.342 Million on capital projects (General Fund and Housing Revenue Account). The capital programme was funded from a combination of existing capital resources and an increase in borrowing (General Fund £12.364 Million, HRA £25.487 Million). New external loans were taken out for the HRA during 2021/22 of £9.047 Million. No external loans were taken out for the General Fund during 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT explained that the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charged to the General Fund in 2021/22 was £195,200, of which £35,100 was funded from investment property; £29,400 was funded by the Garage Improvements Programme; and £130,700 was a net cost to the General Fund.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that there had been no breaches to the Treasury Management policy in 2021/22 and no Treasury Limits were breached during the year.

The Assistant Director (Finance) advised that the report had been considered by the Audit Committee on 7 September 2022. The Committee had noted the report and had recommended it to Council for approval.

In relation to the pie chart set out in Paragraph 4.2.3.2, the Strategic Director (CF) explained that the £29M figure for Housing Revenue Account balance available

above minimum balances was solely for the repayment of debt.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2021/22 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

11 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

Cost of Living

The Leader reminded Members that the Council had approved a motion declaring a Cost of Living Crisis in July 2022. Subsequent to that declaration, an Executive Member and Officer working group had been established to develop a Cost of Living Action Plan which would be presented to the Executive in October 2023. The Action Plan would focus on the impact on residents, businesses, partners, Council staff and Council finances, and would frame actions across a number of themes, including:

- a. Co-ordinating Government Support (to reach those that needed it);
- b. Welfare support and advice (promoting, signposting etc.);
- c. Maintaining good health (physical, mental, community wellbeing, volunteering);
- d. Access to food and nutrition (community larders, food banks, gardens, healthy eating);
- e. Housing (costs, repairs and improvements, retrofitting and decarbonisation); and
- f. Working in partnership (to target support in localities / to the most in need).

The Leader advised that the Government had recently announced a new package of measures to be put in place to support people through this winter, and beyond. This was in addition to the previously announced universal and targeted payments, and included:

- i. Capping the cost of energy for households for 2 years from 1 October 2022, at an average of £2,500 per year;
- ii. Businesses, charities, and public sector organisations would receive equivalent support for six months, and then it would be reviewed every three months;
- iii. An energy supply task force to get contracts with international suppliers to bring down energy costs; and
- iv. A budget announcement to take place later in September, which would provide more detail about how the above measures would be funded and implemented.

The Leader stated that there was a wide range of support that the Council was already putting in place for people experiencing difficulties, including:

- a. The Government response and grant schemes, rebates and vouchers; and
- b. Stevenage Borough Council's universal and targeted support, including Benefits and grants; the use of the Community Renewal Fund, and Community Wealth Building approaches and developing the Social Inclusion Partnership; UK Shared Prosperity Fund including Community Wealth Building and VCSE access to business and sustainability support; Household Support Fund, including

payments to foodbanks, schools and community centre cafes; Work to improve the EPC rating of our housing stock, including bidding for funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes and building new homes that are highly energy efficient; and Longer-term investment in skills development and employment opportunities, including the Stevenage Town investment plan and Stevenage Works programme.

The Leader commented that, in considering the potential impact on Council finances and staff, things underway included:

- a. The challenges being faced with recruitment and retention;
- b. Calculations suggesting that the impact of increased utility costs could be up to £300,000 this year, and £460,000 full year in 2023/24;
- c. The importance of the proposed national pay in helping staff meet increased costs, but also the impact on Council budgets as this was higher than anticipated (up to £700,000) and may not be fully funded by Government (the Local Government Settlement was still to be agreed);
- d. The value of existing flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programme, and availability of resilience support, coaching, and pay flexibility requests being considered; and
- e. Development of an online hub for staff.

The Executive was informed that initial priorities underway and being developed included:

- i. Information hub on the Council's website, signposting to support available – this included summary of grants and other support;
- ii. Internal and external communications to residents, businesses, staff and Councillors – both supporting themselves, and supporting others;
- iii. Considering a Warm Spaces initiative, including potential links with community associations, public and voluntary sector partners;
- iv. Working with partners to offer “full financial MOTs” for people, focusing on short term and more sustainable longer term solutions;
- v. Surveying local Community Associations to understand the potential impact on them, how they were intending to manage pressures, and any support needed; and
- vi. Holding a Stevenage Together meeting on 20 September 2022 to co-ordinate work with partners and discuss / agree any joint work to support people.

The Leader commented that, in the longer term, further skills and investment opportunities would aid the town level response, and included the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (£37.5M secured from Government, STEM jobs, £900M investment from GlaxoSmithKline); Community Wealth Building Programme - £1M UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Stevenage Works (£340,000 secured), Community Infrastructure Levy; and Levelling Up - Step2Skills (£5.8M) Multiply Project. The Leader also noted that circa £31M had been secured from the Local Enterprise Partnership to support the delivery of various projects across the town, including the new Bus Interchange and projects within the Town Square.

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 - 12 JULY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 July 2022 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

14 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 5 September 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair) Alex Farquharson (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Jim Brown, Nazmin Chowdhury, John Duncan, Liz Harrington, Wendy Kerby and Anne Wells.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6:00 pm
End Time: 7:06 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adrian Brown.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 7 JULY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of Community Select Committee meeting held on Thursday 7 July 2022 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 OFFICER PRESENTATION ON VOIDS

The Committee received a presentation regarding Council's housing voids. The presentation outlined the issues and challenges that faced the Council in dealing with void properties in the Council's social housing stock. The Housing Supply Manager and the SDS Service Delivery Manager provided the following key points to the Committee:

- Void properties resulted in a loss of rental income for the Council.
- Costs were incurred for any work required to ensure the property met lettable standards.
- The Repairs Team received on average 7 void properties per week.
- The current turnaround targets from one tenant moving out to a new tenant moving in was 32 days on average for a general needs property.
- Historically the turnaround for sheltered housing void properties were longer as the properties needed more work.
- The void properties were processed in the following three stages, with the teams providing the service denoted in brackets:
 - Pre-void and tenancy termination (Housing and Investment team)
 - Followed by the voids works (Repairs and Voids Team)

- Inspection and letting (Housing and Investment team)
- Void properties with general needs had a standard target of 26 days, and some properties with major needs had a turnaround of up to 64 days.
- The Voids Team were struggling with the demand and currently working at 50% capacity. The Team was in the process of recruiting a Voids Officer, a Voids Operative and 3 DLO operatives to ease the pressure.
- Some of the challenges that impacted the delay in void operations were: dealing with asbestos; condition of the property; level of aids and adaptation; major works and some hard to let properties.
- The specialist team removed some of the major asbestos to improve the condition of the property to a standard lettable property.
- The cost involved in carrying major works at the void properties had gone up due to the sharp rise in inflation linked to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Where possible, adapted properties were matched up to people who needed the adaptation to avoid extra cost of removing the adaptations and making good the property.

The Committee discussed the issues around voids, and during the discussion the following points were raised by Members:

- Key improvement would take place in the next six months. These changes included to re-engineer the letting process, reviewing the lettable standard and benchmarking with other local authorities that had a similar housing stock.
- The Service Delivery Manager advised that most of the properties needed some work to turn them into a lettable standard.
- The Housing Supply Manager explained that some of the properties were hard to let because they were in less popular areas, or these properties were not suitable for some families if it already had some adaptations or with the less popular older sheltered accommodation for older people. On some occasions, customer also refused to take on the property, which Members were keen to explore the reasons for this, as this seemed curious given the lack of affordable rented accommodation available.
- Members were advised that customers could be penalised if they refused a property for the second time.
- Members were informed that the Service was reviewing the process to improve including a pre-void inspection and the programme of visits during the tenancy.
- Following a comment that a large number of properties were left in a poor state by tenants who vacated the property, the Chair suggested that officers could consider ways to incentivise tenants to leave their property in good order, perhaps if they were to receive a financial reward such as a month or a couple of weeks rent returned to them if they left the property clean and empty, as this could save the Council time and money rather than paying for 2 or 3 skips to clear rubbish etc. as was often the case.

Councillor John Duncan, who had met with officers to explore the process explained that the current voids process was old fashion and was not sufficiently customer focused. He explained that there was not a single issue that if corrected could

transform the service. The Council needed to look at ways to retain skilled staff as the pay levels were below the industry standard. More focused benchmarking could also improve the Council's perceived performance compared to other housing providers. He clarified that he was not proposing any major changes to the process but rather to improve the process by refocused procedures.

Members noted that a scoping document for the review would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and as part of the scope Members wished to carry out some site visits to observe the void process at various stages.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Voids update be noted.

4 **UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report on the Committee's Work Programme for the rest of the current Municipal Year 2022/23. He advised Members the Crime and Disorder was a statutory annual item for the Committee scheduled for March 2023. The Committee would also look at the Public Health as priority item and a one-off update on the Local Community budget.

It was **RESOLVED** that the updated Work Programme be noted.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 20 September 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Matt Creasey, Bret Facey and Claire Parris.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.45pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Michael Downing and Lorraine Rossati.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 13 JULY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 13 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **EXECUTIVE MEMBER RESPONSE TO INTERIM CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW**

The Committee considered the Executive Member's response to the Committee's interim review of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

The following comments were made:

Recommendation 1 – Resident Engagement

- in order to engage with local people and hold community meetings, additional resources would be required;
- The Assistant Director (Planning and Regeneration) advised that the Citizens Panel had held a one-off meeting in 2020 but this would be re-formatted for more bespoke local engagement next year;
- Councillor Barr to replace Councillor Broom in the list of Executive Members.

Recommendation 2 – Baseline Figures

- Members were encouraged to hear about the proposals for the new Hub

building to be as energy efficient as possible. Members agreed that it was important for the reduction of carbon to be in the construction as well as the use of the building;

- Further work with the University would be welcomed as it was agreed that expertise and knowledge should be shared to address the issue. This was also relevant in relation to other Local Authorities;
- In response to a question regarding progress measurement, the Assistant Director advised that data was given to the Council on an annual basis by the Government and that the latest figures would be available by the end of the year.

Recommendation 3 – Establishment of a Climate Change Lead Officer

- Members noted the permanent appointment of Veronica Chan, Climate Change Lead Officer, from 13 September 2022.

Recommendation 4 – Community Group – Challenge

- The potential growth of social enterprises was welcomed by Members;
- The Council's Engagement with HEART would continue as part of a wider Topic Reference panel and for sharing advice. It was noted that HEART's main focus was the emotional and psychological impacts of climate change although Members agreed the importance of reducing climate change as well as mitigating the effects of climate change.

Recommendation 5 – Mainstreaming of climate emergency thinking with regards to all Council activities

- It was noted that all Assistant Directors within SBC would be challenged to demonstrate how their Business Units worked in a low carbon way.

Recommendation 6 – Protected and Enhanced Tree Canopy

- Additional tree planting was welcomed by the Committee.
- Officers advised that a report outlining future opportunities for consideration by members would be presented at the October meeting.

Recommendation 7 – Planning and Development

- Noted.

Recommendation 8 – Focus on Improved Recycling

- Officers advised that a full report on recycling would be submitted to the October meeting of this Committee;
- It was noted that the Government's emerging national Resources and Waste Strategy had been pushed back from Spring of this year. It was envisaged there would be requirements for separate weekly food waste collections, extended responsibilities for waste producers and more consistency of

- recycling materials;
- Particular challenges for recycling were noted for flat blocks;
- Members agreed the importance of spreading the message encouraging residents to use less so that less which would result in less waste overall.

Recommendation 9 – Protecting Climate Emergency Targets within the Budget Setting Process

- Noted.

Recommendation 10 – EV Charging points in Neighbourhood Centres and Electric Car Club

- Members questioned the logic of the installation of a number of EV charging points having been installed on or near cycleways;
- Officers advised that they were currently looking into the potential for an ebike/escooter scheme.

Recommendation 11 – Social Housing and resident led environmental community projects

- Members were pleased to note the proposed increased consultation with local tenants.

4 INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

The Committee received a presentation from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, Councillor Simon Speller, on his vision for the development of the Council's Climate Change strategy.

Cllr Speller spoke about the 9 levels of engagement for Climate Change strategies and highlighted the need for Stevenage Borough Council to focus on neighbourhoods and street level alongside engagement with the local community.

The gaps in Stevenage Climate Change partnerships were highlighted and the proposals to fill those gaps noted including the use of Portfolio Holders, Outside Bodies, Resident Groups and People Panels.

In relation to Portfolio Holders engaging with people, Cllr Briscoe would be talking to local businesses, Cllr Henry would link with young people including the Youth Mayor and schools and Cllr Barr would link with residents groups through the next level of community and neighbourhood management work.

In relation to the Citizens Panel, Councillor Speller advised that the proposal was to separate into topic focussed people's panels and specialist reference groups to get more targeted results.

The Portfolio Holder was keen to support Members in terms of proposals within their own ward areas including identifying potential spaces for tree planting or plans for

smaller sites where possible. Ward members would be used as a conduit and gateway for resident proposals for their areas. Engagement with communities was key to this with a better use of digital communications as back-up to contact work.

Pilot areas for monthly engagement meetings were suggested including Pin Green/Bedwell, St Nicholas/Martins Wood and Shephall/Bandley Hill. A Member suggested that Chells and Manor could also be included in this pilot.

In terms of within Stevenage Borough Council, work would be undertaken to recognise and build on what had been done since 2020 and join up work streams where it made sense.

Members thanked Cllr Speller for his presentation and welcomed the potential for much closer working and the increased engagement proposals. It was suggested that the engagement should not just focus on tenants and leaseholders but be for all Stevenage residents.

Cllr Speller concluded by thanking the former Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor John Gardner, for his work and commitment to this issue in recent years.

5 **UPDATED MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Officer presented Members with an updated Mapping Exercise Document for the Climate Change Emergency Review.

Recent updates to the document were highlighted, including:

- Questions were to be formulated for the Portfolio Holders for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People, and Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People to be sent by 24 September;
- The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would set up a meeting for Members to attend a future Youth Council meeting;
- A provisional date of 24 October had been scheduled for a Zoom meeting for an informal sub-group of the Committee to meet with representatives from Friends of the Earth;
- HCC Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Councillor Eric Buckmaster had been invited to 17 November meeting along with the HCC Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transport Councillor Graham McAndrew;
- The Scrutiny Officer advised that he would be drafting an email for the Chair to approach the Lister Hospital CE, Adam Sewell-Jones, in relation to their plans and actions on climate change;
- The SBC Operations Director, Rob Gregory had provided guidance relating to engagement with tenants and leaseholders.

The Chair also advised the Committee that he would add an item to the Committee's Work programme for later in the Municipal Year relating to the Council's approach to the Cost of living crisis.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Mapping Exercise Document be noted.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 21 September 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Andy McGuinness, Robin Parker CC and Anne Wells.

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Phil Bibby CC, Matt Creasey, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Wendy Kerby, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris and Lorraine Rossati.

Councillors Farquharson (Facey), Lawrence CC (Kerby) and Mitchell CC (Bibby CC) were in attendance as substitute Members.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 19 JULY 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 19 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE

2. Minutes – Executive 12 July 2022

Noted.

3. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees

Noted.

4. Garages Investment Business Case

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were informed that the Executive had made a number of comments including:

- A meeting should be arranged for relevant officers to co-ordinate the strategic element of the Garage Improvement Programme with the actual works taking place on the ground;

- A further report outlining the Strategic Management Plan for the Council's garage stock had been requested by the Leader to be brought to Executive in early 2023;
- Officers had been requested to ensure that Ward members were consulted in advance of any works to garage blocks in their wards.

In response to a number of comments/questions from Members, Officers responded as follows:

- The original Garage Improvement Plan had been considered by Members in 2015. The asbestos issue had been discovered over the last 12 months and it was now planned to come back with an Asset Management Strategy for all garages in terms of next steps;
- In relation to the underspend reported, a number of challenges were identified including void garages waiting to be refurbished but some garages had owner/occupiers which could cause delays in relation to redevelopment.
- It was noted that there was a long waiting list for garages but the programme would give a current view of which garages should be invested in for future development;
- The £55k requested was for an additional surveyor to be employed to carry out the surveying work;
- The Executive report contained a breakdown of the funding required for the Programme;
- Some garages were used to house cars but many across the Town were used for storage purposes. Consideration would be given within the programme to building bigger garages to house modern cars.
- Officers agreed to ensure that any communications to residents related to the Improvement Programme should also be sent to Ward Members;
- In relation to safety regulations, Officers agreed to circulate to Members the regulations around storage allowed in garages.

5. Station Gateway Area Action Plan – preferred Options

The Committee was informed that the Executive had asked for as wide a consultation as possible on the preferred options including community and local disability groups. Members had also asked Officers to ensure that Social Media channels should also be used where possible.

Members were pleased with the widening of the consultation and were keen to ensure younger people were included.

Members also made the point that the focus and assumption seemed to be about those people using the train station when in fact this area was also extensively used by residents who come to the Town Centre or going through the area from the northern part of the town to the southern part.

The access for pedestrians to the train station was also raised as the

pedestrian access into the station from the Old Town had been blocked off was affecting local residents. The Assistant Director agreed to take this issue back to the Regeneration Team for consideration.

The importance of the name of the consultation was discussed as it was important to ensure that it was clear that the consultation was for the plans around Lytton Way and the area around the Station.

In relation to the timing of the consultation over the Christmas period, the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation advised that the consultation period was quite flexible and could start in November for example. The consultation would include methods such as in person meetings at the Station, public meetings, the Chronicle and the wider press and Social Media.

In terms of the preferred option and in response to concerns about congestion, the Assistant Director advised that extensive modelling work had been undertaken in conjunction with the County Council. The purpose of the consultation was for the people of the Town to give their views on the preferred option. The proposal did not require modal shift in itself but supported modal shift.

6. Confirmation of Two Article 4 Directions to Require Changes of Use from Class (E)(g)(i) (Offices) and Class (E)(g)(iii) (Light Industrial) to class C3 (Residential) to Obtain planning Permission

In response to a question, the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation advised that the areas exempt from this change were renewed with the new Article 4 Direction.

7. Corporate Performance – Quarter 1 2022/23

The Strategic Director (RP) advised that the Executive had asked for Officers to investigate the potential for increasing the level of commercial sponsorship of Council events and activities.

In relation to staff shortages, it was noted that this was not just a local issue but had been seen across the County and also at a national level. Officers were endeavouring to develop creative solutions to seek to reduce the associated service impact.

It was also noted that the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development had reported on the potential increased need for emergency and temporary accommodation due to the cost of living crisis.

Officers responded to the following comments and questions from members:

- Information relating to commercial sponsorship would be fed back to Executive and then on to Overview and Scrutiny Committee once Officers had concluded their investigations into potential options. A further concern relating to sponsorship was around the criteria used

and that it should be clear that a community event was advertised as such and not lead with the name of the sponsor company. Members also asked how the Council could ensure that the sponsor was appropriate. Officers reassured Members that there was a criteria that the Council used about the type of advertising the Council would accept, including not using a company that was in a commercial relationship with the Council;

- In relation to current call waiting times for the Customer Services Centre, Officers agreed to report current call waiting times in future reports. The Committee was advised that Executive had agreed to the recruitment to 5 additional CSC posts. The transition to more on-line contact was being encouraged. A report relating to the Transformation Programme would be submitted to Executive in October;
- Officers agreed that the signposting on the website to the Corporate Performance presentation should be clearer for those members of the Public viewing on-line.

8. General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (2022/23 – 2026/7)

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that she had estimated that there would still be approximately £500k of parking losses in 2023/24. The new MSCP opening in March 2023 would gradually improve the situation but there would still be a loss.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director advised that there was a 2021/22 underspend but one of the Council priorities was to add to the reserves which were being used to fulfil the Council's regeneration aims.

9. First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account

In response to a question about the potential rise in interest rates, the Assistant Director Finance and Resources advised that the Council would gain on the interest earned on investments but any future borrowing costs would increase.

In terms of inflationary pressures, the Strategic Director advised that high inflation was a concern as there was no additional funding coming from the Government. In addition to high inflation, the Government was also consulting on a cap for rent increases.

10. Annual Treasury Management Review of 2021/22 Including Prudential Code

The Committee was advised that there had been no breaches within the 21/22 indicators that were reported on.

In response to a comment, Officers agreed that Appendix B should be titled Borrowing Portfolio not Investment Portfolio.

11. Urgent Part I Business – Cost of Living

The Committee was reminded that the Council had approved a Motion at Council in July 2022 on the Cost of Living crisis and that an Action Plan would be formulated by an Executive Member and Officer Working Group to take this issue forward.

A Member asked how the recent Government announcement regarding the energy cost freeze would impact the Council. The Strategic Director (CF) advised that this was currently being worked on and that she would ensure Members were kept updated.

In relation to the Warm Space Initiative, the Strategic Director (RP) advised that this was at the early stages of consideration and plans would be worked up in conjunction with the Stevenage Together Partnership.

It was noted that Community Centres had experienced their own financial challenges over recent years and there might be an issue around 24 hour presence in the building.

Cllr Broom as Chair of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee advised that the Select Committee would also be looking to undertake some scrutiny work on the cost of living crisis in the New Year.

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

None.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

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

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

7 **PART II MINUTES - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 19 JULY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 19 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

14. **Part II Minutes – Executive – 14 September 2022**

Noted.

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

None.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 12 October 2022



SOCIAL HOUSING DECARBONISATION FUNDING

KEY DECISION

Author	Lynne Huggins	Ext. 2945
Lead Officer	Rob Gregory	Ext. 2568
Contact Officer	Lynne Huggins	Ext. 2945

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide details of the procurement for a new contract to carry out works in conjunction with funding awarded from a bid made by Stevenage Borough Council to the Government for the Social Housing Decarbonisation funding Wave 1.
- 1.2 The report details the proposed procurement route and recommendation that the contract is awarded to Wates Living and allowing an extension option to carry out further works if SBC are successful in their bid for SHDF Wave 2 funding.
- 1.3 Climate change has never been so important. Alongside the energy supply crisis; radical change is required to ensure that important targets to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency can be achieved. Stevenage Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency on 12 June 2019 and as part of the Climate Change Strategy, Stevenage Borough Council has set a goal to achieve net zero by 2030. In order to help achieve this goal SBC has pledged to achieve a minimum EPC band C for all council homes by 2030. A direct award with an established contractor and supply chain will have advantages as detailed below in section 4.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive agrees that the Council can call off via direct award from the South East Consortium framework and that the Council appoint Wates Living from that framework to carry out works to improve the energy performance of around 399 Stevenage Borough Council social rented homes.
- 2.2 That Executive agrees a contract value for the works with an anticipated value of around £3 million using JCT measured term contract, for the period from the appointment date of the successful contractor to 30 June 2025.
- 2.3 That the Executive agrees the option to include further works, within the contract value, should SBC be successful in its bid for funding through Wave 2.1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and that this option will be built into the agreed contract call off.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 From March 2021 until May 2022 following a successful bid for grant funding through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 1B (LAD1B) a programme of energy works was delivered to some of SBC's housing stock. This funding was used to target properties in an EPC band D or below as per Government criteria's for the funding. 150 properties were included in this programme involving the installation of solar panels at 123 properties, loft insulation at 9 properties and cavity wall insulation at 45 properties. The delivery of these measures increased the EPC score of all these properties to an EPC C or above. It is also estimated to have made a CO2 saving of approximately 142,643KG a year in total.
- 3.2 Stevenage Borough Council's, Asset Management Team has now secured additional funding from the Government as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding Wave 1 (SHDF Wave1) of a further £1.8m plus SBC match funding of £918,273.12 for the project to improve the energy efficiency of a further 399 homes. The team have now also commenced the process to bid for further funding in SHDF Wave 2.1 which if successful would provide funding for further energy improvement works through to 2025.
- 3.3 This funding was provided through the Governments Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), which is administered by the Department for Business and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Around 20,000 social homes across England will be made warmer and benefit from cheaper energy bills thanks to the £179m of Government funding that has been announced. It will also support around 9,000 jobs in the green energy sector and deliver carbon emission savings equivalent to taking up to 6,000 cars off the road in any given year.
- 3.4 The SHDF is a £3.8bn Government commitment over a 10 year period to improve the energy performance of socially rented homes.

The aim is to get social homes to an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C. At present Stevenage have approximately 40% of their housing stock with EPC's of D or lower meaning the funding as well as being of great benefit to the Stevenage residents providing energy savings with fuel costs soaring and warmer properties and helping to try to reduce fuel poverty, it will

also reduce carbon emissions and help towards Stevenage achieving net-zero by 2050.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 A bespoke procurement exercise for this works would take up to four months to complete, with additional lead in time for mobilisation. Given the current market the risk of increased costs over such a period is significant. This would also delay the time that a meaningful impact could be made to eligible households over this winter, during a significant cost of living crisis.
- 4.2 It is therefore proposed to offer a direct award via an approved procurement framework. Use of an approved framework to procure services is an established and compliant procurement method. The operator of the procurement framework have completed a procurement exercise, selecting suppliers for particular 'lots' of work that can be used by Councils (or eligible bodies) to then agree a contract with a specified supplier. The South East Consortium Internal & Externals Framework (Major Refurbishments Lot 1b) has been identified as a suitable framework for the work required with the proposed option of a direct award. The process of calling off from the framework required Stevenage Borough Council to provide the framework with an initial enquiry. The information in this document ensures the requirements fall within the scope of the framework. Following this process has enabled the identification of the most appropriate contractor to meet these requirements. Wates Living has been ranked as number one on the framework to fulfil these requirements.
- 4.3 A direct award to Wates Living through this route is seen as the most efficient and timely route to ensure delivery of works to meet the requirements stipulated by BEIS, and delays could potentially lead to grant money having to be returned.
- 4.4 Upon further advice from BEIS and in consultation with experts and advice from other councils who have already commenced their retrofits the option of using an established procurement framework is seen as the more efficient and effective method of procurement within the limits delivery timescales for the funded works.
- 4.5 The Contractor: Wates Living is an established partner of Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) having worked on, and still successfully working on the Major Repairs Contract. This will enable the works to move ahead at pace and have the benefit of the contractor having extensive knowledge of the Council's properties and SBC policies and procedures.
- 4.6 Construction nationwide is currently suffering from a shortage of skilled workers and materials. With large amounts of SHDF funding being awarded to many Local Authorities and social housing providers across England has led to there being inflated costs and lack of choices for sub-contractors. Having an established relationship with Wates and sub-contractors who have already helped SBC deliver the LAD1B programme brings continuity to carry

on with the SHDF Wave 1 programme smoothly and is financially more cost effective.

- 4.7 Wates provide a full SHDF solution service, which involves providing full support to Stevenage Borough Council with preparing, submitting and delivering the bid for SHDF Wave 2.1 and going forward on any other future bids.
- 4.8 The recommended contractor is an existing contract partner with social value commitments through these contracts. As the initial contract being awarded is for a short duration (12 months) the Council will expand on the current social value commitments in these existing contracts. Should the extension option be taken forward additional social value commitments which will be agreed with the Council and support the wider community wealth building objectives.

5 RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SHDF CRITERIAS

- 5.1 Stevenage Borough Council has a tenant engagement plan that sets out how it will support the planned retrofit project. It highlights the resident engagement journey from buy in and design to installation, handover and post works.
- 5.2 Wates understands that tenant engagement is critical to the success of this project. They have experience delivering maintenance services to over 500,000 occupied social houses a year. Wates tenant engagement processes are accredited by the TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Services) which ensures tenants are central to decisions made.
- 5.3 Not all properties surveyed for the funding will be eligible; the PAS2035 assessments and retrofit designs carried out are bespoke to each property, meaning that two neighbouring properties may differ. SBC will work to manage resident's expectations on this with information at the commencement of the surveys.
- 5.4 The Department for Business and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) set out full details of criteria in the SHDF Wave 1 Memorandum of Understanding that SBC properties need to meet to be included in the current Wave 1 funding.

Key Principles

- A. Properties must have an EPC band D (energy performance certificate) or lower to be included.
- B. Fabric first criteria, this is a 'fabric first' approach (of insulation and heat loss prevention measures) which ensures heat loss prevention measures are installed before other energy efficiency measures to maximise comfort and bill savings.
- C. Worse first: facilitating the treatment of the worse performing homes through a scaled cost cap that allows for greater spend on those homes with a lower starting EPC band.
- D. Full compliance with PAS2030 and PAS2035. PAS 2030 is a certification which businesses will need to have to demonstrate the

compliance of their installations. Unlike PAS 2030, PAS 2035 is not a certification; it is a standard that sets out the specifications which compliant retrofitting must meet.

6 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 6.1 The contract value can be delivered within existing approved budget HRA capital budget KH319; this includes £1.8m of funding awarded through SHDF Wave 1.
- 6.2 The work delivered through the SHDF scheme supports on key theme of the draught Housing Asset Management Strategy and Business Plan to decarbonise the housing stock and reduce its impact on climate change.
- 6.3 Budget for future years will be subject to the review of the HRA business plan and the level of funding secured through future bidding for funding through SHDF. The current HRA business plan is being refreshed and will include assumptions around the level of investment required into the housing stock to meet our decarbonisation objectives. At present these assumptions are based on the latest information the Council has on what works will be required, the likely costs and current known funding levels. The assumptions will need to be refreshed regularly through the business plan as more detailed understanding is gained by carrying out specialist surveys and there is greater certainty around future levels of Government funding. The Government funding for SHDF wave 2.1 requires the HRA to match fund at a ratio of 50:50 and is focused on a fabric first approach. These are mainly insulation measures aimed at achieving an EPC C, as such this does not support the mass replacement of fossil fuel heating systems or installation of Photovoltaics(solar panels), both of which are likely to be required to decarbonise Stevenage's council homes. This means the current levels of funding are well short of the investment needed to deliver against the objectives for decarbonisation.

Legal Implications

- 6.4 The procurement of the new contracts via an established framework as detailed in the report is in accordance with procurement regulations and Stevenage Borough Council's procurement policies. The Council will comply with the direct award criteria under the framework and enter into contracts as set out under the framework to be approved by the Borough Solicitor. Any additional works or extension of contract and contract length will be subject to review by the Borough Solicitor to ensure continued compliance with procurement rules.

Procurement Implications

- 6.5 SBC's Corporate Procurement Team have been consulted and have not raised any concerns regarding using an established framework.

Risk Implications

- 6.6 The most significant risk is due to the limitation of available experienced contractors and therefore there may be no or minimal experienced companies to available for this type of work.

If the recommendation to use an established framework is not agreed, SBC would be met with delays, that could affect spending all of the funding secured and result in SBC carrying out less works and having to return any under spend to the Government. The award of the SHDF funding is subject to the works being delivered by March 2023.

Policy Implications

- 6.7 There are no direct policy implications but these works form part of the Council's HRA asset management strategy and climate change strategy.

Leaseholder Implications

- 6.8 There are no implications for leaseholders with the current contract and funding award.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.9 The work delivered through this contract are part of the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions and through this and subsequent contracts to continue to help deliver warm, energy-efficient homes, reduce carbon emissions, tackle fuel poverty, support green jobs, develop the retro sector and improve the comfort, health and well-being of social housing tenants.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 Memorandum of Understanding 19/02/2021
- BD2 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 application form

APPENDICES

None.

Meeting Executive

Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change;
Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council;
Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People and
Economy, Enterprise and Transport

Date 12 October 2022



CLIMATE CHANGE – ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2022

KEY DECISION

Author Zayd Al-Jawad, Rob Gregory

Lead Officers Zayd Al-Jawad, Rob Gregory, Steve Dupoy

Contact Officer Zayd Al-Jawad, 2257

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report builds upon the update provided to the Executive at its meeting in June 2022 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 by Stevenage Borough Council, 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 to achieve the target for the Town and Council to be carbon net zero by 2030.

- 1.3 As the report to the Executive in June 2022 provided a fuller update, this report focuses on the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change's new approach to neighbourhood and street level engagement.
- 1.4 The report acknowledges that to there is an extensive programme of work in place, wide engagement with other public sector partners, links with businesses and an opportunity to deepen local engagement. At the same time, the technical skills and knowledge required to bring forward relevant business cases, funding bids and projects to help reduce the Council's carbon footprint and lead efforts to achieve net zero across the borough will require additional skilled resource. The report sets out a proposal to create a new senior Officer lead role (Head of Climate Action), to be incorporated as a request for growth funding within the Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Executive in November 2022.

2 RECCOMENDATIONS

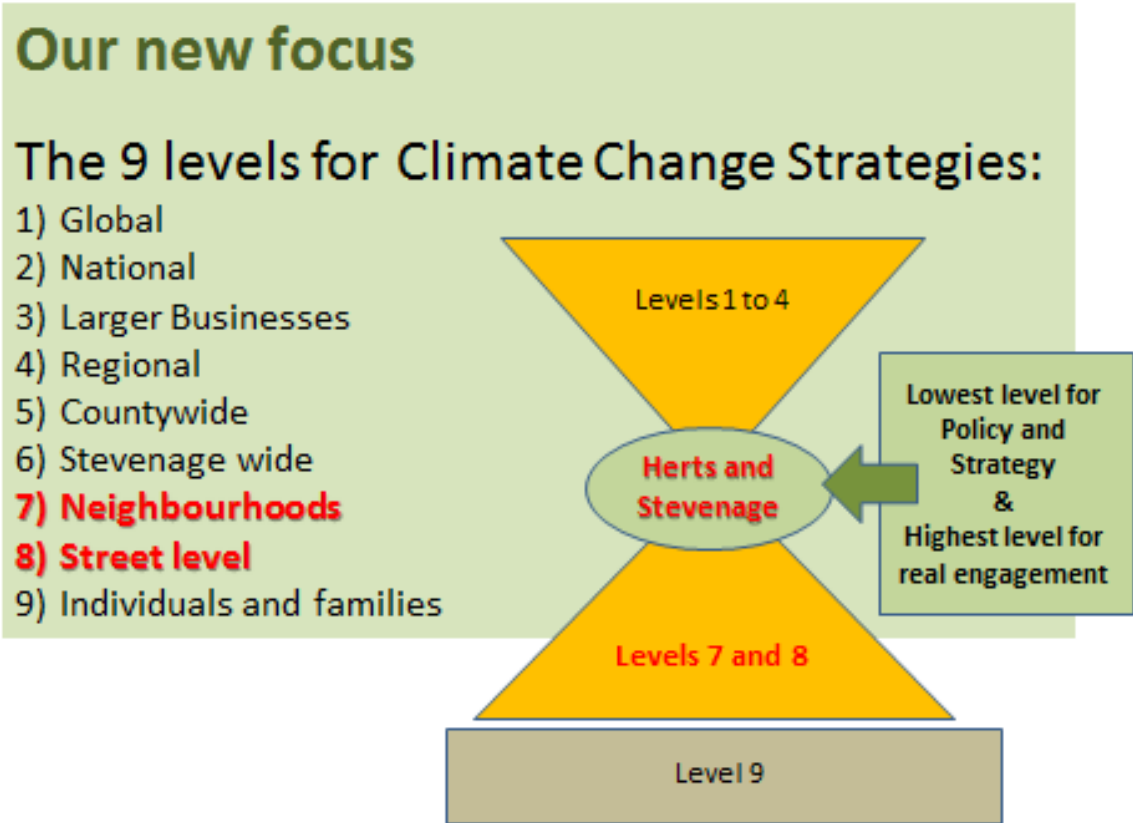
- 2.1 That the Executive notes the progress being made to deliver the Climate Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.2 That the Executive endorses the proposed approach to engagement set out in this report.
- 2.3 That the Executive notes that a proposal to create a Senior Officer lead role for Climate Change will be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report in November 2022.

3 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

- 3.1 Officers have been working with the new Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, to review the current Climate Strategy and Action Plan, existing and possible engagement activities, projects and schemes which are underway or could be brought forward, and the overall steps that will be needed to accelerate our collective efforts to achieve the aim of a net zero Town and Council by 2030.
- 3.2 As the country faces an energy crisis and a cost of living crisis, efforts to decarbonise the economy and protect the planet are vital. While the Government, and governments of other European countries, have taken steps to mitigate some of the financial impacts of the energy crisis, it is ever more crucial that further steps are taken to decarbonise the economy, reduce energy wastage and secure alternative, sustainable forms of energy.
- 3.3 At the heart of our efforts to tackle the climate crisis is a plan that recognises actions are needed at all levels, from coordinated international efforts such as those set out in COP26 and other global programmes, all the way through to individual actions and choices, and changes that can be made in immediate places and neighbourhoods in which people live.

- 3.4 At the global level, significant funding commitments have been made, for both developing countries to transition away from polluting, and investments in new low carbon technologies. Over £200bn was pledged during COP26. 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.

- 3.5 This report highlights some of Stevenage Borough Council's points of engagement and action, from reflecting global trends, through to actions in our local economy, and the active engagement needed in our local communities.



Level 1: Global and national level climate action

- 3.6 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 marked 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.

- 3.7 The current of living crisis and unfolding energy crisis are presenting deep challenges for individuals, households, businesses and our local community. A Cost of Living Taskforce is in place to help tackle some of the severe challenges ahead. While it is challenging to forecast the implications of this in terms of energy consumption and carbon emissions in the medium-term, the dramatic increase in energy prices for individuals and businesses alike is likely to 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.

Level 2 - Business

- 3.8 Many of the large businesses in Stevenage are well on their way to meet their own corporate objectives of net zero by 2030 or even earlier. Previously we have surveyed businesses along Gunnels Wood Road, including GsK, MBDA, Fujitsu and Wenta. Local businesses such as the IET and Flamingo Foods are investing significant amounts of money in Stevenage to lower their carbon emissions, from both their buildings and their processes, and some organisations working through carbon offsetting programmes.
- 3.9 The Council is working with them to share best practice and learning. SBC has agreed to fund 100 Silver Memberships for a Wenta-run net zero programme, which supports local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to understand what can be done about climate change; identify the business opportunities and risks arising from climate change. It also helps SMEs calculate the business and climate benefits of Net Zero and understand what becoming “Net Zero” can mean for the future of your business.
- 3.10 Through the Community Renewal Funding programme, the Council are currently supporting micro businesses and voluntary organisations with workshops to support sustainability planning and how to identify cost savings, but also opportunities through a ‘Meet the Buyer campaign’. From liaising with business partners including Federation of Small Businesses we are supporting businesses having to achieve ISO environmental accreditations to work with a wider supply chain.

Levels 3 and 4: Regional / Countywide - Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and at the East of England level.

- 3.11 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. This is a joint endeavour, bringing together our resources to help achieve the greatest impact
- 3.12 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.

3.13 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 three of the six main themes for which detailed action plans are being developed:

- Biodiversity
- Carbon reduction
- Transport
- Water.
- Behavioural Change
- Climate Change Adaption

3.14 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 Action Plans and some important quick wins.

3.15 HCCSP has recently supported SBC in the launch in Stevenage of two schemes supporting our residents to reduce their carbon emissions and their heating costs.

A: Solar Together: Stevenage Borough Council is supporting a group-buying initiative for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Hertfordshire, a solar group-buy scheme run by iChoosr in conjunction with local authorities, will assist homeowners to purchase high-quality panels, installed by approved fitters at a competitive price. This innovative scheme is part of the Solar Together programme which started four years ago and now runs across the UK.

3.16 The scheme has been very successful in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire amongst other countries, and is currently running in Bedfordshire. To date, Solar Together has delivered over 7,000 installations which will avoid 130,000 tonnes of carbon emissions over the panels 'lifetime'.

B: Energy Saving Trust Heat App:

3.17 Stevenage Borough Council has joined with councils across Hertfordshire to become one of the first in Britain to partner with Energy Saving Trust to provide an energy-efficiency app to help you cut energy use and help save carbon emissions.

3.18 The easy-to-use Hertfordshire Energy Advice Tool (HEAT) app gives a virtual tour around a typical home, asking questions and giving advice through each room. Based on the answers you give, quick, easy, low or no-cost actions are

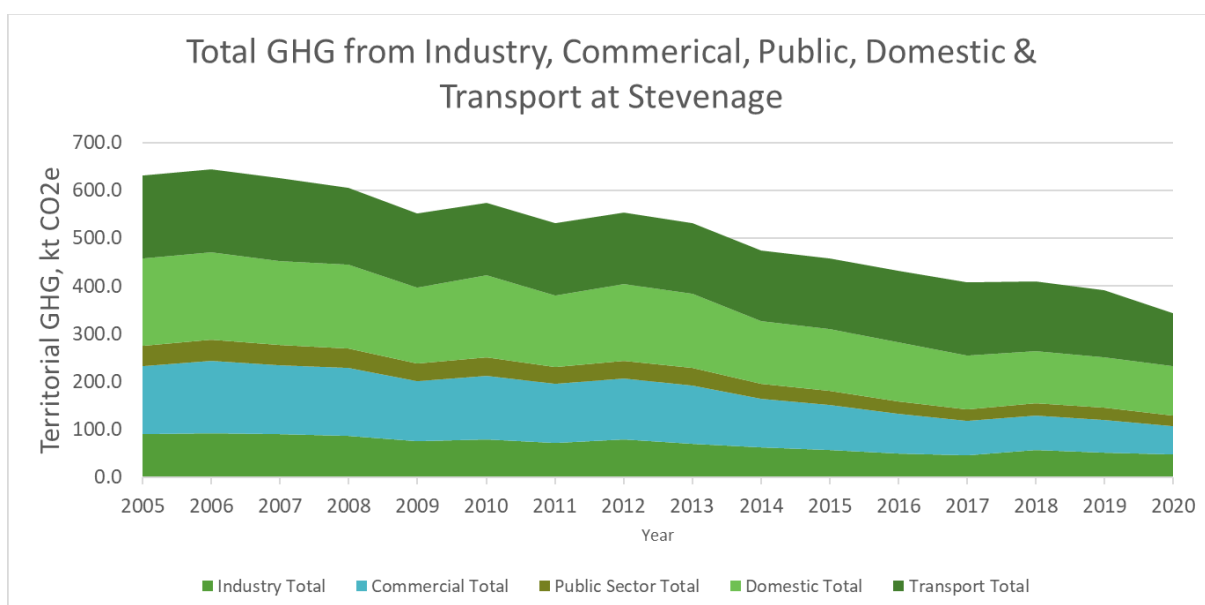
suggested to help you save money on your energy bills and cut your carbon footprint.

- 3.19 Once the virtual tour around the home has finished, a personalised advice report can be emailed, providing you with a summary of the potential energy and money savings. The average saving from using the HEAT app is estimated to be £70 a year.
- 3.20 Up to forty per cent of the borough's greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings, including homes. By taking small steps to be more efficient at home, we can all help do our part to help tackle the climate emergency and help get Stevenage to net zero emissions by 2030.
- 3.21 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
- 3.22 The LGA's Climate Change Sector Support Programme is promoting two of its virtual programmes to members with dates from September to December.
- 3.23 The programme will help senior council officers, across all services, to explore their crucial local leadership role in responding to the climate emergency. These actions will be evaluated by the Carbon Literacy Project for you to be certified as Carbon Literate, enabling you to train others in your area of work.
- 3.24 The LGA's Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool provides a straightforward and consistent approach for councils seeking to calculate their own carbon baseline. The tool, which is used to record scope 1 and 2 council emissions, has been very recently updated to incorporate wider scope 3 reporting. SBC will be able to benchmark our emissions with others to understand how their performance compares with their peers across the country.
- 3.25 In partnership with Innovate UK, EELGA hosted an event for councils to explore progress and future opportunities in meeting net zero targets. The pilot work summary can be found in the background papers.
- 3.26 The research work with the University of Hertfordshire 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.

Level 5a: Emissions in Stevenage

- 3.27 Central government data for Stevenage’s over emissions for 2020 have been released and is shown below. Clearly the effect of the pandemic has resulted in a sharper than average fall in emissions which was a benefit. The 2021 figures will be release in the next 6 months and are likely to show some increase as industrial production has recovered, as was the case after the 2008/2010 down turns.



- 3.28 The carbon emissions in the Stevenage Borough Council geography area dropped by **12.5%** in ktCO₂ (Kilo-tonnes of carbon) in 2020, from 380.3 ktCO₂ in 2019 and 397.9 ktCO₂ in 2018 (our baseline year). These amounts are on the most recent data and include and increased scope for CO₂ reporting. The big drop can be put down to the lockdown restrictions and subsequent decline in both industrial production and travel. The 2021 figures are expected to increase as we reopened. These are figures produced by central government taking into account a complex array of energy use data and are about a year behind.

Level 5b: Stevenage Council Homes

- 3.29 As a major housing provider the council has been keen to drive the decarbonisation of its own housing stock of almost 8,000 council homes. As opportunities have emerged the Housing Investment team have started to explore ways to reduce carbon emissions across the stock.
- 3.30 From March 2021 until May 2022 following a successful bid for grant funding through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 1B (LAD1B) a programme of energy works was delivered to some of SBC’s housing stock. This funding was used to target properties in an EPC band D or below as per government

criteria's for the funding. 150 properties were included in this programme involving the installation of solar panels at 123 properties, loft insulation at 9 properties and cavity wall insulation at 45 properties. The delivery of these measures increased the EPC score of all these properties to an EPC C or above. It is also estimated to have made a CO2 saving of approximately 142,643KG a year in total.

- 3.31 The Council is preparing a further bid to the second round of this scheme to further drive this work and deliver to further eligible properties. This will be factored into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Planning process to consider future match-funding requirements from the HRA.

Level 5c: Stevenage Council activities

- 3.32 The Council is working across Hertfordshire to agree an approach to common baseline which can be used to track progress and monitor effectiveness. SBC is trialing new software that can better track and report our climate change progress, with a new informative public webpages expected to launch in early 2023.
- 3.33 The Climate Change Strategy is based around 8 themes, reflecting the breath of services offered by the Council. The 8 themes are shown on the next page and the Council's delivery against the key activities agreed by Executive within those themes is set out below. The traffic light colouring (red, yellow, and green) depicts the progress made against each one.
- 3.34 As the Council has refreshed its approach to the Climate Strategy and Action Plan, there are several key areas which will be subject of additional focus will be:

People (Cllr Simon Speller / Cllr Sandra Barr / Cllr Richard Henry)

- Street meets to and walkabout to hear about local issues.
- Topic People Panel and Topic Reference Panels.
- Youth Council and school engagement.

Biodiversity (Cllr Simon Speller)

- Re-greening Stevenage in Fairlands Valley Park; North of Stevenage Country Park and other areas. Increasing our target from 2,500 to 4000 new trees and increase the number of new pounds from 3 to 6.
- Pilot Neighbourhood Green Plans (NGP).
- Delivering the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Updating the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Transport (Cllr Lloyd Briscoe)

- Work on EV Taxi strategy to get to net zero by 2030 across Herts.

- Successful £13m funding bid to central government for £6m funding for 30 single deck, battery electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network.
- 12 New EV charging facilities in the Neighbourhood Centres bid to Department for Transport.

Energy & Water (Cllr Speller)

- Working with Affinity Water to support their 2030 net zero target.
- Supporting residents and businesses to best manage their energy and water usage.

Business (Cllr Lloyd Briscoe)

- Support for local businesses with shared knowledge.
- Wenta Net Zero Silver options for 100 local Stevenage businesses.

Homes (Cllr Jeannette Thomas)

- 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. SBC is currently bidding for second and possible third rounds.
- Reviewing the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to examine opportunities for further decarbonisation.
- Lobbying government for additional funding for social housing decarbonisation.
- Solar Together scheme, launched across Hertfordshire for local people to jointly purchase solar panels at a discounted rate.
- Housing Development programme to adopt high environmental standards triple glazing, solar power and other low carbon housing .

Construction and Regeneration (Cllr Simon Speller and Cllr Sharon Taylor)

- Inclusion of low carbon housing, carbon sinks and offsets in the review of the Local Plan.
- Sustainability and Climate Change requirement on procurement contracts.
- Developing the low carbon ambitions for the Station Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP).

Waste & Recycling

- Commitment to Food Waste collections for residential properties in Stevenage from 2025

Theme visions

- 3.35 The priorities above help deliver priority areas identified within the 2019 Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which is based on 8 priority areas. A summary of the vision for each theme (from 2019) is set out below.

People

- 3.36 The only way we can achieve the goal of carbon zero by 2030 is if everyone plays their part. Through educating, engaging, supporting, listening and communicating with our residents from all background, positions, ages and interests can we collectively make the required changes to our behaviour.

Biodiversity

- 3.37 Ensuring our biodiversity is improved as part of the carbon reduction measures will ensure we have a holistic approach to the wider sustainability impacts we as humans are having on our local ecology. Using nature's natural way of addressing the human impact of climate change is the most effective method of taking action. Ensuring that one area of improvements does not undermine the other is vital.

Transport

- 3.38 Making up nearly a third of our emissions Transport is a key area for us to address, and one that behaviourally we as residents, employers, employees or visitors make every day. Big changes and support from the Transport Authority can have huge transformational impacts not only on our carbon outputs, but also health and employment opportunities.

Energy & Water

- 3.39 The source and use of energy has the opportunities to make significant changes in our carbon emissions relatively quickly, particularly while we are still trying to change behaviours. It is expected that the general electrical grid will be fully re-carbonised by 2050 which is too late for our targets, so encouraging all energy users to not only consider where they source their energy from but how much is used, is one of the first major actions. As our temperature increases, our water usage increases and availability decreases. Hertfordshire is already one of the driest regions in the UK yet we use twice as much water as people in places like Manchester. Actions to address leakage and chalk stream sourcing need to also be considered.

Businesses & Homes

- 3.40 Industrial and residential users make up nearly two-thirds of carbon emissions, investment in de-carbonising industrial processes, and home heating / energy use are key areas to support and educate our businesses and residential to make the changes. Government financial support will be required too.

Construction & Regeneration

- 3.41 As a leader in building new home sand regenerating the town centre the Council will have significant powers and opportunities to build better buildings and places, which are designed in sustainable ways, in sustainable locations.

Waste & Recycling

- 3.42 Reducing, reusing, then recycling need to be at the heart of what we do as a Council collecting and processing waste but also in educating residents and businesses.
- 3.43 The following section and diagram provides a brief summary progress report on actions within this theme.

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 4000 trees by 2030

Construct at least 6 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

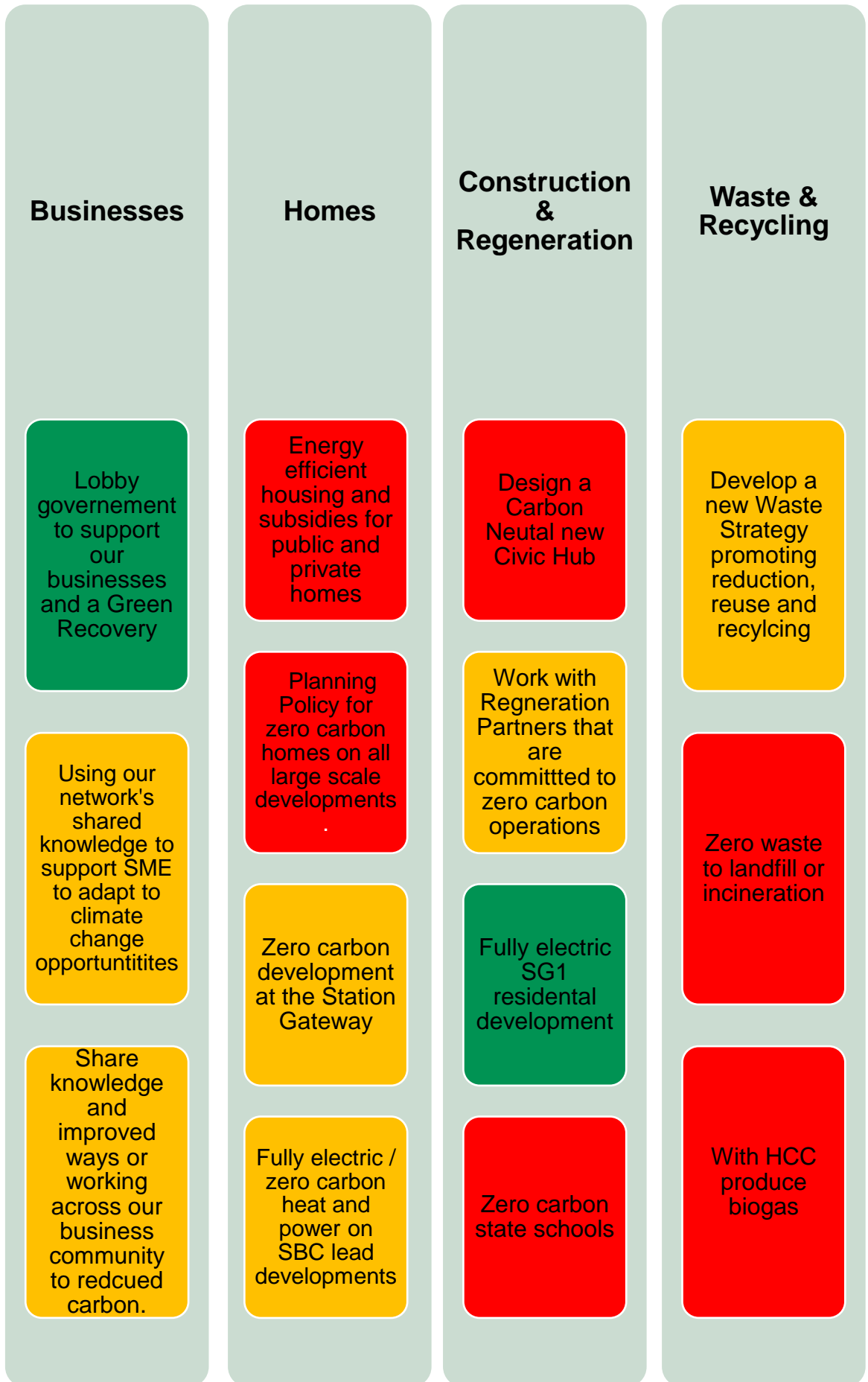
Energy & Water

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

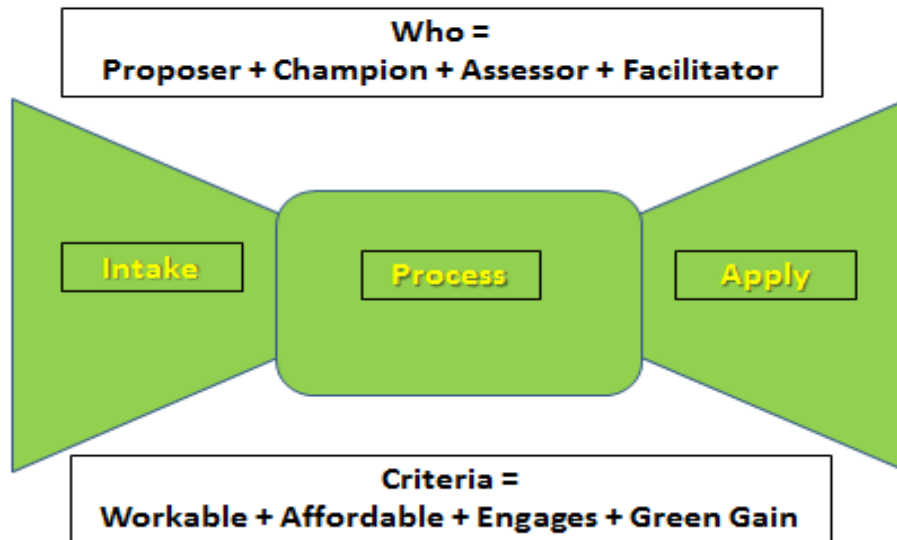


Levels 6- 9: Local Engagement

- 3.44 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.
- 3.45 Further work on engaging with young people through the Green Schools network is being explored, alongside work with North Herts College. The Deputy Leader and Youth Mayor and Youth Council will also work with the Council to ensure the Borough's younger voices are heard and empowered into action.
- 3.46 The Environment and Economy Select Committee have committed to reviewing the delivery of the climate strategy and action plan over a two year period. Through this Committee, there has been technical work with the University of Hertfordshire and extensive discussions with stakeholder groups like HEART.
- 3.47 There is a cross-party Member led group within the HCCSP, Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, which Cllr Speller (as Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change) will attend and contribute towards.
- 3.48 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.
- 3.49 The Council will update its webpage as way to inform but also hear from residents and interest groups. Currently it is about sharing information and education, but it will be expanded to including more interactive features, communication with the Council and more detail updates on key projects.
- 3.50 The Council is developing a new reporting platform for internal and external use with a Finnish company specialising in climate change reporting. The system is being tested at the moment with the hope of having a live version ready in the new year. It is designed to be user friendly and easier for the public to see how SBC is performing in its climate change ambitions.

Neighbourhood and street level working

Grassroots Projects Pitches



- 3.51 One of the new approaches is that ideas from local people for greening their street or local area, can be submitted via our website, with officer support, taken to the Climate Change Progress Group (CCPG) for a 'dragon's den' style consideration. Money from local Community Infrastructure (CIL) and other funding streams could be used. Projects which had more community ownership, support and potentially reduced costs for SBC while green a local street would be supported.
- 3.52 Working with the Portfolio Holder for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods, the Council is committed to getting buy-in from our members and officers, with much of this work already being done over the last few months, the next stage is listening and responding to our residents.
- 3.53 The approach is that through a series of street meets and walkabout, ideas from local people about what might improve their 'pocket neighbourhood' can be heard, and officers and local ward councillors working together can see how these re-greening improvements can be made. Much of this way of working will be embraced corporately as part of our Cooperative Neighbourhoods approach
- 3.54 This approach to engaging communities more proactively with the climate change agenda comes as the next phase of Co-operative Neighbourhoods is developed. Over the coming months Co-operative Neighbourhood groupings will lead visioning exercises with residents in each neighbourhood areas to identify local priorities, utilising community feedback already received. As part of this process climate change actions and activities will be identified. This process will begin over the coming month led by the community development team with local priorities identified in early 2023.
- 3.55 Following the success of the Pin Green neighbourhood planning, 3 trial areas for Neighbourhood Green Planning (NGP) are proposed. The 3 areas are Pin

Green & Bedwell; St Nicolas and Woodfield, and Shephall & Bandle Hill. In these areas, local residents and ward councillors with support from officer's would identify a vision for some significant improvements to their area and how the community can be empowered to take the lead in this. This may take the form of improved community facilities and usability of green space.

- 3.56 There will be an opportunity for Co-operative Neighbourhood Groups to determine investment priorities as part of this process and consider how to resource particular initiatives that are proposed. This may take the form of participatory budgeting exercises, direct in-house commissioning, external bids for funding or Dragon's Den style pitches through the CCPG.
- 3.57 Co-operative Neighbourhood Groups will have access to various funding sources over the coming two years. This will include allocations from the Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This will be alongside Members' access to their own Local Community Budgets. This will provide some opportunities for investing in projects that support climate change ambitions.
- 3.58 More widely Topic People Panels and Topic Reference Panels would be set up to hear from both those with an interest in Climate Change and those without it, about what climate change means to them and what the Council can do.

3.59 Working with partners

Main external groups:
■ UKNet100
■ EELGA
■ HCCSP 6 sub-working groups for officers
Main internal groups:
■ Executive / Scrutiny and senior team: 6 weekly meetings
■ E&E – finish review and then six monthly checks
■ SLT
■ New Corporate Climate Change Group, previously Information Exec on Climate Change – monthly.
■ SBC Estates team looking at decarbonising BTC and Market and capturing Rental requirement on EPC rating
■ SBC Fleet decarbonising working group
Consultation and deeper engagement
■ Street meets, Neighbourhood Green Plans
■ Topic Reference Groups and Specialist Referenace groups
■ Communications Plan updated
Main stakeholder groups:
■ Local community engagement planned (neighbourhoods / street level)
■ Engagement with schools and young people
■ Engagement with businesses and via entities such as WENTA, Biz4Biz, HCC .
■ Specialist groups – FOE, HEART

Governance - Climate Change Progress Group

- 3.60 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.
- 3.61 A new Climate Change Progress Group (CCGP) group will be established, led by the new Climate Change Programme Lead, to report quarterly clearly on SBCs performance in meeting its climate change commitments. This high level group of officers and Portfolio Holders will keep a track on performance and highlight achievements and areas which require additional support and resources.

Engaging Council teams

- 3.62 Tackling the climate crisis is a significant priority for the Council, along with the existing Future Town Future Council programme, the emerging cost of living crisis and the need to ensure a stable financial position.
- 3.63 The next phase of work will require deep and broad engagement across different Council teams, from biodiversity, to commercial estate management, management of Council homes, planning and transport, local Co-operative Neighbourhood teams and beyond. Our proposed approach is for the Council's Senior Leadership Team to maintain an oversight of the delivery of the programme, and work through options to help equip teams with the skills to tackle the climate crisis ahead of us. To do so will require a learning and development programme, including developing particular skills such as knowledge of new technologies, preparation of business cases for investments and changes to particular assets, skills for public engagement to help support the Co-operative Neighbourhood working programme and street meets. There are likely to be opportunities for direct engagement, including local community projects to help support the delivery of smaller scale climate projects, and to help embed cross team working on this programme.

Communications

- 2022/2023 Communications Plan Agreed
- Helpful tips and reminders
- Linked to HSCCP and National Campaigns.
- Stevenage case studies

4 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 4.1 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. Local CIL funding may also be available to support improvements to local infrastructure that reduce the carbon emission in an area such as new tree, better lighting and footway improvements.
- 4.2 SBC funding for permanent Climate Change Lead Officer has been agreed, the recruit taken place and the officer is now in the role.
- To further support the work on Climate Change at a senior level, to ensure the Council can priorities its commitment to decarbonising and supporting our businesses and residents to do the same, proposals to create a senior Officer lead role will be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy report in November 2022 for Executive's consideration.
- 4.3 We recognise that a move to net zero and sustainable travel could mean reduced income, for example related to car parking income, which is used to fund other services, and will need to be continually reviewed through the Medium Term Financial Plan process. 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. 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 The Council is resourced to do some of the work around Co-operative Neighbourhoods and can accommodate climate change considerations as part of that process. However dedicated bespoke engagement at street and neighbourhood level is going to be officer and member resource intensive which is yet to be fully budgeted for.

Legal Implications

- 4.6 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

- 4.7 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

- 4.8 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

- 4.9 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

- 4.10 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

BD1 - Climate Change Work Programme 2022/2023

BD2 - LGA Net Zero Regions Pilot

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Planning and Regulation
Date 12 October 2022



COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - ALLOCATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Members of the amounts of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) secured and projected.
- 1.2 To seek agreement that current Charging Schedule (CS) be maintained and reviewed in 2023/2024 linked to the Local Plan work.
- 1.3 To change the approval process for CIL expenditure and allocate money locally.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the amounts of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) secured and projected are noted.
- 2.2 That the current Charge Schedule (CS) rates be maintained and the rates reviewed in 2023/2024.
- 2.3 That Executive approval, rather than Planning & Development Committee approval, is required to allocate and spend more than £75,000 of CIL income.
- 2.4 That the allocation of £15,000 per Co-operative Neighbourhood area, per year from 2023, be approved for local infrastructure (as per CIL Regulations) improvements which support Climate Change improvements and carbon reduction measures.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge introduced by the Planning Act 2008, as a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure, such as transport schemes, schools, community facilities, parks and leisure facilities, which are needed as a result of development taking place.
- 3.2 CIL is fairer, faster and more certain and transparent than the system of planning obligations (S106), which causes delay as a result of lengthy negotiations and is subject to viability. The benefit of CIL is that once it is collected it can be used to deliver any infrastructure that the Council wish – it is not ring-fenced for a specific scheme or type of project.
- 3.3 S106 would still be used for site specific mitigation, particularly for the larger schemes i.e. where a whole school is required as part of a specific development (e.g. North Stevenage and West of Stevenage) or where road/cycleway improvements are required within or in close proximity to the development. S106 is only allowed for infrastructure that is directly related to the scheme and is required in order for the development to be acceptable.
- 3.4 When the Executive and Council, in 2019/ 2020, agreed the current rates of CIL they also agreed to review it after a year. Since the 1st of April 2020, the Council has been charging the rates below:

Table 1: Existing CIL levy rates

Development type	CIL rate	
	Zone1: Stevenage Central	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential Market housing	£40/m ²	£100/m ²
Sheltered Housing	£100/m ²	
Extracare housing	£40/m ²	
Retail Development	£60/m ²	
All Other Development	£0/m ²	

Table 2: CIL due confirmed over the next few years.

Application No	Site Address	Demand Amount	Receipt Amount
20/00671/FP	Land Adjacent To 24 Shackledell, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 9AE	9,752.71	9,752.71
20/00672/FP	Garages And Forecourt Area To Rear Of 13-19 The Chace, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 8QS	21,136.53	2,113.65
20/00593/FP	49 Fellowes Way, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 8BS	12,900.00	1,290.00
20/00142/FP	Courtlands, Chantry Lane, Todds Green, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2JE	7,100.00	7,100.00
20/00133/FP	Former Shephall Green Infant School , Shephall Green, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 9XR	22,800.00	22,800.00
19/00123/FPM	Land To West Of A1(M) And South Of Stevenage Road, Todds Green, Stevenage, Herts	1,130,989.00	113,098.90
20/00053/FPM	Former Chells Play Area, Eliot Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 0LJ	0*	0*
Total		1,204,678.24	156,155.26

*subject to disqualifying event (100% relief offered)

Table 3 – overview. “Potential” means there is a CIL liability but they haven’t commenced on site. “Due” means they have commenced on site.

	Potential 23/26	Due	Collected	Allocated	Spent
Totals	£7,901,688	£1,204,678	£156,155	£0.00	£93,000 (prep. and admin 2019-22)

Application No	Site Address	Ward	Due	Strategic	Neighbourhood	Admin
21/00536/FPM	Land To The North West Of Junction 7 Of The A1(M), Knebworth Park, Knebworth, Herts, SG1 2AX	Roebuck	9,536.55	7,629.24	1,430.48	476.83
19/00721/FP	19 Made Feld, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1PQ	Bedwell	5,168.00	4,134.40	775.20	258.40
21/00328/FP	4 Shackleton Spring, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 9DF	Shephall	5,802.57	4,642.06	870.39	290.13
21/00847/FP	Car Park, Bragbury End Sports Ground, Aston Lane, Aston, Stevenage, Herts	Longmeadow	132,203.59	105,762.87	19,830.54	6,610.18
21/00886/FP	27 Boswell Gardens, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 4SB	Woodfield	12,731.77	10,185.42	1,909.77	636.59
21/00898/FP	Land Adjacent To 39 Jessop Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 5LG	Martins Wood	23,928.14	19,142.51	3,589.22	1,196.41
21/01244/FP	42 Sandown Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 5SF	Martins Wood	8,449.10	6,759.28	1,267.37	422.46
22/00019/FP	39 Fishers Green Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2PD	Symonds Green	5,785.15	4,628.12	867.77	289.26
22/00491/FP	Chells Manor House, Chells Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 7AA	Manor	39,625.29	31,700.23	5,943.79	1,981.26
21/00957/FP	12 Hollyshaws, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 8NZ	Longmeadow	7,477.54	5,982.03	1,121.63	373.88
21/00709/FP	69 Whitney Drive, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 4BH	Woodfield	0*	0*	0*	0*
19/00647/FPM	Former BHS Store, 7 The Forum, Town Centre, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1ES	Bedwell	738,263.00	590,610.40	110,739.45	36,913.15
21/00704/RM	MKG Motor Group Limited, Chells Way, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 0LZ	Chells	34,496.41	27,597.13	5,174.46	1,724.82
21/01162/FP	Land To Rear Of 36 Fellowes Way And 57 Woodland Way, Stevenage, Herts, SG2 8BW	Roebuck	11,530.54	9,224.43	1,729.58	576.53
19/00474/FPM	Land To The West Of Lytton Way, Stevenage, Herts	Old Town	4,300,000.00	3,440,000.00	645,000.00	215,000.00
17/00862/OPM	Land To The North Of Stevenage, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 4DE	Woodfield	2,566,691.00	2,053,352.80	385,003.65	128,334.55
Total			7,901,688.65	6,321,350.92	1,185,253.30	395,084.43

*subject to disqualifying event (100% relief offered)

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.2: That the current rates of CIL are maintained and reviewed in 2023/2024.

- 4.1 It can be seen that there has been only a limited amount of CIL funding secured and paid so the Council is still in the early days of assessing the impact of the rates. However more schemes are coming forward which are liable to CIL.
- 4.2 The pandemic has had a variety of impacts on the development and housing markets within high levels of Planning activity, but mixed effect on the residential housing prices. It appears houses prices and land values have been resilient so far, but the future is unclear.
- 4.3 There is, however, substantial demand for offices, and research and development space and is currently £0 rated for CIL. As the large number of this office space was not envisaged for at the time of the Local Plan or the CIL Charge schedule we would like to review all the rates and those types of uses covered by CIL as part of the Local Plan update.

4.4 It is proposed to review the rates in the next financial year, 2023/2024.

Recommendation 2.3: That Executive approval, rather than Planning & Development Committee approval, is required to allocate and spend more than £75,000 of CIL income.

- 4.5 CIL and S106 income and expenditure will be reported annually and published on the Council's website, along with infrastructure priorities and local needs, most of which are linked to our Local Plan and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).
- 4.6 The IDP details the expected level of infrastructure that is required to support the planned growth in the Local Plan. The IDP highlights a significant level of un-funded infrastructure that the CIL is only part able to fill. As such, strategic decisions on the best infrastructure schemes will need to be made by the Executive in due course.
- 4.7 CIL infrastructure expenditure below £75,000 will be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning & Regulation, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder. Expenditure of CIL on infrastructure of £75,000 and above has been determined by the Planning & Development Committee. There has yet to be any spend above £75,000.
- 4.8 The recommendation is for approval of expenditure above £75,000 to be taken back by Executive, to allow the Executive itself to approve that expenditure in line with most financial expenditure of that magnitude in the Council. This should better align CIL expenditure with the corporate objectives of the Council and, where possible, provide greater impact for infrastructure provision by taking that higher level view.

Recommendation 2.4: That the allocation of £15,000 per Co-operative Neighbourhood area, per year from 2023, be approved for local infrastructure (as per CIL Regulations) improvements which support Climate Change improvements and carbon reduction measures

- 4.9 As the Council wanted to ensure that the larger amounts of CIL are effectively used at a strategic level, the Council wants to ensure that local neighbourhoods see and feel some of the benefits of improved infrastructure at their local level. This approach works in sync with that of the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Environment's approach to local neighbourhood and street level engagement
- 4.10 The recommendation seeks agreement to allocate £15,000 of 'local' CIL to each of the 6 neighbourhood areas, each year from 2023. This funding would be suitable for local physical infrastructure improvements, that accord with the CIL Regulations. Where possible this will align with ideas for local climate change and carbon reduction measures that local people might have. This funding commitment would enable local people at street and neighbourhood

level to make the decision, through councillors, on what physical infrastructure improvements would benefit them and their area. These may include trees, biodiversity improvements, pedestrian crossing, lighting etc.

- 4.11 As there is a considerable amount of CIL funding that may or may not come forward, the proposal gives ward members certainty of some funding at the neighbourhood level in each area. Once the approach has been established and when larger schemes payments are starting to be triggered the amount per neighbourhood area can be reviewed.
- 4.12 More details on the approach to Neighbourhood Greening Planning and street level, interventions are covered in the October 2022 Climate Change update.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The financial expectations remain as previously reported.
- 5.2 The costs of implementing CIL will be met from the 5% CIL income the Council is allowed to keep for administration purposes in the long term (this includes the costs of Examination). In the meantime, it is being funded through the agreed departmental budget of the Planning Policy Team.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 The preparation of Community Infrastructure Levy is given effect by the 2008 Planning Act.
- 5.4 Detailed statutory requirements for the preparation of CIL, including consultation requirements, are set out in The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Risk Implications

- 5.5 None.

Environmental & Climate Change Implications

- 5.6 CIL has the potential to have a positive impact on the environment, as monies can be used towards improving/maintaining/new environmental infrastructure. The proposed allocation of sizeable amount of funding to local neighbourhoods for climate change improvements offers an opportunity for local people to identify climate change improvement measures for their area.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

Appendix 1 – Approximate income from future large schemes yet to be approved

App Number	Address	Ward	Start Date	Approx income
19/00743/FPM	SG1 Phase 1	Bedwell	2023/4	1.8 Million
19/00743/FPM	SG1 Phases 2, 3, 4	Bedwell	2024/5	2.4 Million
21/00356/FPM	Land To The West Of Stevenage Phase 1	Symonds Green	2023	850,000
21/00356/FPM	Land To The West Of Stevenage Phase 2	Symonds Green	2025	2.5 Million
N/A	South Stevenage	Longmeadow	2025	3 Million
Total				10.55 Million

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Leader of the Council
Date 12 October 2022



COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Executive on the steps that Stevenage Borough Council and partners have taken already in responding to the cost of living crisis in this country, and
- 1.2 To agree the proposed actions as the basis for further development by the Council and key local partners to support local residents, businesses and community groups, and the Council, over the coming months.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the draft Action Plan, attached at Appendix A, is agreed as the basis of an initial town-wide response to the cost of living crisis.

- 2.2 That the Council continues to work with key local partners, including through the Stevenage Together Partnership, to develop a coordinated response across agencies to support residents, businesses and community groups
- 2.3 That the Executive Member Cost of Living Working Group continues to oversee the development and implementation of the action plan, supported by the Officer Working Group, and reports back on progress to Executive again in December.
- 2.4 That Executive notes that the potential for reduced income from fee-based services and people struggling to pay council tax and/or rent, coupled with increased demand for services and higher costs, could significantly impact on the Council's short and medium-term finances. This will be closely monitored and reported to Executive as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process.
- 2.5 That the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport writes to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to request that the recently announced cap on the cost of energy for businesses for six months is extended to two years, in line with the cap on household energy costs, to provide certainty for local organisations.

3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 It is widely recognised and accepted that the United Kingdom is currently facing a cost of living crisis that is directly impacting all households and businesses to some extent.
- 3.2 The crisis is being driven by a number of factors, including (but not limited to) the cost of energy, food, fuel and other goods; the war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia; highest levels of inflation for 40 years and rising interest rates; ongoing residual impact from the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. For businesses, other factors are also impacting such as increased supplier and material costs, challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, and transport costs.
- 3.3 Many households are already facing significant increases in household costs, with recent estimates suggesting as many as 4.4m households (1 in 6) across the country are in financial difficulties – up 1.6m since December 2021. A quarter of households now have no savings, while credit card debt is rising. This is likely to increase further as the winter period approaches.
- 3.4 It is also anticipated that the crisis will impact more significantly on the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country, including the lowest paid, single parents, people with disabilities and families with three or more children.
- 3.5 Whilst many steps have already been taken nationally and locally to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis as much as possible, it is anticipated that households and businesses (including the Council) will continue to face challenges for some time.
- 3.6 This report sets out the actions that have already been implemented, along with short and medium to long-term actions that it is hoped will help local residents, businesses and community groups, Council employees and the Council itself through this difficult period.

- 3.7 It is important to recognise that the Council alone cannot address or mitigate the potential impacts and is already working with partners to develop an understanding of the local situation and appropriate actions in response. This will continue throughout the crisis, in keeping with its commitments as a Cooperative Council.

4 IMPACT IN STEVENAGE

Residents

- 4.1 Stevenage is the most deprived Local Authority in Hertfordshire with over 73% of its LSOAs (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) occurring in the bottom 30% in the county. This means the impact on people in the town has the potential to be higher than in other areas.
- 4.2 Around 20% of households in the town are considered to be in poverty, and the percentage of working age people claiming Universal credit, levels of unemployment, and the proportion of lone parent households in the town are all above the average for the East of England.
- 4.3 The impact on residents is already been seen across three key measures: food, fuel and rent arrears.

Food

- 4.4 Based on research by the Local Government Association and Financial Inclusion Centre in January 2021, Stevenage households were the most worried about their food security compared to all other local authority districts in the East of England.
- 4.5 In addition, recent data about food poverty from Citizen Advice Stevenage indicates that the demand for charitable support (such as foodbank services) is now on the increase and likely to continue to rise. This mirrors national level data with almost 700 people a day being referred to food banks – up by around 300 on last year.
- 4.6 Hertfordshire has seen a 9% increase in pupils eligible for Free School Meals from Nov 2020 to June 2022, with Stevenage having the highest numbers in the county.
- 4.7 Recent Citizen Advice Stevenage data about requests for other types of charitable support has also seen an increase since Quarter 3 (2021). Requests include applications for grants available from Stevenage Community Trust, or Hertfordshire Community Foundation or other similar charities. This includes help with essential items such as small kitchen appliances and white goods, beds, mattresses and bedding.

Fuel

- 4.8 In January 2021 the percentage of Stevenage households experiencing fuel poverty was 12.7%, around the average for the East of England. Citizens Advice advised that nationally, energy debt is up from £350 per person in 2019 to £700 + in 2022.
- 4.9 This increase is having a disproportionate impact on disabled people due to their need to use more heating to stay warm, and charge up items of assistive

technology. Citizen's Advice has advised that it is seeing more disabled people with a cost of living issue than for all other issues.

- 4.10 Scope have reported that a third of disabled people have cut their energy consumption over the last year to afford their bills, 29% of working-age disabled people had struggled on costs, and nearly a quarter turned off heating even though the home was cold.
- 4.11 Nationally, Citizen's Advice is seeing a truly unprecedented number of people who can't afford to top up their prepayment energy meter, and therefore can't do the basics like turning on their fridge or heating their hob. By the end of June this year, more people had come to Citizen's Advice about fuel and energy poverty than in each of the past 3 years.
- 4.12 There has also been a significant increase in the cost of travel, with petrol and diesel prices hitting regular daily records in June 200 before a recent slight drop. Residual high prices will continue to influence people's decisions about travelling, whether that be for essentials such as work or socially (with the inherent mental wellbeing benefits that can bring).

Rent Arrears

- 4.13 Citizens Advice (CA) is reporting a steady rise of the number of its clients coming forward with rent arrears. Previously, Council Tax and Credit Card debt were the biggest contributory factors to debt levels, but this is no longer the case.
- 4.14 Cost of living challenges are directly impacting income collection and arrears recovery, with rent arrears collection in Quarter 1 2022/23 below target and increasing levels of complex cases. More people are being referred to Citizens Advice and Welfare team for support and these are taking longer to resolve due to the high complexity levels. CA has received 172 referrals since April 2022
- 4.15 The increase in the number of residents with concerns about rent arrears has also been flagged by the Hertfordshire Economic Recovery Team (HERT) Project. The project is a partnership between Citizens Advice Hertfordshire and the Money Advice Unit, working with the most vulnerable residents within Hertfordshire who need debt and benefits advice. The top issues they are dealing with across Hertfordshire are:
 - 11.7% Breathing Space Agreements (to prevent Creditors taking enforcement action)
 - 8.8% Rent arrears
 - 8.7% Credit card
 - 8.1% Council Tax Arrears
 - 7.4% Fuel debts
 - 4.9% Water debts
- 4.16 The reduced Discretionary Housing Payment budget (the Government cut funding from £140 million to £100 million in 2022/23) and higher threshold for eligibility has resulted in more people being refused than previously (11% in Quarter 1) and people receiving lower sums compared to previous years.

Physical and Mental Wellbeing

- 4.17 Increased financial concerns with food, fuel and housing costs, on top of other pressures, is likely to contribute to increased issues with mental wellbeing.
- 4.18 Mind in Mid Herts are continuing to experience increasing demands over 40% over the last 2 years, both due to increasing numbers of new referrals and people having more severe symptoms. Stevenage is the busiest of four centres in the county, and Herts Mind Network who run the Crisis café in the evenings in Stevenage have seen more demand there than three other crisis cafes in Watford, Ware and Hemel Hempstead.
- 4.19 Experience through the recent Covid-19 pandemic, and previous economic downturns, has shown that challenging personal circumstances can lead to increased cases of domestic violence and antisocial behaviour.
- 4.20 The current situation is also likely to widen existing health inequalities in the town, and it will be important to work with partners across the Integrated Care System and Public Health to consider appropriate health interventions.

Businesses

- 4.21 Many of the same issues that are impacting on residents are also impacting on local businesses. This includes high energy costs, increased prices impacting on supply, materials, manufacture and delivery costs, and pressures of business rates and rent or other property costs.
- 4.22 In addition, many businesses face changing demand for goods and services, particularly those that can be considered discretionary such as some retail, leisure and hospitality.
- 4.23 With unemployment at lowest levels for 50 years, many businesses are also experiencing vacancies and challenges in recruiting employees. This is putting pressure on existing employees, and also impacting retention in many sectors, especially where levels of pay are lower.

Impact on the Council

- 4.24 As well as a role in supporting local residents and businesses, and Council employees, the Council is also being impacted directly by the cost of living crisis. It is therefore very important that the Council continues to strike the right balance between maintaining the financial sustainability of the organisation itself at the same time as striving to support others.
- 4.25 This is likely to lead to challenging decisions over the coming months, as council costs are likely to increase at the same time as key income will be reduced and demand for Council services will also rise. Examples include:
 - Increased debt and arrears for rent, council tax and business rates
 - Increased benefit claims, and people needing higher levels of support
 - Increased demand for homelessness support, and higher costs for temporary accommodation including Bed and Breakfast rooms

- Increased fuel costs impacting the council fleet as well as staff travel costs, as well as increases in cost of materials and labour for regeneration programmes
- Reduced income from key income streams such as commercial and residential garage leases, and car parking

5 NATIONAL RESPONSE TO DATE

5.1 The Government announced an initial £21 billion package of support measures for households in March 2022 Spring Statement, and an additional £15 billion in May 2022. These measures were predominantly focused on one-off payments and retail discounts for households, along with an extension of the Household Support Fund, and include:

- £150 Council Tax rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A-D
- £400 energy grant for all households
- 8 million households in receipt of Universal Credit will receive a one-off payment of £650 to be paid in 2 lumps sums (due July and autumn)
- 8 million pensioners in receipt of winter fuel payments will receive an additional one-off payment of £300
- 6 million people in receipt of disability benefit will receive a one-off payment of £150
- The Household Support Fund extended from £1 billion to £1.5 billion.

5.2 During September, the Government announced a further package of measures including:

- Capping the cost of energy for households for 2 years from October 1st, at an average of £2,500 per year
- Capping the cost of energy for businesses, charities, and public sector organisations for six months, and then it will be reviewed every three months
- An energy supply task force to get contracts with international suppliers to bring down energy costs.
- Cancelling the proposed increase in corporation tax, keeping it at 19%.
- Cutting the Basic rate of tax cut by 1p in the pound from April 2023, taking it to 19%, and scrapping recent increases in dividend tax from April 2023.
- Reversing the 1.25% National Insurance rise from 6th November and cancelling the health and social care levy due to be introduced in April 2023
- Capping the cost of bus tickets at £2 per journey for 3 months.
- Raising the point at which stamp duty is paid on house purchases from £125k to £250k, and from £300k to £425k for first time buyers.

6 STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO DATE

- 6.1 On the 20th July 2022, the Council declared a cost of living emergency, with the Council calling on Government and Hertfordshire County Council to do more to help residents most impacted by the crisis.
- 6.2 This included providing food for children eligible for free school meals during school holidays, scrapping the National Insurance increase, restoring the additional Universal Credit payments, imposing a windfall tax on oil and gas companies, providing direct financial support to reduce household energy bills, and restoring the triple lock for pensions.
- 6.3 In response to the crisis the Council has set up an Executive Member Cost of Living Task Force, which is working across the Council and with key local partners to identify the support needed in the community and ensuring actions are in place to address the needs identified. The Working Group is focusing on the impact on residents, businesses and community groups, Council employees and the Council's finances.
- 6.4 Many of the services and activities that the Council undertakes as "business as usual" support local residents, businesses and community groups facing difficulties. This includes providing and signposting to information, advice and support; distribution of benefits and grant funding; housing and homelessness provision; community engagement and support; community safety including Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) and the No More drug and alcohol service; and skills development and employment opportunities.
- 6.5 The Council has already built on many of these areas, and implemented additional measures to provide additional support to help mitigate the local impact of the cost of living crisis.
- 6.6 The Council also funds Citizen's Advice Stevenage to provide direct support to people in seeking to prevent and mitigate financial difficulties, and continues to support a local crisis café to support people with their mental wellbeing.
- 6.7 Measures already taken to support local residents, businesses and community groups include:
- Establishing an online information hub on the Council's website to bring together relevant information and sources of support available internally, externally and through partners (see <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/benefits/help-to-manage-the-cost-of-living>)
 - Providing more information directly to residents, including via social media, about energy rebates being issued and what they need to do to receive them
 - Distributing and promoting the Government response and grant schemes, rebates and vouchers
 - The use of the Community Renewal Fund to support people and communities most in need, including developing Community Wealth Building approaches, raising awareness of local services including face

to face support, and developing the Social Inclusion Partnership to support local communities and community organisations (£750k)

- Applying to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to further our Community Wealth Building programme and improve access to business and sustainability support for voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (£185k)
- Distributing Stevenage's allocation of the Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food, clothing and utilities., including payments to foodbanks, schools and community centre cafes (£124k)
- Work to improve the energy efficiency (EPC) rating of the Council's housing stock, including securing £1m grant funding to start decarbonising homes
- Longer-term, multi-million pound investment in skills development and employment opportunities, including the Stevenage Town Investment Plan and the Stevenage Works employment programme

6.8 Citizen's Advice Stevenage has indicated that it is intending to scale up the number of advisers it has, in response to increasing number of people seeking help and the complexity of their needs.

6.9 The Stevenage Community Foundation has also indicated that it will increase the amount of money it distributes to people this year, again in response to the increasing number of people seeking support.

6.10 Measures already taken to support council employees (over and above those that benefit them as local residents), and to mitigate the impact on Council finances include:

- Working to address the challenges being faced with recruitment and retention, including learning and development opportunities for existing staff and implementing new advertising approaches including better use of referrals and social media.
- Reporting the impact of the cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy update to Executive in September, including increased costs for utilities, goods and services, reduced income due to people reducing outgoings and struggling with housing costs, and additional staffing costs.
- Recognising the importance of the proposed national pay in helping staff meet increased costs, but also the impact on Council budgets as this is higher than anticipated (up to £700k) and may not be fully funded by Govt (the Local Government Settlement is still to be agreed)
- Requests for increased mileage rates are being made to HMRC as not covered by the national pay claim
- Recognising and promoting the value of existing flexible working arrangements, employee assistance programme, and availability of resilience support, coaching, and pay flexibility requests is being considered.

- Developing an online hub for staff to access information, support and advice is being developed.

6.11 As a Co-operative Council, working in partnership is at the core of the Council's approach. Through the Stevenage Together Partnership, the Council is working with private, public and voluntary sector organisations to co-ordinate responses to the crisis and support for local residents, businesses and community groups. This includes developing a shared, town-wide action plan that will build on the initial actions set out in Appendix A.

6.12 The Council is also engaged with Hertfordshire County Council and the other district and borough councils in the county (and beyond through links including the Local Government Association, District Councils Network and Co-operative Councils Innovation Network) to lobby the Government for additional support and funding, to share best practice and to develop wider interventions where appropriate.

7 PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

7.1 As mentioned previously, the Council is focusing on the impact of the cost of living crisis on local residents, businesses and community groups, Council employees and the Council's finances.

7.2 It is proposed that further actions and efforts to mitigate the impact as much as possible will be structured around these headings, whilst also considering a number of key themes that the Council is able to directly influence:

- Understanding the various impacts of the crisis, to enable targeted support to be prioritised where needed the most and to help track the impact of any actions and interventions
- Co-ordinating Government support to reach those that need it
- Providing information, support and advice, including promoting and signposting to the most appropriate sources
- Maintaining good health, including physical, mental and community wellbeing such as volunteering
- Access to food and nutrition, including community larders, food banks, gardens, healthy eating and cooking advice and support
- Housing, including costs, repairs and improvements, retrofitting and decarbonisation
- Working in partnership to co-ordinate Council activities, maximise their impact and to target support in localities / to the most in need

7.3 A draft action plan is attached as Appendix A. It should be noted that this sets out initial priorities and areas of focus, and will continue to evolve and develop over time as more is understood about the impact of the crisis and any interventions (locally and nationally).

- 7.4 A particular area of focus, working with partners, is the development of a Warm Spaces programme. This includes exploring the use of council-owned facilities, as well as those owned and operated by other partners, to promote opportunities for people to access warm spaces outside their own homes. This will be accompanied by the delivery of outreach programmes of advice, support and activities, providing meaningful reasons for people to access these warm spaces over and above social benefits and reduced heating costs at home.
- 7.5 Hertfordshire County Council has recently announced a small grant scheme to support voluntary sector organisations seeing to provide warm Spaces, and we will work collaboratively to maximise the benefit of this to Stevenage residents.

8 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The implementation of the proposed action plan will be overseen by the Executive Member Working Group, supported by the Officer Working Group.
- 8.2 The proposed response will be kept under close review, and the approach adapted where appropriate to reflect changing circumstances and learning from local, regional and national interventions if/when alternative actions are considered to be more effective.
- 8.3 The approach will also be closely monitored to align with any relevant announcements from Government and other sources, and any funding that is made available.
- 8.4 The Executive Member Working Group will report back to Executive on progress in December 2022. Further progress updates will be made at least quarterly.
- 8.5 Further steps will be taken to engage more fully with partners, including developing and funding health interventions, employment support and community-based support.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 9.1 The Leader, Executive Members and Senior Leadership Team have all been consulted about and engaged in developing the proposed response to the cost of living crisis.
- 9.2 The focus is on areas the Council can directly influence that will have a positive impact in mitigating the impact of the crisis on local residents, businesses and community groups, Council employees and the Council's finances.
- 9.3 Executive could choose to take a different approach to helping to mitigate the impacts, but it is felt that the current proposals and governance arrangements will be the most effective given their initial focus is based on local evidence, flexibility, oversight and commitment to working with others.

10 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Financial Implications

- 10.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. Officers responsible for delivering the actions set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.
- 10.1.2 However, the cost of living crisis is already impacting directly on Council finances and will continue to do so. In addition to increasing costs for fuel, energy and other materials, the Council is likely to see an increase in demand for many services at the same time as a reduction in income from fee-based services and people struggling to pay council tax and rent. This will be closely monitored and could lead to challenging decisions needing to be taken about the Medium Term Financial Strategy in due course.
- 10.1.3 It is also possible that additional funding will be allocated to local government in response to the cost of living crisis, either for the Council to use itself and/or for distribution to local groups, individuals or businesses to help provide support and mitigate the impacts. If and when this funding is forthcoming, decisions will be taken in line with any guidance, criteria and restrictions set in consultation with the Executive Member Working Group, Portfolio Holder(s) and Executive as appropriate.

10.2 Legal Implications

- 10.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications in consultation with the Borough Solicitor.

10.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 10.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report, although it is possible that the impacts of the cost of living crisis will be greater for people on lower incomes, with disabilities, and with caring responsibilities so actions will prioritise support for the most vulnerable where possible.
- 10.3.2 Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects and service changes identified to ensure any negative, differential impacts are mitigated where possible.

10.4 Risk Implications

- 10.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, the potential impacts of the cost of living crisis are already being monitored as part of the Strategic Risk Register and officers responsible for delivering the actions set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.

10.4.2 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.

10.5 Other Corporate implications

10.5.1 Implementing the priorities and improvement activity outlined in this report may impact on the development of future policy or procedure, and require the realignment of resources to deliver specific actions.

11 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

12 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Draft Cost of Living Action Plan

Appendix A – Initial, Draft Cost of Living Action Plan

Residents			
Focus	Action	Timescale	Owner
Information, Advice and Guidance	Continue to develop and update the online Cost of Living information hub in the Council website, covering Council support and signposting to other support, including Government and local grants, advice about avoiding scams, and support with household costs such as school uniforms	December 2022	Corporate Policy
Information, Advice and Guidance	Work with partners including Citizen’s Advice and the Money Advice Unit to offer residents a comprehensive advice and support service – a “full financial MOT” looking at short-term and longer-term changes that will improve their financial resilience	November 2022	Corporate Policy / Cooperative Neighbourhoods
Health and wellbeing	Work with partners to develop a Warm Spaces scheme, utilising public, community and other buildings to offer comfort during the winter months, alongside information, advice and other social opportunities to support people	November 2022	Cooperative Neighbourhoods
Food	Advice to help people with cooking on a budget, including links to Step to Skills to develop learning opportunities	December 2022	Cooperative Neighbourhoods

Skills	Promote availability of local employment opportunities, and skills and training courses (including funding available to support access) to help raise awareness and confidence for people to increase income and improve their financial wellbeing	January 2023	Planning and Regulation / Communications and Marketing
Businesses and Community Groups			
Focus	Action	Timescale	Owner
Information, Advice and Guidance	Develop and/or signpost to existing online information and support hub (such as the Herts Growth Board), to increase awareness of the support, funding and advice available	November 2022	Planning and Regulation
Information, Advice and Guidance	Utilise existing relationships and networks to reach out to local businesses and community groups to understand what support they need, and what interventions from the Council and partners would be most beneficial in supporting them	December 2022	Planning and Regulation
Council Tenants	In particular, contact businesses that are Council tenants to offer support and to promote information, advice and other measures to help those in financial difficulty	December 2022	Estates and Facilities

Council Employees			
Focus	Action	Timescale	Owner
Information, Advice and Guidance	Develop an online information and support hub promoting the internal and external information, advice, support available to employees	November 2022	HR
Information, Advice and Guidance	In particular, to provide financial advice and support about short term loans, avoiding scams and so on given the marked increase in both that has been reported nationally amongst public sector employees	November 2022	HR
Pay	Implement the outcome of the national pay review, once confirmed following consultation with the Unions	January 2023	HR
Flexible working	Promote and role-model the Council's flexible working policies, including recognising that more employees living locally may choose to come into the office to reduce heating costs at home (for example)	November 2022	HR
Council Finances			
Focus	Action	Timescale	Owner
Forecasting	Modelling impact of inflation and other rising costs on Council budgets, in year and for 2023/24	January 2023	Finance
Forecasting	Engaging with suppliers to understand any likely price increases and/or issues with availability of goods and services as a result of increased cost and pressures for them	December 2022	Corporate Procurement

Decarbonisation	Develop and implement decarbonisation schemes to reduce Council and tenant costs. This will include a bid to Round 2.1 of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund targeting properties with a EPC D rating or below.	November 2022	Housing and Investment
Energy	Modelling the impact of energy increases in the charges to tenants and leaseholders, to consider how best to support people with managing costs	December 2022	Finance
Governance, collaboration and oversight			
Focus	Action	Timescale	Owner
Partnership Working	Continue to work through the Stevenage Together Partnership to share learning and best practice and to co-ordinate activity where appropriate	January 2023	Corporate Policy
Partnership Working	Continue to work with the County and district and borough councils in Hertfordshire to share learning and best practice and to co-ordinate activity where appropriate	January 2023	Corporate Policy
Data and Intelligence	Develop local dashboard to track impact, analyse outcomes of any interventions, and to inform targeted action, linked to the Welfare Reform Group and Citizen's Advice	November 2022	Corporate Policy
Longer term investment	Further develop the use of the Social Value Portal to divert funding from Council contractors to local skills development and key local investment priorities	March 2023	Cooperative Neighbourhoods

Part I – Release to Press



Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Resources, Transformation & ICT
Date 12 October 2022



FUTURE COUNCIL 2025 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

LEAD AUTHOR: RUTH LUSCOMBE

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report sets out an update on the Future Council 2025 transformation programme, including proposals for the Council to implement a Five-Star Customer Service programme which responds to the key principles agreed by Executive in August 2021.
- 1.2 The report covers an update on the first phase of implementation and outlines the proposed programme, its goals and benefits for the next phase to be delivered in 2023/24.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Agrees the Five-Star Customer Service programme outlined in 4.2.
- 2.2 Note the progress on the first phase of implementation of the transformation programme.

- 2.3 Note that further work to develop detailed plans, including structural change, is ongoing and will be taken forward over the autumn of 2022.
- 2.4 Endorse the proposal for resident feedback and engagement outlined in section 4.28.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In August 2021, Executive approved the development of a transformation programme to improve customer experience, increase workforce productivity and organisational resilience, while supporting savings required by the Medium Term Financial Strategy. There are two main drivers for the Transformation programme; improving resident / customer satisfaction as well as supporting the Council's Making Your Money Count agenda.
- 3.2 Across the country, local government has been facing a challenging financial position after a decade of central government funding reductions and with pressures heightened by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing inflationary pressures and the cost-of-living crisis driving up demand for services. Therefore, the focus on financial security is more important than ever to support a strong position for the Town and the Council.
- 3.3 The ability to identify options to reduce net spend has become ever more challenging, with a need to make annual savings to reduce the Council's cost base. The transformation programme combines changes to processes, organisation structure, culture and technology; all four of these aspects need to be reviewed and redesigned, with changes implemented to each, to ensure improvements are sustainable and maintain delivery of priority services within a lower overall budget.
- 3.4 Through delivering sustainable transformation, the programme aims to enable resources to continue to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the Council's corporate plan. The Corporate plan includes a number of priority programmes including Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving town, Transforming our Town, Co-operative Neighbourhoods, and More Social and Affordable Homes.

Improving resident and customer satisfaction with services

- 3.5 Customers increasingly want convenient services, with access when, how and where they choose. For many this means online services which are easy to use and available "24/7".
- 3.6 The Council has invested in new tools and technology over the past few years. In particular,
- the implementation of a new website has improved the user experience (for example, it is now much easier to view on a mobile device and web content has been simplified and upgraded).
 - Implementation of a digital platform (self-serve forms and customer case management), this has enabled many more services to be requested online.

- Integration of the web platforms with the Council’s new waste management system has enabled self-service and automation of some of the highest volume requests (e.g. missed bins), improving the experience as well as supporting efficiency savings in customer support teams.
 - A housing online portal has been implemented offering tenants the ability to view balances and request services, such as repairs online.
- 3.7 In addition to technology, the Council has invested in leadership capacity as well as technical and project management skills to further develop the programme. A core Digital and Transformation team is in place and further work is ongoing to recruit additional capacity.
- 3.8 While there has been an increase in the number of digital transactions (from 13% of all transactions, to approximately 24% over the past 18 months*¹) there is opportunity to further improve our online offer and the ease with which residents can access Council services.
- 3.9 Significant work is underway to improve customer service performance, through accelerating the work to enable particular transactions to be completed online, temporarily increasing the size of the customer service team by 5Fte to help address higher volumes, working to overcome recruitment pressures, and promoting the use of online channels. In addition, work is underway to address service backlogs such as the fencing implementation programme being led by the Housing and Investment team. Taken together, this plan aims to improve call handling performance, encourage use of online channels, and address some of the covid-related service backlogs. However, while short term measures including recruiting and training additional staff are being implemented, there is a need to identify long term financially sustainable solutions.
- 3.10 To help inform the next phase of the programme, a range of sources of feedback have been sought from staff, customers (for example through complaints) and Members. This highlights some areas where there is a need to adapt how we operate to meet expectations in terms of the quality of service provided. At the same time, satisfaction with the service offered by the customer service centre has remained broadly high based on our telephone survey results (consistently 85%- 90% reporting they were satisfied over the past 18 months), but as set out below, there are some areas of improvement that the transformation programme will focus on.
- 3.11 Review of cases and staff / member feedback identified some of the common complaints raised by customers:
- When will my issue be resolved and what are the next steps?
 - How can I find out what is going on with my case?
 - Why did the council say no to my request?

¹ the proportion of service requests made online compared to the total received online or through Customer Services. This excludes online payments and balances’

- Why can't the person I am speaking to tell me the answer, or why do I have to wait for an answer?

3.12 Addressing these challenges requires the Council to do substantive work on its processes to make sure every step adds value, to ensure that customers get a resolution more quickly and so that self-service versions of processes are easy to use. To improve the experience the Council may need to review certain policies for example to make sure they are clear and consistent.

3.13 In addition to processes and policies, the Council needs to continue to develop its staff development and performance management approach to ensure all teams are equipped to deliver quality customer service. Furthermore, systems will need to be developed, and where possible integrated with the self-service offer to reduce the need for staff or customers to re-type information in different systems, and ensure updates are provided promptly.

3.14 Organisational design is an important enabler. One part of the programme is to re-design the way teams are organised to create bigger more resilient teams, with teams who are skilled in a broader range of topics, improving the ability to resolve requests more swiftly.

Making Your Money Count

3.15 The Making Your Money Count agenda aims to ensure the Council is financially resilient and can protect resources to deliver on priorities.

3.16 Spending cuts by central government, pressures arising from new legislative requirements or taxation, responding to challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently inflationary pressures, have meant that the Council needs to identify and deliver around £3Million savings over the next three years.

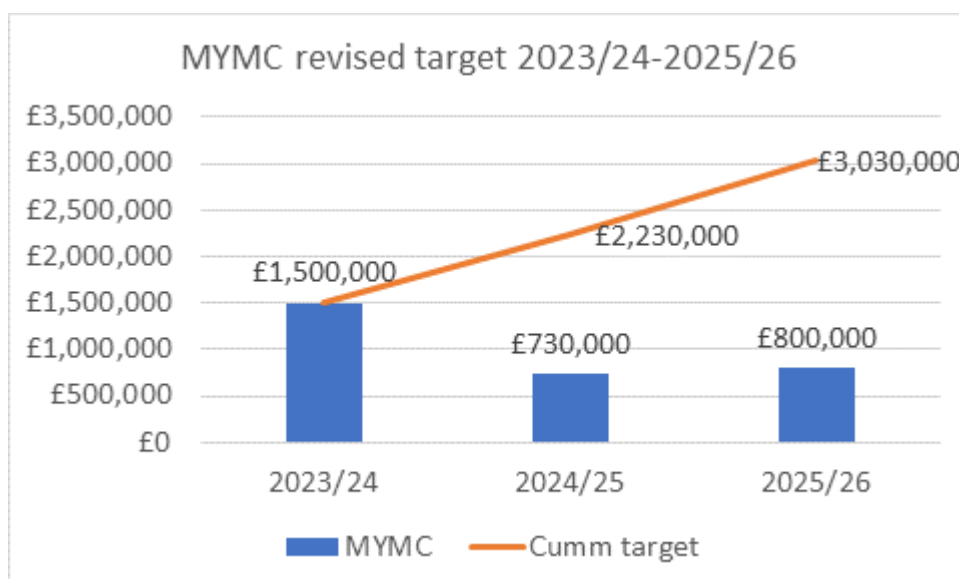


Figure 1. Making Your Money Count targets

- 3.17 As a result of over a decade of government grant reductions (£.3Million) and unfunded inflation (£6Million) the Council has been required to deliver a number of budget saving programmes over the preceding years. The impact of successive years of spending reduction is that identifying options to reduce net spend has become ever more challenging.
- 3.18 Furthermore, the challenges presented by the cost of living crisis have created additional demand for services as well as putting pressure on Council budgets which is likely to escalate further in coming months.
- 3.19 In response to these drivers, the transformation programme has been set up to review all aspects of how the Council operates to improve efficiency, enhance productivity and ensure its resources go further towards supporting priorities.

Vision

- 3.20 The vision for the programme approved the Executive is:

Customers are at the heart of our services. We will serve customers in a straightforward way, with resolution at the first point of contact and through the provision of easy to access online services that are so good, people prefer to use them. We will work cooperatively with residents to make sure services are designed with them.

Foundation principles

- 3.21 A set of foundation principles were agreed by Executive in August 2021. These foundation principles recognise the importance of working cooperatively across teams within the Council, and with partners too.
- 3.22 The principles set out guidelines based on what has worked well to date and where future improvements can be made to benefit customers and residents
- 3.23 The approach recognises that there will need to be investment and enhancement to our digital foundations, to help ensure these channels are reliable, accessible and available for many customers to choose to use.
- 3.24 A key principle of the new approach is to move to a “Digital First” approach, and ask customers to self-serve online wherever possible, to make resources go further. However, the proposed model recognises there is no one-size fits all approach. Some customers and service types will require in person support via the telephone or face to face and this support will remain crucial for many customers in the future.
- 3.25 The principles also seek to further embed the cooperative neighbourhood model, working closely with communities to help resolve problems, maintain a visible and proactive presence and help Council teams to work effectively together.
- 3.26 The foundation principles underpinning the programme are outlined below.

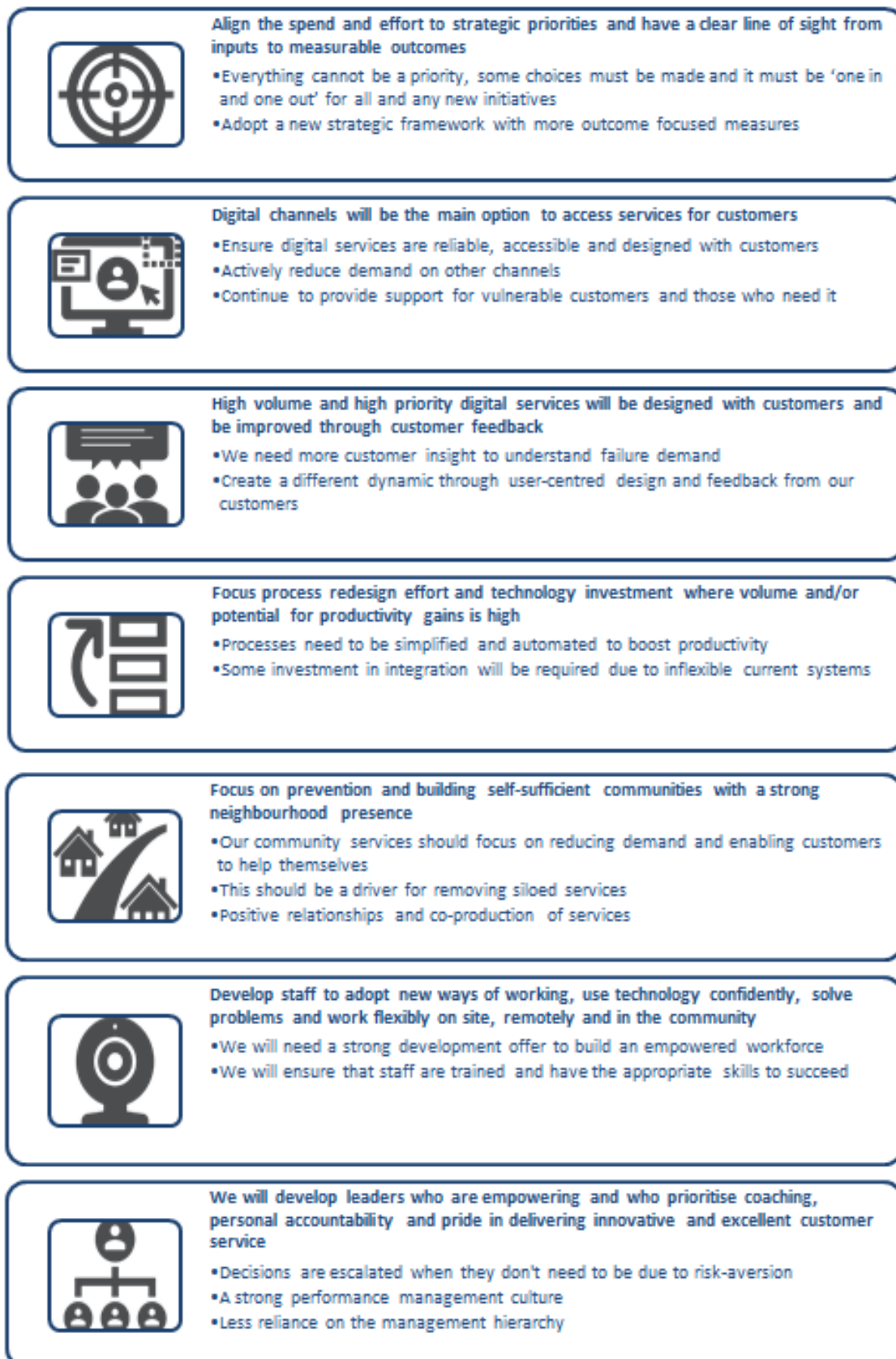


Figure 2 Foundation Principles

Four themes and prioritisation

3.27 The transformation programme is organised into four main themes which were set out in August 2021 to help organise activities in the most efficient way and group particular skills and priorities together. The four themes are;

- Strategy and Commissioning
- Resources
- Service Delivery and Locality Model
- Direct Services

3.28 These high-level themes are not an organisational structure, but are intended to help look at the resources available to deliver the Future Town, Future Council priorities, service and statutory duties. Delivery is being phased to ensure there is enough capacity to support each theme. The transformation programme will review all aspects of how the Council operates against the key principles (in section 3.21-3.26) to improve efficiency and ensure its resources go further towards supporting priorities.



Figure 3 Four transformation themes

3.29 The Service Delivery and Localities Theme aims to improve customer experience across all Council teams, across the various routes and means that residents and customers engage with the Council, and the way the Council works cooperatively with the community. This area is at the heart of the Council's ambition to be a Cooperative Council, and with an effective way to working within and across neighbourhoods. Given the potential benefits for customers, residents and the town, this area of work has been prioritised. In addition, this area covers the largest area of staff spend (approximately £9m).

3.30 Detailed analysis of the Council's costs has been undertaken to identify the potential staffing and cost base associated with each of the four themes above. It is anticipated that Transformation savings may come from de-layering management and moving to bigger teams with common activities grouped together compared to small teams with a narrower specialism. Furthermore, efficiency savings are anticipated from reducing waste in processes, improving automation and by improving services to achieve a 'right first time' approach. The detailed design work is still underway with plans to be further developed.

3.31 The Council’s teams are at the heart of it’s work , supporting the town and residents with skill and dedication. In seeking productivity improvements, the use of digital and online tools, and changes to how the Council works, the Transformation programme is committed to providing teams and colleagues with opportunity to acquire new skills and experiences and transition effectively if or when any structural changes are made. With a challenging external recruitment market, the need to use agency staff to fill current gaps and areas that are hard to recruit, the Council’s approach to change will be to manage change through staff turnover, providing training and development opportunities, clear succession and workforce planning to reduce staffing impacts as far as possible.

First phase of work

3.32 The phase of the transformation programme is underway. This phase is focused on improving the current customer services offer and implementing a Digital First approach in 2022/23. These changes are designed to improve the performance in the short to medium term and to facilitate savings which were included in the 22/23 budget. In addition to the measures below, additional short term resource is being recruited to help with improving performance.

3.33 Delivered milestones (2022/23 to date):

Changes to opening hours	Opening hours have been shortened by one hour at the end of the day to ensure maximum efficiency in the service ; by reallocating resource across a shorter day this reduces less busy periods and wasted time between calls.
Prioritisation of phone options	New Phone options were launched in the summer actively encouraging customers to go online and prioritising support for customers in urgent need.
Dynamic scheduling of Repairs	Customer Service staff are now able to offer more appointments to the customers at the point of contact and respond to digital enquiries faster
Bulky waste booking	Residents can book a bulky waste collection online, improving the experience and reducing the processing time needed by staff.

3.34 Future milestones (2022/23)

Online Triage	This Digital tool is in development and will help customers to find the right form / service online
Complaints	A fully digitised (end to end) two stage complaints process will make it easier for residents to log and track complaints online.
Garage Lettings Digital offer	A new lettings system will shortly be available to customers to bid and let available garages digitally

My Stevenage Page	A single login account for Stevenage tenants and residents with access to digital services, Housing Online, digital repairs and useful functionality like balance, tracking requests and open cases, information on local Ward, Councillor and (when needed) polling station allocated to the place of residence
Assisted Waste Collections	Digital system where residents can apply for waste collection assistance and make sure their bin is not missed. Increased automation will improve the experience.
Tenancy/Garages keys	Key issuing and returns via smart lockers. This will allow any time key/document collections, support any day tenancy, and reduce cost of garage voids
Repairs appointments	Customers will be able to fully self-serve online by raising and booking own repairs.
Case management (Caseviewer)	Ongoing work on converting our digital forms into Caseviewer system that will allow detailed traceability and progress of the cases raised by the customers
Self-scanning kiosk at Customer Service Centre	Drop in service for customers to have their documents scanned and validated by a member of staff (available only for documents that require validation)

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The recommendation is to build on the work delivered to date by implementing a Five-Star Customer Service programme to address the challenges set out above.
- 4.2 The proposed Five-Star Customer Service programme is set out below in Figure 4. The programme includes a set of actions which together will improve customer satisfaction, reduce complaints and also support the Council's Making Your Money Count programme by releasing savings:
1. Accessible services online and 24/7
 2. Easy to use and trackable processes
 3. Spot and solve issues before they arise
 4. An answer first time and clear on next steps
 5. Personalised advice and support

Figure 4. FIVE STAR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAMME



- ✓ Increase satisfaction with our service
- ✓ Reduce the number of complaints
- ✓ Services are more cost effective & reduced impact of budget reductions on services

Workstream 1: Accessible services, online & 24/7

4.3 To enable 24/7 access to services, it is proposed to maximise use of digital self-service, in order to help the Council to prioritise staff resources to the customers and services that benefit most.

4.4 The goals for this workstream are to:

- Improve service options available online
- Test new online services with customers
- Make it easier for people to use the website
- Implement new options, such as a chatbot
- Prioritise phone and face to face services for those who need it

4.5 This will be achieved through a combination of new ways of working, more use of the Council’s core existing technologies, and investment in new technology and customer facing processes. A summary of the approach is outlined below:

Digital First Channel Strategy			
	Past	Now	Customer Hub
Digital self-service	Limited functionality typically collating and emailing a request to a service. Lacked usability	Phasing in Digital First approach, providing more digital services that mirror the service over the phone	Continue development and provide alternative ways to find and access our services such as chatbots and self-service triage
Telephone	Most advertised channel, service varied from switchboard to full transaction handling	Revising call options to prioritise high needs and assist Digital First approach	Consider automated telephony options as an alternative for people without internet access
Face to face	Drop-in with 20min wait, no prioritisation to people that needed extra help	Appointments with guidelines of what they're best used for	Introduce more alternatives such as smart locker key collection and self-service scanning of documents
Email	Emails often took inconsistent routes and lacked monitoring or process automation	Removing email addresses from website where digital self-service available	Automate email handling where possible and handle consistently with other channels
Social media	Small volumes, handled without service standards and with limited effectiveness due to nature of medium	Phasing out direct messages in favour of better alternatives	Signpost customers to digital self service, review ability to comment on some posts

Figure 5 Channel approach - Past/ Now / Future

4.6 Examples worth highlighting are:

- MyStevenage account – a single login for most digital services and provides them personalised information on their account page such as their upcoming bin collections, which will be added to over time (main exclusion will be that Revenues and Benefits, and Planning services will still require a separate login).
- Chatbot – this web technology imitates human conversation through a series of questions to identify what a customer needs help finding or to walk them through simple processes. As this technology is rapidly evolving it is intended to start with a simple chatbot and build its complexity through different versions, trying alternative technologies as needed.
- Smart lockers – secure and electronically controlled lockers in the town centre that will enable customers to pick up or drop off items to us using a PIN. The main use case is to enable key pick-up and drop-off for any-day tenancy start and end, although further possibilities will be considered such as providing access to emergency equipment.

Workstream 2: Easy to use trackable processes

4.7 The goals for this workstream are to:

- Redesign processes so they are simple and as few steps as possible
- Be clear with customers what happens next
- Replace email with an online system where customers can check progress and updates.

4.8 Most customer requests received online are passed to services by email. Generic email inboxes are used by a number of support teams to store and handle customer enquiries. While this has advantages, there are number of downsides including: lack of progress visibility to customers or other staff, lack of clarity on who is owning an issue, and difficulty performance-managing staff.

4.9 The proposed approach is to capture and maintain customer requests in a case management system. This means there will be an ongoing audit trail, automated updates to the customer, easy re-assignment to different staff or team, and monitoring of performance.

4.10 Customer feedback and lessons learnt can be captured at the end of the process, which will make it easier to identify the root cause of any future complaints or issues.

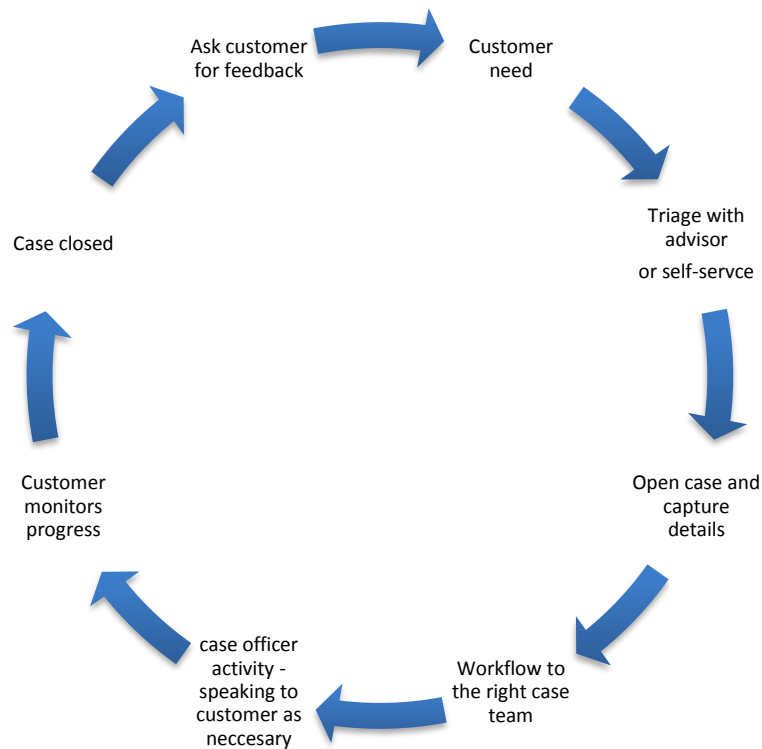


Figure 6 Case management approach

Workstream 3: Spot and solve issues before they arise

The goals for this workstream are to:

- Develop all staff to be proactive problem solvers
- Improve data and reporting so we can spot issues early
- Communicate changes and give timely updates
- Test new services with customers before launching them

4.11 Currently satisfaction is captured through telephone surveys at the end of a call. As the Council’s customers increasingly use self-service options it becomes important to provide additional feedback routes covering the full range of services.

4.12 More structured feedback and insight mechanisms will be established to replace the less formal activities staff currently use to pass on and consider what customers are saying, including by updating the feedback mechanisms on the website and providing the opportunity to feedback at the end of every case.

4.13 At the same time, the Council’s existing customer-focussed ethos will be built on through a coaching-culture, and a focus on simple but effective staff actions which facilitate staff proactively solving problems, such as:

- Empathise with a customer’s situation, the ‘relative test’, treat the customer as you would want a relative to be treated.
- Focus on what the Council can do for a customer, and/or help them to alternatives elsewhere if their ideal solution cannot be provided

- Always tell the customer what will happen next and when
 - Consider if a customer's situation means other services might be appropriate – for instance someone applying for an assisted waste collection might benefit from a tenancy visit, or it might help someone moving home to tell them about the Council's skip and garage storage offer
 - Be clear when something is not part of the council's service / what the service standard is
 - Consider if a customer's situation is particularly unusual whether it merits over-ruling the normal process?
- 4.14 In addition to feedback about individual service requests, it is a priority to have good resident involvement in designing local priorities. The Council has adopted a Co-operative Neighbourhood model which has seen the Borough divided into six localities, with the objective of co-ordinating services at a neighbourhood level and supporting the growth of local initiatives created by residents, communities, partners and engaging with the different groups living and working within Stevenage.
- 4.15 Through the Five-Star Customer Service programme a Locality Services team will be created to further embed this approach through creating the capability needed to help engage with residents, as well as improve planning and problem solving in each local neighbourhood area. The proposal is to create a more integrated team covering a range of neighbourhood-based services. It will further strengthen the current approach by closer co-ordination of activities across relevant teams. The scope is still to be finalised, but this could include for example Community Development (including the Neighbourhood Wardens), Residents and Estates Services, Green spaces teams, Town Centre Management and Markets, Events, Leisure and Culture.
- 4.16 Through locality work, the goal is to create better relationships with Council teams, residents, and partners, and by doing so, increase the level of participation and improve everyone's experience of engaging with the Council. This will be achieved by:
- Providing wide ranging and easy to use engagement channels, which build on the existing Co-operative Neighbourhood's model
 - Delivering high quality services that are tailored to community needs by applying local data and insight
 - Encouraging even better relationships with key stakeholders by developing community led plans for local people to identify priorities and make decisions for their neighbourhood and the town
 - Co-ordinating local services and projects within local areas to reduce duplication

Workstream 4: An answer first time and clear on next steps

- 4.17 The goals for this workstream are to:
- Deliver a customer service induction for all new starters, and a rolling programme for existing staff
 - Implement a single source of service information for staff
 - Ensure updates are easy to find in systems
- 4.18 Increasing the knowledge that staff have and enabling them to easily access information means that customer queries can be answered more quickly and by the first person they speak to in the Council.
- 4.19 As teams become more multi-functional, and the need to adapt to higher levels of staff turnover continues to grow, it is important to ensure staff have access to high quality information at their fingertips. At the same time, to ensure that the service offer remains aligned and consistent across the channels customers use to access services changes to customer guidance, the services offered, or the process used, need to be applied at the same time.
- 4.20 Therefore, it is proposed that a new knowledgebase will be introduced to bring together our single source of guidance, procedure and policy. This information will be updated and maintained to ensure that the liaison between customer services to ensure that any customer-facing information is released in a co-ordinated manner.
- 4.21 This knowledgebase, combined with a fresh induction for all staff on 5 Star Customer Service will provide people with the information and tools to answer customers first time and be clear on next steps. This induction will facilitate the culture of acting as one team and taking responsibility for providing customers queries and will support all aspects of the Five-Star Customer Service programme.
- 4.22 These approaches will improve the standard of the Council's work, consistency across access channels and members of staff, and make it easier to onboard new staff.

Workstream 5: Personalised advice and support for those who need it

- 4.23 The goals for this workstream are to:
- Implement and Advice and Support service for people needing extra help
 - Train staff to give advice on a range of services
 - Find the best source of help which may be a partner organisation
- 4.24 The Advice and Support service will be a centre of excellence, providing tailored help to those customers who need it. The new service provides an opportunity to meet a wide range of support needs of individuals, and to focus on intervening early to support people before needs escalate, as well as helping people at points of crisis.

4.25 The service will support residents to improve their wellbeing while reducing the cost of intervention, aiming to:

- Provide customer with both short and long term support and advice
- Prevent escalation of issues (and the associated increase in cost to the council and partners)
- Provide crisis intervention

The topics which customers can access support and advice on are expected to include: temporary and emergency accommodation; rough sleeping, homelessness, housing advice, first time lets, debt advice, alcohol / substance misuse, family intervention, domestic abuse, safeguarding and services for older people. The design of the service will determine whether it is best to incorporate all or part of these functions in the Advice and Support service.

4.26 While many teams currently work together regularly on case work, there is an opportunity to develop a more joined up approach which will improve the impact of the respective services, as well as the experience of the users of the service.

4.27 There are five key elements which will drive the design and implementation of the service detailed below:

1. One way to access services	In the current model one person may have to contact a number of different teams for support. By looking at issues in isolation, opportunities to help or refer for help may be missed. The proposal is to provide a single access point for customers who may have multiple different needs. A triage approach will be taken to ensure that appropriate support is provided.
2. Quality conversations	Good communication, judgement and practice expertise will guide the way the service will work with people. By ensuring quality conversations, the service will ensure that there are robust and supportive assessments, interventions and meaningful change for those who engage with the service.
3. An evidence based approach	The service will use an evidence-based approach when assessing and supporting individuals and will be informed by up to date knowledge, research and safeguarding review findings.
4. Maximising partnership working	Collaboration between practitioners, internal and external partners is essential to ensure prompt assessment and provision of advice and support by the most appropriate team or organisation. Referrals will be made for example to Hertfordshire County

	Council's social care services, Citizen's Advice or the internal income and debt team as appropriate.
5. Staff culture and expertise	Staff will require a range of expertise to holistically assess and support resident needs, and in line with the wider transformation plans there will be a focus on people being trained across a number of different areas of expertise.

Enabler: Customer engagement

- 4.28 Customer / resident input into the design of new services is essential to make sure the Council invests its resources into actions which best meet their needs. It is proposed that consultation will happen through a number of routes as outlined below:

Type of consultation	Proposed approach	Timing
Consultation to seek resident views on the Five-Star programme to ensure it meets their needs	Workshop(s) with a representative group of residents	Autumn 2022
Involve customers in testing new services on the website	Online or in person customer testing panels. Sharing early versions of services	Ongoing
Build feedback mechanisms into new processes to ensure satisfaction is monitored	As new processes are built, include final stage to give feedback	Ongoing
Engagement in setting local neighbourhood priorities/ plans	Resident engagement through the Cooperative Neighbourhood model	Ongoing

Enabler: Organisational development and culture change

- 4.29 In order to ensure effective change, an organisational development programme is proposed which focuses on three key areas;
1. *A customer-focused culture* – embedding the Five-Star principles in the way staff work, and into performance management approaches, as well as ensuring customer feedback drives the improvement of services.

2. *Turning data into insight that can be used* – ensuring that teams are able to effectively collect and use data to measure service performance and to improve services.
3. *Improving processes* – building staff skills to create fit for purpose processes which cut out waste and ensure that processes meet customer needs.

Enabler: Organisation design

- 4.30 It is anticipated the Council may need to deliver some structural changes in order to enable the changes outlined in the Five-star Customer Service programme, as well as to release savings. The first phase of organisation design change is being scoped and an outline of the team structure and intended outcomes for each area is provided in Appendix 1. This is subject to further design work but in order to improve the handling of cases the programme is expected to implement larger multi-skilled teams. Any structural changes will be subject to consultation with affected staff.

Implementation plan and proposed next steps

- 4.31 A programme team is being mobilised to deliver the actions outlined above. This includes additional project management and digital resource as well as service development leads for key priority areas.
- 4.32 The programme will be taking forward a number of activities over the next phase:
- Concluding the work on phase 1 technology improvements (outlined in section 3.34 above).
 - Creating detailed designs and go live plans for new team areas (i.e. those outlined in Appendix 1), including proposed structures and re-designed processes.
 - Development of enabling technology for the next phase , including
 - procurement of the knowledge tool to be used across customer teams
 - phased roll out of a chatbot to enable customers to self-service simple information and advice online
 - Creating new processes/ workflows in the Digital Platform to log and track cases corresponding to each of the new team areas.
 - Developing and implementing an organisation development strategy (covering the elements outlined in 4.29 above), communications plan, and training programme for staff.
 - A key step is that the first phase of organisation design work will be taken forward over the next few months with consultation in early 2023. This is essential in order to enable further changes and ensure savings delivery from 2023/24.

4.33 A high level implementation plan is set out below.

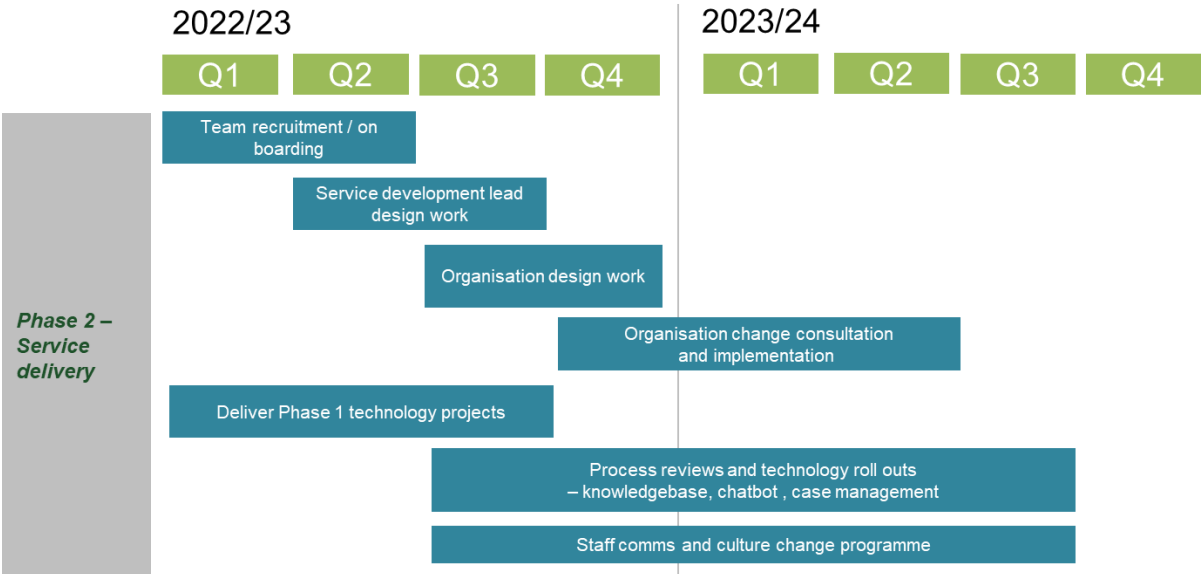


Figure 7 Implementation Plan

Alternative options

- 4.34 Alternative options (listed below) have been discounted as they cannot release cashable savings while maintaining the service offer.
- 4.35 Implement technology and process improvements without reviewing team structures. As outlined in 3.12 to 3.14, all aspects need to be reviewed together in order to deliver the savings levels and improvements to customer experience required.
- 4.36 Generating further commercial opportunities and income: the Council already has an agreed Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy (2021), with a clear action plan to generate additional income which can fund priorities and protect local services, which is also a part of the Making Your Money Count programme.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The transformation programme will contribute to the three-year target as set out in paragraph 3.16.
- 5.2 Further detailed design is required to identify the savings to be delivered in 2023/24. Services in scope for the next phase, implementation of the Service Delivery and Localities Model, include approximately £9Million staffing spend associated, a 5% saving would generate £450K, the programme could deliver up to a 10-15% efficiency saving or £1.35Million over time.
- 5.3 Subject to approval of the scope, budget is in place in order to deliver the next phase of changes required. However it is anticipated that further

business cases may be brought forward for targeted transformation projects as required.

Legal Implications

- 5.4 There are no identified direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the activity set out within this report may need to consider any resulting legal implications in consultation with the Borough Solicitor.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 The key risks associated with the report are:

Risk description (Cause / consequence)	Mitigation
Current performance pressures in Customer Services impact on customer satisfaction and Council's capacity for change	Invest in temporary adviser resources to support Customer Services through changes and to improve performance.
Involvement of residents in the design of the future service model.	Design a programme of resident engagement to seek views on the key issues to be tackled through the programme and their priorities for transformational improvements.
Appropriate staff involvement and consultation	All Staff communications and engagement Regular staffside (unions) briefings Staff champions programme to be developed to ensure changes are effectively communicated and staff are engaged.
If there is insufficient ICT and digital capacity or skills, opportunities to exploit technology will not be realised.	ICT Strategy in place to deliver foundation work. Additional roles appointed in Digital and Web team to support online service delivery. Business cases for additional resource to be brought forward as required. Seek third party support where appropriate.
If the focus of the transformation programme is limited to structural change	Investment in process redesign and technology improvements.

only it is unlikely to meet the desired benefit levels.	Appointment of temporary Service Development Leads to ensure opportunities fully considered.
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Policy Implications

- 5.6 There are no specific policy implications of this report. Policies related to specific service areas may be reviewed as required and decisions taken in line with the Council's scheme of delegation, for example revised policies related to payment options and how the Council will treat debt.
- 5.7 In parallel with this report in October 2022 a revised Customer Complaints Policy and Unacceptable Behaviour policy will be brought to Executive in order to create a policy which will meet the housing ombudsman's new requirements.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.8 Moving to more digital service delivery and improving the productivity of the Council will have a positive impact on the environment and support the Council's Climate Change Strategy for example:
- Reducing the Council's and residents' reliance on paper to deliver/ access services.
 - Improving efficiency in service delivery will improve efficient use of resources (fuel for fleet etc)

Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.9 Overall the proposals may result in a reduced headcount as a result of efficiencies e.g. increased adoption of self-service tools, greater automation and reducing management layers.
- 5.10 The design of future structures will take into consideration the possible impacts of reduced staffing on business continuity and emergency planning.
- 5.11 It is aimed that by moving to bigger, cross-functional teams there will be greater day to day resilience than currently as more staff will be trained across a number of different areas.
- 5.12 Long term accommodation requirements are being considered as part of the Council's Hub programme. A reduced headcount will provide greater flexibility for the Council's accommodation strategy, although this needs to be balanced against requirements of other programmes/ strategies which may see growth (e.g. Commercial). Considerations will be given to the space requirements for example more staff may need to be co-located together to support the new Service Delivery model.

Human Resources Implications

- 5.13 A significant proportion of Council spend is on staffing and the transformation programme may result in a headcount reduction over time. Where possible the approach taken will minimise the impact on staff, such as looking at options to deliver savings through staff turnover rather than redundancy.
- 5.14 The Council will need to deliver some structural changes in order to enable the changes outlined in the Five-star Customer Service programme. In order to improve the handling of cases the programme is expected to implement larger multi-skilled teams. The outline structure proposed in Appendix 1 is still at concept stage and specific staffing implications of detailed design work will be considered in due course
- 5.15 Where structural change may be needed, this will be managed in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy. Our established approach is to work close with Trade Unions and staff, to plan ahead, reduce disruption where possible, to look at suitable options for opportunities such as retraining where colleagues are impacted by change.
- 5.16 Future proposals will be subject to consultation with affected staff.
- 5.17 All staffing relating proposals that come forward will have an associated workforce EQiA undertaken.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.18 Overall, there are no identified for most characteristics. Under the Digital First approach, alternative options will remain available for those who require support in person or over the phone. The addition of new ways to access services online is likely to have positive impacts for those with some types of disability.
- 5.19 Equalities impact assessments for further specific changes yet to be fully scoped, will be delivered in parallel with project plans/ business cases.

Service Delivery Implications

- 5.20 The report outlines a redesign of the way Council services are delivered. The proposals are intended to strengthen the current offer and build in additional resilience into service delivery teams. The programme aims to protect service delivery by ensuring that efficiency improvements have been implemented before any headcount reduction is made.

Information Technology Implications

- 5.21 A shared ICT Partnership Strategy is in place with an associated delivery programme. The strategy was reviewed by the partnership in early 2022 and considered fit for purpose to meet the requirements of SBC's transformation programme.
- 5.22 Delivery of the ICT Strategy programme will enable further transformation by providing stable foundations for technology.

- 5.23 Key systems have been procured and implemented which will enable the transformation programme including Microsoft 365, a Digital Platform, website, and Robotic Process Automation tools.
- 5.24 The immediate technology priorities to support Phase 2 of transformation include: further development of case management and workflow in the Council's digital platform (including integrations with other systems), implementation of digital engagement tools, extension of reporting tools, chatbot and AI technology and knowledgebase tools.
- 5.25 A review of telephony and contact centre systems is being conducted across the ICT partnership as a joint project with East Herts District Council.
- 5.26 A digital technology assessment has been completed which outlined potential future priorities for investment. Future priorities may include a review and re-procurement of payments technology in line with the end of the current contract, optimising support service systems, including finance systems, as well as business cases for moving legacy systems to cloud technologies.
- 5.27 Further business cases for system improvements may be brought forward in due course.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Transformation: Service Delivery and Localities Team Structure (outline).

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Service Delivery and Localities team structure (outline)

Customer Hub	Locality services	Income and Debt	Lettings Bookings	Advice & Support
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One team to handle customer queries and casework, monitor feedback and improve the web/ digital experience

- Improve satisfaction
- Reduce complaints
- Ensure feedback shapes services
- Maximise use of digital where appropriate

One team to support the six cooperative neighbourhood areas.

- Ensure residents engaged in setting local priorities
- Tackle issues important to local residents
- Take action where needed

One team looking after payments policy, income collection monitoring and debt for all services.

- Prevent escalation of debt
- Maximise income collection
- Ensure clear policies

One team to manage lettings of garages, houses and space, venue bookings

- Reduce empty property time
- Increase rent from spaces
- Set and monitor standards.

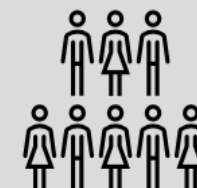
One team to provide support for those in need of specialist help, covering statutory and non statutory services

- Support those who need extra help
- Help early and reduce further costs.
- Maximise impact of services
- People-centred

Bigger , multi-skilled teams

- ⇒ Resilience as more staff trained on a range of areas
 - ⇒ More flexibility to respond to changes
 - ⇒ Fewer non-specialist management posts
 - ⇒ Specialist/ technical roles can have more impact

⇒ More likely to be able to make efficiency-related headcount reductions from staff turnover



5 star programme drivers

- ★ Accessible services, online & 24/7
- ★ Easy to use trackable processes
- ★ An answer first time and clear on next steps

- ★ Spot and solve issues before they arise

- ★ Easy to use trackable processes
- ★ Spot and solve issues before they arise

- ★ Easy to use trackable processes
- ★ Spot and solve issues before they arise

- ★ Personalised advice and support
- ★ Spot and solve issues before they arise

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Resources, Transformation & ICT
Date 12 October 2022



REVISED COMPLAINTS POLICY AND NEW UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report presents the Council's Complaints Policy (Appendix A) and Unacceptable Behaviour Policy (Appendix B). The Complaints Policy is an update to previous policy incorporating changes required by the Housing Ombudsman and other iterative improvements. The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy sets out how the Council will respond to customers who are using threatening, abusive or unreasonably persistent behaviour.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- 2.2 Approve the Complaint Policy (Appendix A)
- 2.3 Approve the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy (Appendix B)
- 2.4 Acknowledge that future updates to Complaints Policy may be needed more frequently than in the past, to meet the requirements of two complaints ombudsman

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of the Government's review and reform of the social housing sector the Housing Ombudsman was given remit over complaints within the Council's HRA housing services. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) retains its remit for complaints about the Council's other services, including General Fund housing services such as Housing Options.
- 3.2 The Housing Ombudsman set out a new Complaint Handling Code (Background Document 1) in 2019 to promote the progressive use and consistent handling of complaints across the social housing sector. This contains more specific detail on how complaints should be handled compared to the guidance from the LGSCO.
- 3.3 There has been some indication that the LGSCO may adjust their guidance to more closely match the Code, but it is not yet clear when this will happen.
- 3.4 A self-assessment against the Code in 2020 identified that the Council's existing complaints policy needed to be changed in some key ways:
- To operate a 2-stage complaints process instead of a 3-stage complaints process; and
 - To use the Code's definition of a complaint.
- 3.5 In addition, the Code requires some changes to officer process for complaints handling such as: learning from complaints cases handled elsewhere in the sector as well as the Council's own, ensuring that customers are welcomed and assisted to make complaints, and undergoing regular self-assessment against the Code to ensure compliance
- 3.6 Over the same period as the proposals for the Code have come forward, the quantity of complaints to the Council has risen, partly due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic.
- 3.7 The volume of complaints increased by 54% in the first six months of 2022 compared to the first six months of 2019. Whilst many services have been able to maintain a high level of service in responding to complaints, some have struggled with the volume and this has been reflected in the corporate performance measures.
- 3.8 Action plans are in place to improve complaints handling performance, and these were considered in the September Executive performance item (Background Document 2).
- 3.9 To enable a renewed focus on complaints handling several iterative improvements to the existing policy were identified, in particular:
- Clarifying cases that may be raised as complaints but should instead be handled through other mechanisms; and
 - Setting a clearer time limit by which complaints should be raised.
- 3.10 It was also identified that establishing an alternative less formal route for handling enquiries from Members would assist officers in focussing on handling complaints within the required service standards.

- 3.11 Whilst reviewing complaints handling standards elsewhere in the sector it was identified that many other councils and housing associations also publish unacceptable behaviour policies alongside their complaints policies. These typically set out how the organisation will respond if a customer's demands or persistence become unreasonable. Although this can occur with any service, in the context of complaints it is recognised that some customers can repeatedly raise the same issue through different channels or to different councillors, even though they've exhausted the complaints process.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The updated Complaints Policy incorporates the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code while at the same time fulfilling the guidance of the LGSCO. This means that the Council can continue to have a single complaints policy and approach across the whole organisation.
- 4.2 For customers the new policy will help to ensure that complaints are positively received, effectively investigated, and used to improve services. The policy is written to be engaging and useable by members of the public, and sets out the Council's commitment to make reasonable adjustments where they're needed to ensure any customer can use our complaints service.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the new policy is applied from the start of November 2022. The new policy will be supported through the adoption of a new digital complaints system. The new system will make it easier for customers to log and monitor progress of their complaints as well as for officers to record and track investigations.
- 4.4 An outline of the complaints process is provided in Appendix C. The changes will be supported by training for officers with key complaints roles on the new policy and system, and also for councillors through the Modern Member programme.
- 4.5 Members will continue to forward complaints they receive to the complaints team, where they will be logged, assigned, and a customer acknowledgement sent. By standard the complaint response will go to the customer and copied to the councillor unless an alternative is requested for the case. A new form for member queries will be provided so they can go directly to the appropriate service and be responded to informally outside of the complaints process.
- 4.6 The Complaints Policy will be graphically produced upon approval to assist with making it engaging for customers.
- 4.7 The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will assist officers in responding to customers who have unreasonable persistence or demands when using the complaints service, or other Council services.
- 4.8 Unreasonable persistence or demands can also arise within public commentary such as social media. Officers will work with the portfolio holders for Communications and Customer Services to find appropriate ways to apply the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy in these contexts.

- 4.9 The officer procedures for using the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy are being developed and are expected to mirror the existing process for reporting violent incidents. This will mean the investigation and consideration of any mitigations will be considered jointly by Health & Safety and Community Safety, together with Staff Protection Register if required.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 No identified implications

Legal Implications

- 5.2 It is important for the Council to have a clear complaints process in place and ensure that it reflects codes such as the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. Please also note that once the new complaints procedure goes live, all new complaints will be dealt with using the new process, however all existing complaints will continue to be dealt with under the old complaints process until conclusion or the complainant opting to use the new process.
- 5.3 The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy will provide a process for officers to consider and follow, and enable swift action should such unacceptable behaviour lead to the need for legal action

Risk Implications

- 5.4 If the Council does not adjust its complaints policy to meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code then there would be reputational and financial risks in regards to compliance and potential enforcement action by the Housing Ombudsman, including being reported to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Human Resources Implications

- 5.5 The proposed Complaints Policy sets out that HR or an independent manager may investigate complaints about staff behaviour, instead of the service manager. This change brings the process closer into line with the approach to investigating when a member of staff raises a concern about another member of staff.
- 5.6 Training for officers will help support new and existing colleagues to effectively carry out complaints investigations, and assist with consistent approach across the organisation.
- 5.7 The proposed Unacceptable Behaviour Policy assists in the protection of staff.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.8 The Complaints Policy sets out that the Council will make reasonable adjustments to enable customers to use the complaints service. The addition of digital self-service will assist some customers in accessing our complaints

service, while alternative access through Customer Services over the phone or in person will continue.

- 5.9 The Equalities Impact Assessment is provided in Appendix D

Community Safety Implications

- 5.10 Including unreasonable demands and unreasonable persistence within the definition of the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy clarifies the circumstances under which the Council as an organisation can take action to protect staff.

Information Technology Implications

- 5.11 The new digital complaints system is already in development and is undergoing testing in preparation for the new complaints policy
- 5.12 The existing complaints system will continue to operate until all complaints are closed. Any records will then be electronically archived in line with records retention policy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Housing Ombudsman – Complaint Handling Code

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

- BD2 Executive 14th September 2022, Corporate Performance – Quarter 1 2022/23

<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s32542/Corp%20Perf%20report%20-%20Q1%20Performance%202022-23.pdf>

APPENDICES

- A Complaints Policy
- B Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- C Outline of complaints process
- D Equality Impact Assessment

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Complaints Policy

Introduction

APPENDIX A

We always try our best, but sometimes things can go wrong. We're often able to resolve problems if you get in touch but if you're still unhappy then we want to hear from you.

If we made a mistake then we'll apologise and usually do one or more of the following:

- Let you know what we're going to do put things right, and when that should happen
- Explain why things didn't go right
- Tell you about something we'll do differently from now – thanks to you letting us know

Who can complain

You can make a complaint to us if you've been affected yourself, or if someone has asked you to complain on their behalf – for example you may be helping a relative. In some cases we may ask for proof that the affected person is happy for you to be working on their behalf.

If you need someone to help you make your complaint then the following people may be able to assist:

- Customer Services
- Your local councillor – you can find their details on our website
- Your MP

If you do report a complaint through your councillor or MP then we will include them in correspondence to you. In some situations we may discuss your complaint directly with them too.

If a complaint is made anonymously we may not be able to act on it.

A few things to know before you complain

Complaints are an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident, group of residents, or other user of our services.

Your complaint needs to be made within 6 months of the problem, and preferably as soon as you can, unless there are reasonable grounds for the delay

This means we will consider most complaints if we've not done what we should have, but there are some other reasons we may pass your complaint elsewhere within the council or externally. These include:

- If there's a more appropriate appeals body, process or policy. For example:
 - The Planning Inspectorate should review most complaints about planning permission
 - Safeguarding concerns will be dealt with through our Safeguarding policy
 - Complaints about a councillor's conduct are dealt with through a separate procedure we can advise you of
 - We have a dedicated process for missed bin collections so that we re-visit you more quickly and easily than having to go through the complaints process
- If your complaint is about a policy or decision that's been made through one of our democratic processes by councillors. As these have been democratically agreed we can't change them through the complaints process. However, we may pass your views to the staff and/or councillors involved to help guide their thinking. You may also want to discuss your thoughts directly with your local councillor
- If your complaint is an allegation of a fraud, corruption or another crime. In this case it will be passed through our Whistle Blowing procedures or directly to the police if appropriate.
- If you consider that you have been injured or your property has been damaged as a result of our negligence or by one of our employees acting negligently or in breach of any statutory duty, you may have the right to make an insurance claim against us. However, it is recommended that you first contact your own insurers to obtain their advice and to see what assistance they can provide you with
- If legal proceeding(s) about the matter are underway
- If your complaint isn't about something we've done wrong, but a request for us to do or investigate something. For example a complaint about food hygiene in a restaurant or a concern about anti-social behaviour. In these cases we will let you know the best way to make your request.

How to make a complaint

To investigate properly we need the facts written down. You can also provide us with photos if that helps. The quickest way to do that is online on our website.

If you're struggling to go online you can come in to Customer Services and we'll help you use one of our computers. You can also call us, but there might be a wait and it can take a while as we'll need to check we've got your complaint correctly recorded.

If we spot you saying something that looks like a complaint elsewhere, such as on our social media pages, or face to face to a member of our staff, then we will point you in the right direction to make a complaint.

What we do with your complaint

The Council operates a 2-stage complaints procedure, and if you remain dissatisfied you can refer the issue to the Ombudsman.

To help clarify or resolve your complaint, we may want to talk to you over the phone or in person. If we're able to resolve your complaint over the phone, we will still send you a written response to summarise what was agreed.

Complex complaints and ones that involve more than one service usually take us longer to investigate. We may also need to speak to particular members of staff. If we can't respond to you within the timeline set out below, we will contact you to let you know.

Stage 1 – Formal response by the Service Manager

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt, and a written response provided within the following 10 working days.

Your complaint will be investigated by the most appropriate service manager, usually with support from their team.

Stage 2 – Review by Senior Manager

If you are dissatisfied with our stage 1 response then you can ask us to review it by getting in contact within 15 working days.

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt, and a written response provided within the following 20 working days.

The review will be carried out by the appropriate senior manager, sometimes with support from our Customer Services team.

If at either stage we need more time to respond to you, we will let you know and explain why. If an extension of more than 10 working days is needed we will contact you to agree this, explaining why we think this is the best course of action.

We also take a positive approach to learning from complaints. We encourage our services to learn from things that have gone wrong so we can make them better in the future. In some cases we may publish online learning online so we can show to you how we listen.

The council's Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for ensuring their services are effectively and fairly operating the complaints process, and are incorporating lessons learnt from complaints.

Complaints about discrimination or staff behaviour

If your complaint alleges some form of discrimination we will investigate this. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being [pregnant](#) or on maternity leave
- [disability](#)
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Complaints about discrimination or staff behaviour may take longer than normal for us to investigate as we need to make sure we get as much evidence as possible. The complaint may also be investigated by our HR service or a different independent manager, instead of the responsible service manager.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We're committed to listening to the voices of the communities we serve. This is underpinned by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy.

You may find it easiest to access our complaints service through our website, or on the telephone or face to face through Customer Services.

As a council we will make reasonable adjustments to make sure that anyone who wishes to access our complaints service can. If you need help with translation or a different kind of assistance please contact Customer Services, who will be happy to help find a solution.

Appeal to Ombudsman

If you still remain dissatisfied with the council's decision you may appeal to the relevant ombudsman. There are two different ombudsmen covering different aspects of what we do.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman:

The LGSCO can investigate all complaints apart from those about council housing, such as: waste and recycling, council tax, Environmental Health, homelessness and housing options services including our council housing allocations policy.

[LGO website](#)

Tel: 0300 061 0614

Postal Address:

PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Housing Ombudsman:

The HO can investigate complaints about council housing such as repairs, leasehold services, and lettings. Note that they do not consider complaints about council housing allocations policy, homeless and housing options services.

Find information about the [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code](#) and the [Housing Ombudsman Scheme](#).

[Housing Ombudsman website](#)

Email: [Housing Ombudsman](#)

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Postal Address:

PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

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The Council has standards in place in order to maintain a high quality of customer care.

We expect every customer to receive excellent customer service, always serving them with dignity, courtesy and respect, and responding to their individual needs.

At the same time, we expect our employees and elected members to be treated with respect and courtesy. Whilst we understand that people sometimes act out of character in times of anxiety or distress and can become angry and/or frustrated, we will not accept behaviour from customers that is threatening, abusive or unreasonably persistent.

What is Unacceptable Behaviour?

Aggressive or Abusive behaviour which could include:

- Threatening or abusive language
- Derogatory, offensive or rude comments which humiliate, intimidate, frighten or demean employees or other customers
- Unsubstantiated allegations
- Violence or threats of violence

Unreasonable demands which could include:

- Requests for excessive amounts of information
- Setting unreasonable timescales
- Continual insistence on seeing a particular employee
- Continual contact
- Changing the substance of a complaint or introducing unrelated concerns

Unreasonable persistence which could include:

- Refusal to accept a decision
- Refusal to accept explanations of what a service can and cannot do

Assessing Unreasonable Behaviour

Every situation is different, so this policy does not intend to be prescriptive on what should be considered by the council when assessing unreasonable behaviour. Officers will need to use their judgement and skills to assess the situation and need to take into account a wide range of factors which may include:

- The impact of the person's behaviour so far
- The likelihood of behaviour improving if no action is taken
- Whether different responses are likely to improve or escalate a situation
- The opinion of a more senior manager and managers that specialise in customer behaviour

Responding to Unreasonable Behaviour

The following options can be used singularly or as a combination depending on the circumstances of the case:

- Writing to the person to explain how their behaviour is unreasonable and warn them that they need to change their behaviour
- Writing to the person to explain that the Council has done everything it believes is reasonable and that further communication on the same matter serves no further useful purpose, and that the council will no longer engage in further contact on the same matter. In some cases it may be appropriate for the council to provide a reminder of relevant appeals processes
- Banning the person from entering our premises for a period of time
- Declining contact with the person, either in person, by telephone, by letter or by e-mail or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. We may also put in place a single nominated officer through which all contact with the council must be made.
- Entering information about the person onto the Staff Protection Register. This is described in the Staff Protection (Register) Policy
- Taking legal action against the person which may include use of anti-social behaviour legislation

Related policies

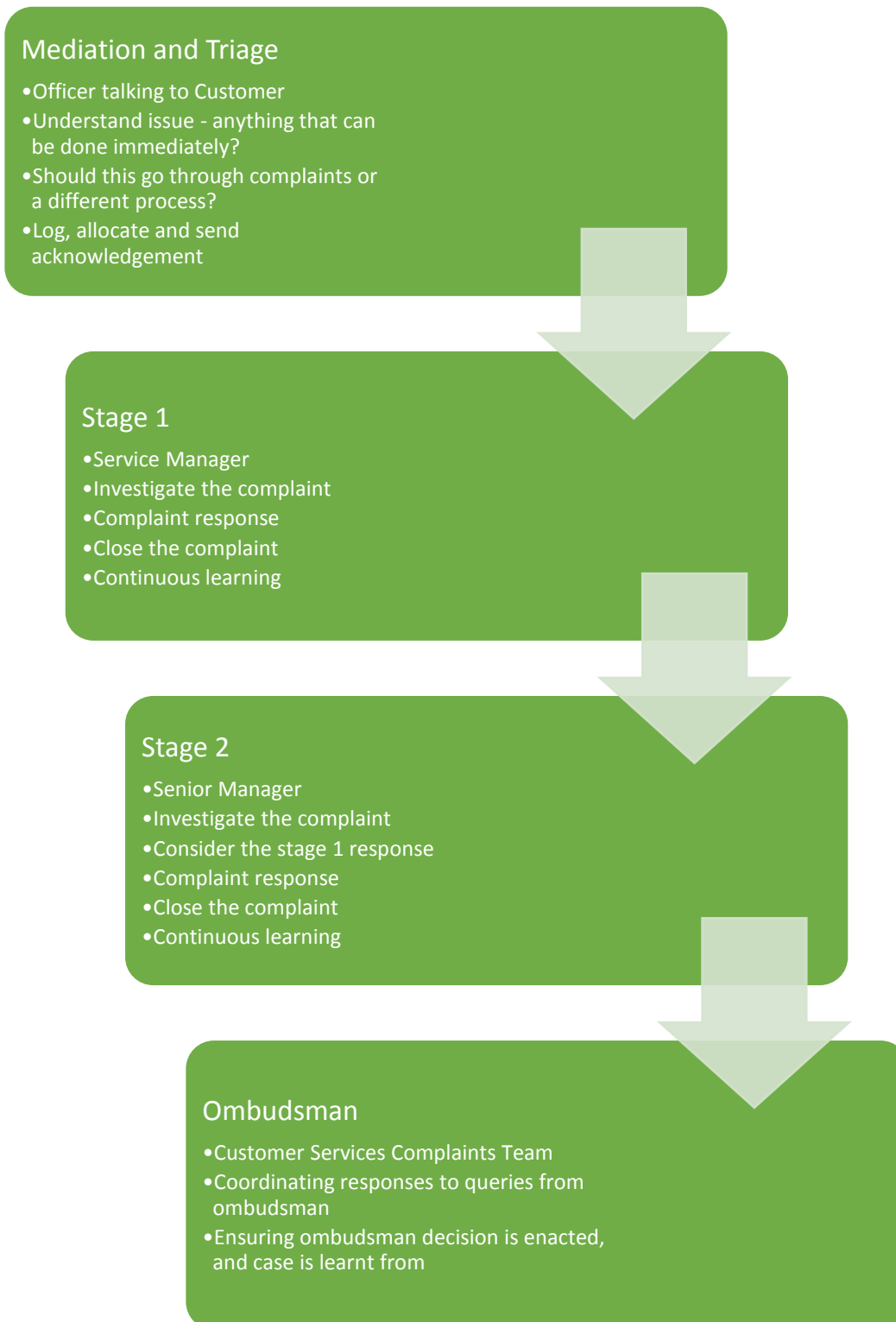
The following policies discuss similar situations and further detail on some of the possible responses:

Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy

Aggressive and Violent Behaviour Policy and Procedure

Staff Protection (Register) Policy

Appendix C – Outline of complaints process



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First things first: does this activity need an EIA?

Subject of the assessment:	Revised Corporate Complaints Policy – Oct 2022	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		No
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		Yes
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council’s reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	Please tick all that apply (✓)
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes
Encourage good relations?	Yes

If you ticked or answered Yes to one or more of these questions you should carry out an EqIA. There are two levels of analysis (Brief and Full) and in deciding which to go for, you should think about not just the number of people affected but the significance of the effect on them – both positive and negative.

If you answered No to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn’t need an EqIA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity. You should reference the information you used to support your decision and seek approval from your Head of Service or Strategic Director before sending this to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqIA is needed to inform the decision on the (insert name of subject being assessed).

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role:

Date:

Date:



Full Equality Impact Assessment

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

What is being assessed?		Revised Corporate Complaints Policy – October 22			
Lead Assessor	Gary Painter			Assessment team	Gary Painter, Greg Arends, Donna Smith
Start date	01/11/2022	End date	End of policy		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	At policy change or significant demographic change				

Who may be affected by it?	Anybody who makes a complaint to the council
What are the key aims of it?	An updated policy incorporating new ombudsman requirements to ensure the council has a corporate complaints process that works efficiently and is used by all service areas, including members. Staff will be trained and can take responsibility for the process and that all service level agreements are met.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	System can be accessed by all residents	Promote equal opportunities	System can be accessed by all residents	Encourage good relations	Improvements in the resident experience and an increase in customer satisfaction

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>In 2011, 7.5% of Stevenage residents who were 16-64 years of age had a disability which limited their day-to-day activities. The figure was 15.7% for all ages. 23.9% of households in Stevenage included a person with a long-term health problem or disability - (Source: Health & Provision of unpaid care - ONS Census 2011, Table KS301EW).</p> <p>Disabled people were more likely to report finding access to products in person difficult compared with non-disabled people (41.6% compared with 15.8%) and Disabled people were more likely to report finding access to services in person difficult compared with non-disabled people (51.5% compared with 25.2%) – Source: Office for National</p>
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	Statistics – Data and analysis from Census 2021)
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>Improved complaint processes will both improve internal efficiency, leading to benefit release, and reduce risk which in turn reduces the risk of fines imposed by the governing ombudsmen.</p> <p>The new approach will add a new online self-service option and won't remove any existing channels for raising a complaint. For this reason the access impacts are generally beneficial</p> <p>The new policy makes clear that we will make reasonable adjustments for people based on their particular situation to ensure they can use the complaints service.</p> <p>In addition the new policy sets a welcoming and constructive tone for complaints, with the intention of ensuring all customers feel able to raise concerns, and don't feel excluded.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		There is no differential impact identified in terms of different age groups. The policy and procedure and new application apply equally to all people regardless of age. Complainants will still be able to raise complaints via mail, letter, telephone, in person at the CSC, via their councillor or MP or a nominated person on their behalf. Customer Services can offer a translation service.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Disability					
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact	No	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<p>People with some disabilities may find it challenging to complain online via self-service, however, they will still be able to raise complaints via telephone, in person at the CSC, via their councillor or MP or a nominated person on their behalf.</p> <p>People with other disabilities may find it easier to use the new online self-service functionality. For example, a customer with a hearing problem may prefer online self-service to use of the telephone.</p> <p>Customer Services can ask Relay UK to assist complainants with hearing and speech difficulties to use our services over the phone. This is a free service provided nationally and paid for by telephone companies.</p>			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Gender reassignment					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	Yes
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<p>The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of gender reassignment.</p> <p>People undergoing re-assignment may contact us under a different name to that held on our records, and this should be handled in a sensitive way in line with any applicable corporate policy and/ or guidance. This situation already exists with the current complaints policy and does not change as a result of the changes to approach</p>			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		There is an opportunity to understand more about how frequently impacts arise because of gender reassignment

Marriage or civil partnership					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless marital/ civil partnership status. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Pregnancy & maternity					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of pregnancy or maternity. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact	Yes	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of race. The complaints handling procedure explains that SBC will consider any request for translation of this procedure into alternative formats and community languages. SBC will consider any requests received and will monitor any patterns emerging from any such requests to determine any further actions required.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or belief					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of religion or belief.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all, regardless of sex. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sexual orientation					
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of sexual orientation. No barriers in accessing the service identified for this group.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic¹					
e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<p>The policy and procedure apply equally to all people regardless of socio-economic category.</p> <p>Some people may not be able to afford or have easy access to the internet which will restrict access to the new online self-service. However, customers will still be able to raise complaints via telephone, in person at the CSC, via their councillor or MP or a nominated person on their behalf.</p>			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Other					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

What are the findings of any consultation with:

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

Staff?	All staff responsible for complaints will be trained on the policy and procedures	Residents?	Residents will be advised to raise complaints using the new process.
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	Overall, there is no change for most characteristics, and the addition of a new way to access complaints is positive for disability. An existing negative impact for gender reassignment will continue with the new policy; that people undergoing re-assignment may contact us under a different name to that held on our records, and this should be handled in a sensitive way. As this is the same impact as the current policy it is recommended to continue as planned
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?



Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Ruth Luscombe

Date: 28/09/2022

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk

Meeting Executive

Portfolio Area Resources, Transformation & ICT

Date 12 OCTOBER 2022



COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24

Authors – Su Tarran Ext. 01279 502075
Contributor – Clare Fletcher Ext. 2933

Lead /Contact Officers – as above

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the latest available information around the current local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme at Stevenage and whether any changes to the scheme should be considered for 2023/24.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive approve the existing CTS scheme of 8.5% council tax liability for those working aged claimants on maximum benefit, (subject to any benefit uplifts) for financial year 2023/24.
- 2.2 That the Executive approve a review of the caseload and transition to Universal Credit in June 2023, so that consideration be given for a banded scheme, (as set out in paragraph 4.7.2).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Government made provision within the Local Government Finance Bill to replace the former national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from 1st April 2013 with localised schemes for Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTS) devised by individual local authorities (LA's). The schemes are valid for one year and must be approved by Council before the 11th March immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect.

- 3.2 The Government require that major preceptors (County and Police) are consulted each year, and if there is any change to the scheme a full consultation open to all tax payers in the district is required. There is no specific timescale prescribed but the period must allow for meaningful consultation.
- 3.3 Additionally, consideration must be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed. The financial impact of any decision on Council Tax Support also needs to be included when setting the budget and Council tax levels at the same time.
- 3.4 Since the introduction of CTS in April 2013 a number of changes to the scheme have been considered, but the scheme has remained unchanged. This means that CTS scheme for all working age claimants (WAC) will be based on 91.5% of their Council tax liability and that a WAC on maximum benefit will only have to pay 8.5% of their Council tax bill.
- 3.5 The cost of the scheme is reflected in the tax base, in the same way as other discounts which reduce the collectable debit.
- 3.6 The history of Council Tax support scheme at Stevenage is detailed in Appendix A.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 This report details the current position on Council Tax Support, and seeks support to continue the current scheme for 2023/24.
- 4.2 The CTS scheme for 2022/23 can be summarised as follows:
- That the CTS scheme for all working age claimants will be based on 91.5% of their Council tax liability;
 - All local discretions currently in place continue e.g. war pension disregards;
 - Other aspects of the Council Tax Support scheme mirror the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme.
- 4.3. The current CTS scheme works and protects the most vulnerable customers by the use of applicable amounts and income disregards. However, the challenges and opportunities introduced by Universal Credit (UC) prompted a review of the structure of the scheme, but conclude that until the majority of claimants are in receipt of UC, any alternative would add further complexity.

- 4.4 **The impact, challenges and opportunities of Universal Credit.**
Universal credit full service roll-out took effect in this area in October 2018. This means that customers who would previously have applied for Housing Benefit (HB) and CTS are now applying for UC and CTS. The Department of Work & Pensions' (DWP) pilot of moving existing HB claimants on to UC from only achieved a small change in caseload although this has increased during the pandemic and the DWP are reviewing and potentially piloting a transition, before seeking government approval for further managed migration.
- 4.4.1 There are certain groups of HB claimant that will not, in the foreseeable future migrate to UC, as they are deemed too complex. This means that in addition to the pensioner case load there will be a residual working age caseload to manage.
- 4.4.2 There is therefore no information available currently to determine when this Council's existing working age HB caseload will move to UC.
- 4.4.3 Customers claiming UC who apply for Council Tax Support do not require the Council to carry out means testing on their circumstances. They need only provide their UC entitlement letters (details of which can be confirmed through local authorities' access to the DWP systems). These claims are already means tested and have differential applicable amounts applied by the DWP, and the only income element that is needed for an award of CTS is earnings. Consideration has to be taken of any deductions being made for overpayments or recovery of advances, but these lend themselves to a simplified assessment and processing system, and could be incorporated into a discount/banded scheme.
- 4.4.4 The reduction in new claims for HB might seem to reduce the services workload, however as the current scheme for pensioners, and non-UC claimants requires the same preparation and processing to award a CTS claim as an HB one, there is no saving. Currently claims or changes in circumstances are prepared and input and both awards (HB & CTS) are processed simultaneously. Claims not requiring an HB assessment simply produce one output (CTS award) rather than two.
- 4.4.5 UC claimants have to apply to the Council for CTS entitlement. There is a common misunderstanding among claimants, who have not previously claimed benefit from the Council, that it is all covered by their claim for UC. The Council therefore often only gets to engage with these new customers when their Council Tax account is in arrears, and additional recovery action has to be taken. The Chief Finance Officer and Head of the Shared Service have been promoting the scheme through various media to ensure that those entitled take up the support.
- 4.4.6 Universal Credit is reassessed monthly, and those customers who are working (nationally this is estimated at more than 40%) are likely to experience variations in the UC entitlement each month. This is attributed to salary and wages frequencies affecting the 'monthly' assessments. Each time there is a change in the UC award, their entitlement to CTS has to be reassessed. Every time the CTS is reassessed, it produces a new

Council Tax Bill. These constant changes in bills and amounts due are not only confusing to the customer trying to budget, but it also resets any recovery action being taken for non-payment.

4.4.7 The service has experienced a significant increase in workload from these monthly changes. They are received electronically from the DWP. However significant progress has been made in automating the processing of many types of changes, and this is helping to mitigate the impact.

4.5 Identifying and acknowledging these challenges from UC requires, any potential change to the CTS scheme to consider:

4.5.1 **The potential for automation of UC notices** on live CTS claims, thus reducing the new increased workflow. Progress has been made in the last year to automate increasing numbers of these changes, and work continues to include more types of changes into the automatic updates.

4.5.2 **Mitigations for changes in UC entitlements to revise Council Tax liability**, and thus avoid resetting recovery action. This could be achieved if the CTS scheme set bands of entitlement, or fixed periods in which changes in income would not result in a change in entitlement, within the scope of a set range.

4.5.3 These options have the potential to be very expensive. The software supplier is estimating a cost in excess of £25k for each Council moving towards a banded CTS scheme. The Council would be looking to other preceptors to pay a proportion of the costs. Any changes to the scheme require full and meaningful consultation with all taxpayers in the district and there are significant costs associated with this level of consultation. It is proposed to hold a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) post May 2023 to determine whether the transition to UC has been significant enough to warrant a change in the scheme as set out above.

4.6 Response to the challenges and opportunities of UC.

Work has previously been carried out to develop a banded scheme for all working age claimants. This included modelling of current claimants into a banded scheme, to assess the impact and identify any unintended consequences.

4.6.1 As it is not currently possible to have a separate scheme for just UC cases, all current working age claimants would have to be included. After testing the data it was clear that the intended simplicity of a banded scheme would be compromised as the need to differentiate between all the many and varied disability premiums and incomes would require too many bands for each category of household, to ensure sufficient protection for these non-UC groups.

4.6.2 In addition, there would be all the costs of changing the scheme but no savings in administration, or increased simplicity for the customer.

4.7 Conclusion in relation to Universal Credit.

4.7.1 Whilst the number of monthly changes is increasing, the improvement in automation of these changes is balancing the demand for resources. It is still recommended therefore that a two-stage approach be followed moving forward. Firstly, instead of looking to change the current scheme in the short term, officers continue to introduce more automation of UC change notices. Secondly, once actual caseload migration is timetabled, consideration of a banded scheme or a discount scheme is re-visited and a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) will be held in June 2023 to allow for consultation or changes if required for 2024/25.

4.8 Other options that could be considered in redesigning a scheme

4.8.1 There are a number of options that could be considered when redesigning the current scheme, although all revisions would affect working age customers only, given that pensioners have to be fully protected by prescribed regulations.

4.8.2 The Government continues to make changes to the Housing Benefit regulations which are not currently mirrored in the CTS regulations. This means the schemes are no longer aligned. The frequency of changes to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit schemes, make it impossible to mirror these in the CTS scheme, not least of which because of the difference in timing. The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit schemes are changed when needed during the year, and the CTS scheme can only be revised annually.

4.8.3 Consideration was been given previously to align some of the more significant differences between Housing Benefit and Council Tax support but the financial implications across the caseload have been assessed as small, and the changes would have required a full consultation exercise, to achieve only a temporary alignment, and therefore these were not recommended by Members.

4.8.4 Consideration has also previously been given to each of the following changes, but each relies on the basic scheme construction remaining the same and Members did not recommend any of these.

a) Changing the level of “minimum payment” for all working age customers

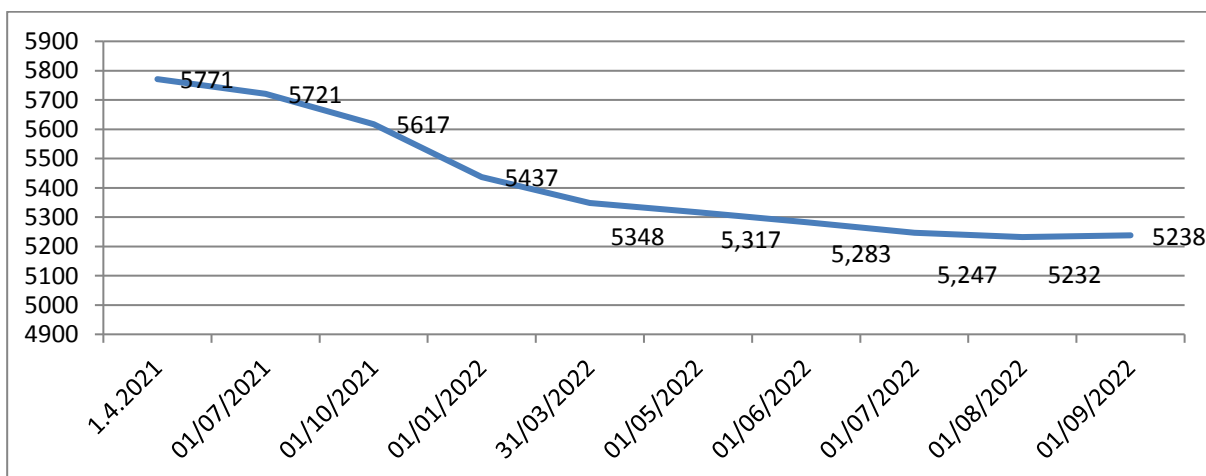
- I. The current scheme assumes that all working age customers are asked to pay at least something towards their Council Tax, and as described earlier the minimum payment is 8.5% of liability. The Council could consider making a change to that amount but in doing so, the full impact of that decision needs to be considered.

- II. If the Council chose to increase this minimum payment to say 10%, this does not mean a straight line reduction in the amount that the Council will spend out. For individuals already finding it difficult to pay at the current level, it can be seen that increasing this amount could increase their hardship levels further, especially as these customers are likely to be receiving other benefits, which have been affected by the on-going Welfare reforms.

- III. Given the latest information shows that the collection rate for those working age customers in receipt of CTS is already significantly lower than the overall rate, officers would need to consider adding further amounts to our bad debt provision in respect of potential non-collection of debts. Having done some indicative modelling, it is estimated that increasing the minimum payment to 10% could result in a decrease in Council Tax spend of approximately £55.2k. This would be virtually wiped out by the need to increase bad debt provision. In addition with the potential increasing caseload as result of COVID-19, the war in Europe and the increase in energy fuel costs, this could exacerbate losses further and cause further hardship.

- IV. Conversely, if the Council were to consider reducing the minimum amount to be paid by the claimant, this would increase the cost of the scheme, particularly at a time when CTS caseload may increase. SBC pays less than 12% of the overall scheme with the County paying the largest share, but if COVID-19, the war in Europe and the increased energy fuel costs significantly increases the caseload then this could have a significant impact on the taxbase and collectable Council tax. On current estimates, officers believe that the additional burden on the taxbase could be upwards of £355k, and customers currently not entitled would also be eligible to apply. The SBC scheme is one of the lowest in the County at 8.5%

- V. The CTS caseload trend is summarised below.



This is showing a consistent downward trend, with a slight upturn from 1 September 2022.

b) Introducing a band cap (so limiting the amount that we would pay to a value of a lower property band, for example Band C)

Some Local Authorities have introduced a band cap where the scheme will only pay up to the equivalent of say a Band C property, even if you are in a higher banded property.

This could disproportionately affect those with a requirement for a larger property as they have children, other dependents due to caring responsibilities or a disability. These groups could already have been hit by other areas of Welfare reform, including the Benefit Cap and the Spare Room subsidy limitation.

Considering the current live caseload, these could impact on 234 households and reduce spend by £65k. The table below shows the potential loss in entitlement per year for those in bands D and above, both at the 91.5% liability and on those who receive a single person discount (SPD)

BAND 2022/23	Annual full charge	91.50%	with SPD	91.50%	Potential loss in entitlement if Band C cap applied	
					91.50%	with SPD
A	£ 1,318.59	£1,206.51	£988.94	£904.88		
B	£ 1,538.34	£1,407.58	£1,153.76	£1,055.69		
C	£ 1,758.11	£1,608.67	£1,318.58	£1,206.50		
D	£ 1,977.88	£1,809.76	£1,483.41	£1,357.32	£201.09	£150.82
E	£ 2,417.42	£2,211.94	£1,813.07	£1,658.95	£603.27	£452.45
F	£ 2,856.93	£2,614.09	£2,142.70	£1,960.57	£1,005.42	£754.07
G	£ 3,296.47	£3,016.27	£2,472.35	£2,262.20	£1,407.60	£1,055.70
H	£ 3,955.76	£3,619.52	£2,966.82	£2,714.64	£2,010.85	£1,508.14

c) Introducing a minimum amount that would be paid out

Some Councils have introduced a minimum level at which they will support residents. An example is that you have to be entitled to at least £5 a week to be supported. This means someone who is currently entitled to a lower amount, would not receive it, despite the fact that we have assessed them as currently requiring support. There are no real

savings in terms of administrative costs because the Council would still have to undertake an assessment to find out that it wouldn't award. In addition, the fact that they are currently entitled to support indicates that they are financially vulnerable and the likelihood of being able to collect that additional amount from those residents is low. Therefore the potential reduction in costs overall is minimal and outweighed by an increase in bad debt provision and recovery costs.

Considering the current caseload this would impact on 105 households and save £16.5k.

d) Changes around discretions for Disability, Children and other Dependents

- I. This would change the nature of the scheme overall. SBC, when setting its original scheme, was clear that all would contribute equally as the core scheme already differentiates preferentially to those with disabilities, children etc.
- II. Any complexity that is added to the way in which entitlement is calculated, will make the administration of the scheme both more complex for officers to manage, both in terms of calculation but more importantly, to explain to residents.
- III. This would also mean that the general working age population may need to pick up an even greater share of the cost if the scheme is to remain affordable and equitable.

e) Other adjustments

These include; income tapers, non-dependent deductions, income disregards etc. but all carry the same risk to bad debt provisions, potential recovery costs and costs of administration. The more complex the scheme, the more difficult it is to comply with and customers' levels of understanding could be compromised.

4.9 What others are doing

- Unfortunately SBC cannot replicate a scheme like this currently as the Council is unable to have two different live working age CTS schemes at the same time, as it moved away from the WA default scheme in 2013.
- Other Councils are considering various options but anecdotally are awaiting more information around migration before changing current schemes, and are considering how reliable the last year's data will be to base assumptions on due to the nature of the pandemic.

	Current scheme	Any planned changes for 23/24?
North Herts	Non banded schemes – % of liability paid by customer on maximum entitlement ? = 25%	Will look to change to a banded scheme.
Dacorum	Maximum 100% for protected Groups (Disabled & Families with under 5) All others restricted to 75% council Tax liability a flat non-dep deduction of £5.00	Officers are still considering plans for 2023/24 <i>Non Banded</i>
Welwyn Hatfield	Maximum 100% for protected Groups (Disabled & Families with under 5) All others restricted to 75% council Tax liability Non dept deductions aligned with prescribed regulations	Still under review at the time of writing the report
Broxbourne	<i>Non Banded</i>	Still under review at the time of writing the report
Hertsmere	Banded for UC not banded for everyone else <i>The non banded is basically the default scheme with some variations (non dep deductions etc)</i>	No
St Albans	Banded for UC Non Banded for others (default scheme) % of liability paid by customer on maximum entitlement = 0	No
Three Rivers	Not banded % of liability paid by customer on maximum entitlement = 0 Default scheme	No
Watford	Not banded % of liability paid by customer on maximum entitlement = 0 Default scheme	No
East Herts	Not banded % of liability paid by customer on maximum entitlement 8.5%	TBC

4.10 Other considerations in addition to the impact of universal credit

4.10.1 The impact of Covid -19, the war in Europe and the increase fuel costs on the economy in the short, medium or long term is as yet unknown.

4.10.2 In 2020/21 the Government allocated funding to enable a top up of up to £150.00 (limited by outstanding liability) to each working age claim. The balance of the funding has been rolled into a hardship fund for 2022/23 to support Council Tax payers suffering financial difficulty. At 1.9.2022 £170k remains to be awarded.

4.10.3 In previous years the cost of CTS on the taxbase has been reducing in real terms. This is demonstrated below, and has supported previous recommendations to retain the current scheme.

	Actual cost	Change	
2013/14	£6,605,773		
2014/15	£6,137,922	-7.08%	
2015/16	£5,755,876	-6.22%	
2016/17	£5,683,162	-1.26%	
2017/18	£5,828,125	2.55%	The Band D value of the 2017/18 taxbase increased by 4.5% on 2016/17,
2018/19	£5,935,167	1.84%	The Band D value of the 2018/19 taxbase increased by 5.8% on 2017/18
2019/20	£5,779,820	-2.60%	
2020/21	£6,011,347	4.01%	The Band D value of the 2020/21 taxbase increased by 3.94% on 2019/20
2021/22	£6,047,385	0.60%	The Band D value of the 2021/22 taxbase increased by 4.18% on 2020/21

4.10.4 The reduction in the cost of CTS between 2013/14 and 2021/22 has been achieved as a result of a reducing caseload, despite an increase in council tax.

4.10.5 The taxbase for 2022/23 was calculated in October 2021, and assumed at that time a band D value of 3234.66. At 1 July 2022 the actual band D cost of Council Tax support was 2999.7, which is less than budgeted for.

- 4.10.6 The taxbase is also impacted by other variables, and changes in anyone of them can impact on its ability to generate the expected income levels on which the budget is set. The Covid-19 pandemic, war in Europe and fuel cost increases may also have a dampening effect on new builds coming into the taxbase which will further reduce its income raising capacity.
- 4.11 The impact of other factors on the ability to pay.
- 4.11.1 Many customers now claiming CTS have been affected by other factors. Not only do they find themselves with debts to their Council and landlord that were previously paid for them, but their ability to pay the debts is diminished. This is demonstrated in the Council Tax collection rates. The overall in-year collection rate for all working age CTS customers was 71.46% in 2021/22. In contrast to the all tax payers in-year collection rate of 94.5%.
- 4.11.2 The actual cost per week of Council Tax for those customers required to pay the minimum 8.5% contribution is demonstrated below.

2022/23	BEFORE OTHER DISCOUNTS (e.g single person)		
	BAND	Annual full charge	8.5% Weekly charge
A	£ 1,318.59	£2.15	£112.08
B	£ 1,538.34	£2.51	£130.76
C	£ 1,758.11	£2.87	£149.44
D	£ 1,977.88	£3.22	£168.12
E	£ 2,417.42	£3.94	£205.48
F	£ 2,856.93	£4.66	£242.84
G	£ 3,296.47	£5.37	£280.20
H	£ 3,955.76	£6.45	£336.24

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 As detailed in the report.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 As detailed in the report

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken if there are proposals to amend the Council Tax support scheme.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 As detailed in the report

5.5 Policy Implications

5.5.1 As detailed in the report

GLOSSARY

IS	Income support
JSA (IB)	Job seekers allowance (Income based)
UC	Universal Credit
PC	Pension credit
GC	Guaranteed credit
SC	Savings credit
ESA (IR)	Employment support allowance (Income related)

Appendix A The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

1. The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

- 1.1 Before April 2013, local authorities (LA) administered Council Tax Benefit on behalf of the Government. This national scheme was specified in legislation and LA's were reimbursed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) through a subsidy claim submitted annually and subject to audit.
- 1.2 The level of subsidy reimbursement varied dependant on whether benefit had been awarded, backdated or overpaid, but the point to note is that entitlement and subsidy were based on assessing entitlement on 100% of somebodies Council tax liability, net of discounts (like a single person discount).
- 1.3 The scheme was means tested and whilst the scheme differentiated between different client groups (providing extra support for disabled groups for example) there was little differential between Elderly and Working Age clients.
- 1.4 Clients fell into one of two groups, "passport" and "standard claims." A passported claim was one in which the DWP had already carried out a means test and then notified the Council that the customers income was at or below the minimum income level for their household composition. They would be automatically entitled to 100% of their Council Tax to be paid by Council Tax Benefit. A deduction would however be made from this entitlement where there were non-dependants living in the home.
- 1.5 The second group were called 'standard claims'. These customers had their means testing done by the Council and awarded Council Tax benefit in accordance with the national scheme criteria. These customers had income above the minimum requirements and would be required to pay something towards their Council tax liability. A deduction would also be made from this entitlement where there were non-dependants living in the home.
- 1.6 In very simple terms entitlement was determined by comparing eligible incomes against relevant applicable amounts. When income equalled or fell below applicable amounts, the maximum entitlement is achieved. If income exceeded applicable amounts, entitlement was reduced by 20% of the excess. The applicable amounts were determined by the DWP in respect of Housing Benefit claims.
- 1.7 In more complex terms, every income and capital source had to be assessed in accordance with its type, and then determined if it was included in the assessment. Child benefit, maintenance paid to a child, PiP and DLA, war pensions etc were fully disregarded, whilst earned income was calculated after tax & NI, and 50% of pension contributions, averaged over the relevant period. Payments to certain child care providers were disregarded, whilst capital (excluding the property

occupied) included savings, shares etc and if the total exceeded £16k, the customer was excluded from entitlement.

1.8 In very general terms the full expenditure on the scheme was reimbursed by the DWP.

2 The impact of changes from 1st April 2013

2.1 The national scheme for Council Tax Benefit ceased, and Councils had to devise their own Council Tax Reduction Schemes for working age claimants. The Government continues to specify the scheme for Elderly customers through prescribed regulations.

2.2 Instead of the scheme being funded through a subsidy claim based on actual expenditure, the Government moved the funding into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement, fixing it at only 90% of the subsidy paid in a previous year. RSG was the amount of grant that Government gave to Councils to support their wider service delivery, and made up one part of the income of the Council in addition to Council Tax receipts, fees and charges and an element of Business rate collection. However the move away from RSG makes this funding element less obvious.

2.3 Each Council had to consider how to fund 100% of the cost of the Elderly 'national' scheme and provide a Working age scheme, whilst receiving 10% less funding.

2.4 Elderly (Pensioner) claimants are protected from changes through the provision of a statutory scheme.

2.5 Schemes must support work incentives.

2.6 The DCLG Policy Statement of Intent did not give a recommended approach to be taken, but indicated the scheme should not contain features which create dis-incentives to find employment. The current Stevenage scheme complies with this statement.

2.7 Local authorities must ensure that appropriate consideration has been given to support for other vulnerable groups, including those which may require protection under other statutory provisions including the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Persons Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010, amongst others.

2.8 The DCLG issued Policy Statements that addressed a range of issues including the following:

- Vulnerable People and Key Local Authority Duties;
- Taking work incentives into account;
- Information Sharing and Powers to Tackle Fraud.

2.9 The Local Government Finance Bill stated that a Billing Authority must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The current scheme has sought to address these requirements.

3 Stevenage’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTS)

3.1 The Council initially devised a scheme which replicated the previous national scheme but limited the Council Tax liability that was used to assess entitlement to 90% for working age customers. The Government offered a one-off transitional grant to Councils who would restrict the reduction to 91.5%, and accordingly the Council amended the proposal and took the one off transitional grant. The Council has maintained this position for the first 10 years of the scheme.

3.2 From 2014/15 the 90% grant that was included in the RSG was no longer individually identifiable. Therefore calculating the total cost of the scheme i.e. the cost of the CTS scheme versus the CTS grant given by Government is now impossible.

3.3 The caseload for CTS indicates that the proportion of working age customers compared to pensioners is changing over time very slightly. At 1.4.19 the proportion of Working Age customers has reduced slightly against the proportion of Elderly customers for the first time. This may be attributed to new working age claimants claiming UC. The number of Elderly claimants has however also fallen since 1.4.2018.

Table 1: Proportion of Working Age and Elderly claimants

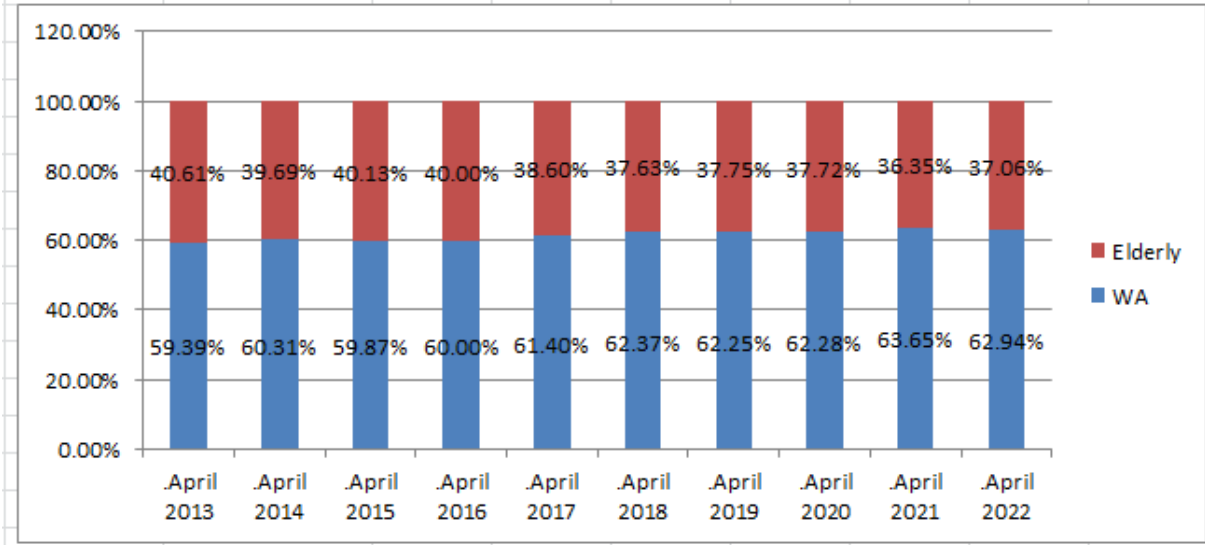
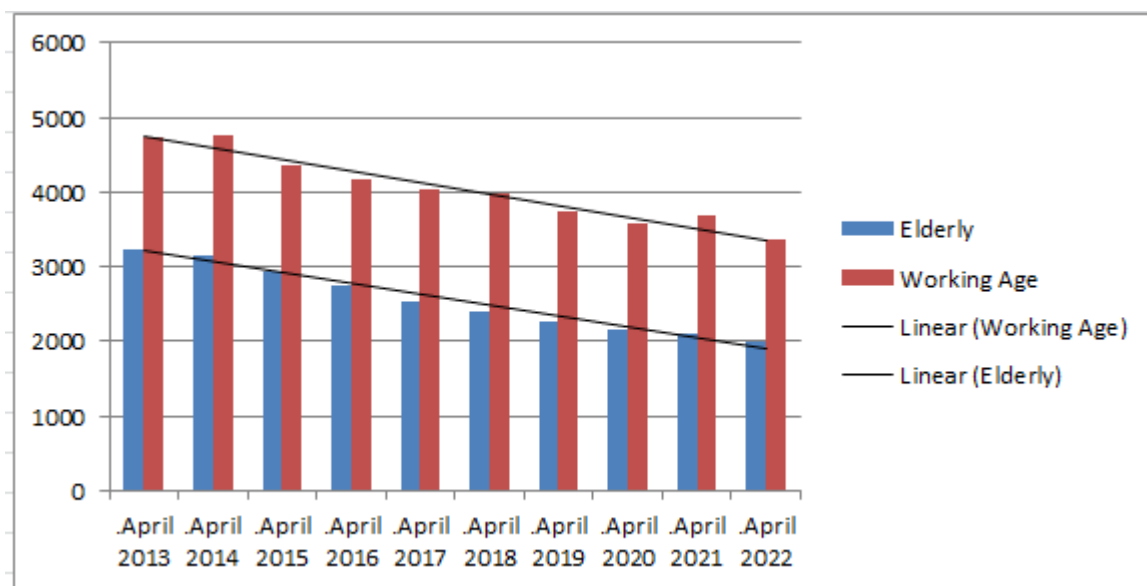


Table 2: Caseload Working Age and Elderly claims



3.4 Before the introduction of CTS there had been a number of years of constant case load increases, the caseload has since stabilised and reduced, alongside a growing taxbase due to new developments in the area. The impact on the cost of the scheme is demonstrated below.

	Actual cost	Change	
2013/14	£6,605,773		
2014/15	£6,137,922	-7.08%	
2015/16	£5,755,876	-6.22%	
2016/17	£5,683,162	-1.26%	
2017/18	£5,828,125	2.55%	The Band D value of the 2017/18 taxbase increased by 4.5% on 2016/17,
2018/19	£5,935,167	1.84%	The Band D value of the 2018/19 taxbase increased by 5.8% on 2017/18
2019/20	£5,779,820	-2.60%	
2020/21	£6,011,347	4.01%	The Band D value of the 2020/21 taxbase increased by 3.94% on 2019/20
2021/22	£6,047,385	0.60%	The Band D value of the 2021/22 taxbase increased by 4.18% on 2020/21

- 3.5 What is certain however is that the level of spend on CTS has continued to reduce in real terms, mitigating in part the impact of overall reductions in income to the Council.
- 3.6 A large proportion of customers affected by the introduction of the CTS scheme had not previously had to pay anything towards their Council Tax bill. If they had been 'passported' under the Council Tax Benefit scheme their liability would have been discharged in full by a credit transfer onto their Council Tax account. Under the new arrangements all working age customer have to pay at least 8.5% towards their bill.
- 3.7 A publication (*Public Finance March 2019*) commented that in 2013-14 CTS schemes nationally provided 14% less support to working age households than the old national scheme, and that by 2018-19 it provided 24% less. Stevenage has maintained its scheme at 8.5% during this period.
- 3.8 It continues to be a challenge to support and educate these customers into a regular payment arrangement. The Council has;
- Offered flexible repayment options,
 - Given more time to pay,
 - Worked on a project with the Citizens advice Bureau to support customers with repeated arrears,
 - Promoted other debt and advice agencies.
- 3.9 The in-year collection rate for working age claimants who had only the minimum 8.5% liability to pay was 62.9% in 2014/15 and 71.59% for 2021/22
- 3.10 The overall in-year collection rate for all working age CTS customers was 70.7% in 2014/15, and 71.46% in 2021/22. In contrast to the all tax payers in-year collection rate, which for 2014/15 was 96%, and 94.5% in 2021/22.
- 3.11 Many of these same customers have been affected by other welfare reforms introduced:
- the spare room subsidy scheme
 - the new Benefit CAP,
 - Reviews of disability benefits etc.
- Many families find that they have increasing debts with their Councils and landlords for bills that were previously paid for them.
- 3.12 Assumptions are made in respect of the level of non-payment of Council Tax when determining the tax base, alongside assumptions over each of the variable elements of its composition. The in-year collection for all Council Tax payers was 94.5% in 2021/22, but this was dampened by only 71.46% collected from those working age customers in receipt of CTS. Those customers who under the old scheme would have not paid anything towards their Council tax (passported customers) paid only 71.59%

- 3.13 The liability not paid in-year becomes arrears on which a bad debt provision has to be established, which is a further cost to the Council. Where the outturn taxbase exceeds the estimated performance it generates a surplus on the collection fund, and conversely when the taxbase does not achieve its expected performance because of negative variations in the component elements, the collection fund would be in deficit. The Council is required to make precept payments during the year regardless of any in-year variations.
- 3.14 In recognition of the fact that the additional Council Tax liability is more difficult to collect, a collection rate of 98.25% has been assumed.
- 3.15 Currently (2022/23) 77.32% of the tax base income is precepted by the County Council and 11.27% by the Police, and accordingly they have a vested interest in the value of the CTS scheme as it directly impacts on their ability to raise funds. The lower the cost of the scheme, the higher the tax base on which they can precept.



Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area: Resources
Date: 12 October 2022



QUARTERS 1 AND 2 MONITORING REPORT (CAPITAL) - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

KEY DECISION

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Finance team and budget managers
Lead Officer – Clare Fletcher Ext. 2933
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Council's 2022/23 capital programme for Quarters 1 and 2.
- 1.2 To seek approval for the revisions to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That capital budget re-profiling of £28.841Million from 2022/23 to future years be approved.
- 2.2 That in-year virement of £100,000 to re-allocate unspent resources to the provision for current programmes within the Stevenage Direct Services Capital Programme be approved.
- 2.3 That in-year virement of £58,000 to re-allocate unspent resources to the provision for current programmes within the Finance & Estates Capital Programme be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 2022/23 original capital programme budget was approved by Council on 24 February 2022, General Fund £30.51Million and HRS £64.67Million.
- 3.2 Quarterly revisions to the budgets are agreed by Members at Executive as part of the Council's Capital Monitoring process.

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4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The total Capital Programme, detailing all programmes with the relevant approval to spend, is detailed in Appendix A and B. It shows the revised budget position inclusive of carry-forwards from 2021/22.
- 4.2 The capital budget for the current financial year is summarised in Table 1 below and provides the latest position reflecting updated programme expenditure profiles as advised by programme managers.

TABLE 1: Capital Programme with Spending Approval

Scheme	22/23 Revised Budget	Reprofiling	Virement	22/23 Forecast Q2	Actuals Q2
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund - Schemes					
Stevenage Direct Services	5,436	(1,104)	100	4,432	1,065
Housing Development	12,633	0	0	12,633	748
Finance and Estates	3,187	(385)	58	2,861	521
Digital & Transformation	735	(317)	0	418	19
Regeneration	10,177	0	0	10,177	4,186
Communities and Neighbourhoods	973	0	(100)	873	95
Planning and Regulatory	372	(96)	0	275	25
Deferred Works Reserve	1,118	0	(58)	1,059	0
Total GF Schemes	34,631	(1,902)	0	32,729	6,659
HRA - Schemes					
Capital Programme Excl New Build (Housing Investment)	26,688	0	0	26,688	7,099
Special Projects & Equipment	63	0	0	63	
New Build (Housing Development)	54,154	(26,744)	0	27,410	9,020
Digital & Transformation	689	(195)	0	494	125
Total HRA Schemes	81,594	(26,939)	0	54,655	16,243
Total Capital Programme	116,226	(28,841)	0	87,384	22,902

2022/23 REVISED BUDGET

- 4.3. The 2022/23 revised budget, last approved by Members at the July 2022 Executive as part of the 2021/22 Capital Expenditure Outturn Report was – General Fund £34.631Million and HRA £81.595Million, a total of £116.226Million. This included £11.643Million of budgets carried forward from 2021/22.

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Reprofiling

- 4.4 Reprofiting of budgets are changes regarding the forecast timing of expenditure from the approved programme, between financial years, with no reported increase or decrease in budget requirement.
- 4.5 At quarter two, £28.841Million is to be reprofited from 2022/23 to future years, this represents 25% of the total revised budget.
- 4.6 Table 2 below analyses the budget reprofiling, with explanations below the table for the significant items:

Budget Reprofiting	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Funding Source
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Play Area Improvement Programme	30	(30)			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Garages	(1,137)	1,137			<i>Capital Receipt and Reserve</i>
Welfare improvements at out based hubs	(10)	10			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Vehicle/Plant replacement Programme	14	(14)			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Total Stevenage Direct Services	(1,104)	1,104	0	0	
EPC Surveys	(90)	90			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Depots: Planned Preventative Works (reroof)	(265)	265			<i>Capital Receipt and Locality Review Receipts</i>
MSCP / Indoor Market guttering	(30)	30			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Total Finance & Estates	(385)	385	0	0	
Infrastructure Investment	(232)	232			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Core ICT Equipment for Additional Staff	(65)	65			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
2012 Migration Servers	(20)	20			<i>Capital Receipt</i>
Total Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology	(317)	317	0	0	
Off Street Car Parks (Multi Storey Car Parks)	(96)	96			<i>Borrowing</i>
Total Planning & Regulatory	(96)	96	0	0	
HRA - New Build Programme - eligible for 1-4-1	(27,464)	15,122	7,727	4,615	<i>Various</i>
HRA - New Build Programme - ineligible	720	(720)			<i>Various</i>
Total HRA New Build (Housing Development)	(26,744)	14,402	7,727	4,615	
HRA - General IT	(140)	140			<i>Major Repairs Reserve</i>
HRA - CTOC	(55)	55			<i>Borrowing</i>
Total HRA Digital & Transformation	(195)	195	0	0	
TOTAL Budget Reprofiting	(28,841)	16,499	7,727	4,615	

- 4.6.1 Garages (£1.137Million) – The garages programme is being delivered using the MRC contract to ensure works could be started without the need to procure a new contract. However, regulation 72 means expenditure not related to the MRC must be within the 15% allowance permitted by the regulation, therefore the garages work has been capped to £5m so this % is not breached. This has necessitated the need now for a

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further procurement for garage spend. Executive approved a business case in September 2022 to invest part of GIP funding to complete repairs on around 100 garages to bring them into use through minor repairs and improvements.

- 4.6.2 Depots Planned Preventative Works (£265K) – this has been impacted by recruitment challenges related to property, surveying and estates roles in a challenging market, and the need to prioritise the workload. Officers are reprogramming the works, so the roof work will not be undertaken in the winter months due to the weather.
- 4.6.3 Infrastructure Investment (£232K) – The Council currently undergoing major changes to infrastructure namely the VDI (Hosted Desktop) and Network project which are to be completed by the end of the calendar year. Once these projects are completed the next phase of implementation will start firstly with the WIFI project; discussions are already in progress with suppliers.
- 4.6.4 HRA New Build Housing Development (£26.744Million) - The reported underspend was not reduced as part of the budget setting to allow flexibility in switching from planned schemes (if delayed or still in the planning stage) to open market acquisitions. However, this approach to budget projections will be revised going forward to give a more realistic budget position. The level of capital funding for Housing Development and Housing Investment will updated as part of the next iteration of the HRA Business Plan.
- 4.6.5 Members should also note however the impact of continued disruption to supply chains as a result of the war in Ukraine, as well as the continuation of the Lock down policy in China on Covid-19 outbreaks, means the Building Industry is still experiencing a shortage of key materials as well as increasing prices.
- 4.6.6 HRA Digital & Transformation (£195K) – The requirement for older versions of mobile devices needs to be replaced due to compatibility with the new security feature of Office 365 and this combined with supply chain issues means this budget needs to be slipped to next year.

Additional Budget Requests

- 4.8.1 Executive have delegated authority to approve new requests for capital expenditure where there is existing funding of up to £250K, and a further £250K for new capital expenditure where new funding needs to be identified.
- 4.8.2 To assist in the budget setting process, managers have been asked to identify changes to budgets required, including additional budgets, as and when information becomes available. It is hoped that by building up this list, it will result in a lower chance of late budget requests coming through after the budget setting process has concluded. Urgent budget requests for emergency works may still arise at any time of the year and will continue to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

2022/23 Forecast and Expected Outcomes

Actuals

- 4.9 The actual spend as at Quarter 2 was £22.902Million excluding staff recharges which will be processed in the coming months. This represents 26% of the revised budget for 2022/23.

Capital Financing

4.10 Table 3 sets out the current financing position for the 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme.

TABLE 3 Revised financing of the capital programme:

Capital Programme Financing	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
External Sources- Grants & Contribution	6,383	3,916			10,299
SBC Resources-Reserves & Capital Receipts	14,567	10,284	1,939	283	27,073
Borrowing	11,779	2,007			13,786
Total General Fund	32,729	16,207	1,939	283	51,158
External Sources- Grants & Contribution	8,367	1,130	568		10,065
SBC Resources-Reserves & Capital Receipts	36,132	26,839	28,076	31,222	122,268
Borrowing	10,157	23,814	175		34,146
Total HRA	54,655	51,783	28,818	31,222	166,479
Total Programme	87,384	67,991	30,757	31,505	217,637

5. CAPITAL RECEIPTS

5.1 General capital receipts – the forecast for receipts expected in 2022/23 has increased over the forecast as at Quarter 4 2021/22 by £1.9Million to £7.1Million. Of this, £2.5Million relates to piece of land been sold ahead of schedule. Other changes to the forecast can be seen in table 4 below.

TABLE 4 General Capital Receipts Forecast

General Capital Receipts	2022/23	2023/24
	£000	£000
Budget	£5,211	£10,173
Changes:		
Development sale - receipts ahead of budget profile	£2,500	(£2,500)
Additional Garage sales	85	0
Sale of Amenity Land	13	
Sites unlikely to proceed 22/23	(£450)	£450
Sales unlikely to proceed and being re-evaluated	(£175)	£0
Pre-sale costs variation	(£79)	£0
Total Adjustments	£1,796	(£2,050)
REVISED RECEIPT	£7,105	£8,123

5.2 Locality Review Site Disposals – which is a pipeline of land disposals to maintain the resilience of General Fund balance. The current position is detailed below and shows a reduction in receipts for the year of £347,600 from reduced valuations on several

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properties and the removal of property from the list of disposals (Highways asset £216,000).

5.3

TABLE 5 Locality Review Site Disposals Forecast

Locality Review Site Disposals			
Tranche	Estimated receipt Q4 2012/22	Q2 22/23 Updated F/cast	Variance
Tranche 2 - Yr2 2022/23	£2,597,600	£2,250,000	£347,600
Tranche 3 - Yr3 2023/24	£960,000	£960,000	£0
Total Forecast Locality Review Receipts	£3,557,600	£3,210,000	£347,600

Forecast use of capital receipts are included in **Appendices A** and **B**. Actual General Fund capital receipts to 16 September stand at £2.749Million.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

6.1.1 Financial implications are implicit in the report.

6.2 Legal Implications

6.2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to arrange for the proper administration of its financial affairs and a fiduciary duty to taxpayers with regards to its use of and accounting for public monies. This report assists in the discharge of those duties.

6.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

6.3.1 None directly arising from this report

6.4 Risk Implications

6.4.1 Inflationary increases, particularly construction related are forecast to impact a number of the building programmes. Increasing cost of construction is being widely reported at every level, with materials and labour all increasing in price. The demand for construction materials is increasing as governments across the world try to revive and stimulate growth following Covid19 and the war in Ukraine. The supply of skilled construction labour is being impacted by both Covid and Brexit related challenges.

6.4.2 Supply chain delays are also being reported, with a potential impact on delivery timetables.

6.4.3 Work is underway to understand the impact on the delivery timelines and cost of, affected programmes. Updates will be provided as part of the Quarter 3 monitoring report. Where evidence indicates that a current year programme will cost more to deliver, options including the removal or reduction of existing approved programmes will be investigated.

Part I
Release to Press

6.5 Climate Change Implications

- 6.5.1 The Council's buildings across the town do not meet the climate change agenda in terms of energy efficiency or divestment of use of fossil fuels and in their current condition they would undermine the Council's attempt to be carbon zero by 2030.
- 6.5.2 However, there is an opportunity with the local asset review agenda to have design principles built into renewed assets in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources. This should be a core principle of any future designs arising from the local asset reviews. There would be a further benefit of reduced energy costs.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 - Capital Strategy February 2022 (Council)
- BD2 – Capital Outturn August 2022 (Executive)
- BD3 – Quarter 1 and 2 monitoring report (Executive)

Appendices

- A - General Fund Capital Programme
- B - HRA Capital Programme

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APPENDIX A - GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals at 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	General Fund - Schemes							
	Stevenage Direct Services	5,435,673	1,064,630	4,432,039	(1,003,634)	4,431,550	5,535,184	1,103,634
	Housing Development	12,633,293	748,265	12,633,293	0	8,334,474	8,334,474	0
	Finance and Estates	3,187,332	521,157	2,860,761	(326,572)	780,000	1,164,726	384,726
	Digital & Transformation	735,241	18,844	417,834	(317,407)	104,220	421,627	317,407
	Regeneration	10,176,846	4,186,275	10,176,846	0	0	0	0
	Communities and Neighbourhoods	973,431	94,719	873,431	(100,000)	90,000	90,000	0
	Planning and Regulatory	371,932	24,663	275,285	(96,646)	365,000	461,244	96,244
	Deferred Works Reserve	1,117,640	0	1,059,485	(58,155)	200,000	200,000	0
	Total Schemes	34,631,387	6,658,552	32,728,973	(1,902,414)	14,305,244	16,207,255	1,902,011
	General Fund -Resources							
BG902	Capital Receipts	13,000,045		11,298,457	(1,701,588)	7,179,052	8,600,890	1,421,838
	Locality Review receipts	1,239,000		1,007,531	(231,468)	944,000	1,175,468	231,468
BG461	Grants and other contributions	7,480,342		7,480,342	0	3,916,192	3,916,192	0
BG862	S106's	10,999		10,999	0	0	0	0
BG904	LEP	0		0	0	0	0	0
	RCCO	0		0	0	0	0	0
	Revenue Reserves	57,244		57,244	0	0	0	0
BG905	Ringfenced regeneration receipts	1,142,020		1,142,020	0	0	0	0
BG903	Capital Reserve (Housing Receipts)	804,451		804,451	0	375,280	375,280	0
BG916	Capital Reserve (Revenue Savings)	571,942		279,613	(292,329)	0	292,329	292,329
BG920	New Homes Bonus CNM	304,986		304,986	0	0	0	0
	Prudential Borrowing Approved	7,658,679		7,658,679	0	1,890,720	1,890,720	0
	Short Term borrowing and funded from private sale	2,361,679		2,684,651	322,972	0	(43,625)	(43,625)
	Funding Gap	0		0	0	0	0	0
	Total Resources (General Fund)	34,631,387		32,728,973	(1,902,413)	14,305,244	16,207,255	1,902,011
	Stevenage Direct Services							
	Parks & Open Spaces							
KC218	Hertford Road Play Area (S106 Funded)	25,000		25,000	0	0	0	0
KE911	Play Area Improvement Programme	545,119	195,816	575,119	30,000	244,220	214,220	(30,000)
KE097	Litter bins	128,269	4,350	128,269	0	10,000	10,000	0
KE329	Play Areas Fixed Play	9,473		9,473	0	0	0	0
KE494	Green Space Access Infrastructure	203,650		203,650	0	128,000	128,000	0
KE916	Peartree skate park	40,000		40,000	0	0	0	0
KC236	Ridlins Athletics			100,000	100,000	0	0	0
KE917	Ridlins Athletics Facility	30,000		30,000	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX A - GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals at 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Other</u>							
KG002	Garages	3,391,089	695,569	2,253,830	(1,137,259)	2,265,720	3,402,979	1,137,259
KS263	Waste and Recycling System	42,811	1,600	42,811	0	0	0	0
KE520	Welfare improvements at out based hubs	10,000		0	(10,000)	0	10,000	10,000
KE914	FVP Dam Works	35,008	23,204	35,008	0	0	0	0
KE542	Flat block waste management infrastructure	30,000		30,000	0	0	0	0
KE543	Shrub bed programme	133,000		133,000	0	133,000	133,000	0
KE544	Review of Biodiversity Action Plan	12,000		12,000	0	0	0	0
KE545	Cemeteries System	50,000	22,453	50,000	0	0	0	0
	<u>Vehicles, Plant, Equipment</u>							
KE497	Trade Waste Containers	27,996		27,996	0	20,000	20,000	0
Various	Vehicle/Plant replacement Programme - see Appendix A1	722,257	121,639	735,882	13,625	1,630,610	1,616,985	(13,625)
	Total Stevenage Direct Services	5,435,673	1,064,630	4,432,039	(1,003,634)	4,431,550	5,535,184	1,103,634
	<u>Housing Development Scheme (Joint GF/HRA)</u>							
KG032	Building Conversion New Homes		(11,315)					
KG034	Kenilworth - Retail	28,530		28,530	0	0	0	0
KG035	Kenilworth - Community Centre	162,218		162,218	0	486,464	486,464	0
KG036	Kenilworth - private sale (Malvern Close & Blocks A3&A6)	8,327,813		8,327,813	0	7,848,010	7,848,010	0
KG037	North Road	293,902		293,902	0	0	0	0
Various	Housing Development Schemes (Joint GF/HRA)	8,812,463	(11,315)	8,812,463	0	8,334,474	8,334,474	0
KG038	Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC)	3,820,830	759,580	3,820,830	0	0	0	0
	Total Housing Development (including grants to Register	12,633,293	748,265	12,633,293	0	8,334,474	8,334,474	0
	<u>Finance & Estates</u>							
	<u>Estates</u>							
KS278	New Management Software	66,075		66,075	0	0	0	0
KR916	Commercial Properties Refurbishment (MRC Programme)	439,074		439,074	0	0	0	0
KR150	Works to improve vacant premises prior to re-letting	50,267	4,367	50,267	0	15,000	15,000	0
KR155	EPC Surveys	114,619		25,000	(89,619)	0	89,619	89,619
KR156	EPC remedials	219,765		219,765	0	0	0	0
KR157	Building condition and Insurance valuation Survey	148,341		148,341	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX A - GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals at 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Play Centres</u>							
KC904	Play Centres General		1,962					
	<u>Community Centres</u>							
KE529	Community Centres Urgent and H&S Works	56,659	420	46,659	(10,000)	0	0	0
KR159	St Nicholas POD removal	14,345	480	2,500	(11,845)	0	0	0
KE553	Bedwell CC - Replace extract fans and electric heaters	5,000		5,000	0	0	0	0
GROWTH	Bedwell Community Centre reroofing	0		0	0	125,000	125,000	0
GROWTH	Chells manor - lightning upgrade	0		0	0	10,000	10,000	0
GROWTH	St Nicholas Annex refurbish metal roof	0		0	0	60,000	60,000	0
	<u>Neighbourhood Centres</u>							
KE554	Bedwell Neighbourhood centre canopy repairs	30,000		30,000	0	0	0	0
KE555	8-10 The glebe roof replacement	30,000		100,000	70,000	0	0	0
	<u>Estates cont.</u>							
	<u>Park Pavilions</u>							
GROWTH	Peartree pavilion - reroofing	0		0	0	100,000	100,000	0
GROWTH	KGV Pavilion Replace electric heating and lighting	0		0	0	20,000	20,000	0
GROWTH	KGV reroofing and gutter replacement	0		0	0	75,000	75,000	0
	<u>Depots</u>							
KE526	Cavendish Fire Protection works formerly know as Depots: Urgent and H&S Works	452,170	175,494	702,170	250,000	0	0	0
KE540	Cavendish Road Fire protection works	250,000		0	(250,000)	0	0	0
KE527	Depots: Planned Preventative Works (reroof)	307,107	8,180	0	(307,107)	0	265,107	265,107
KR160	Cavendish depot - IT server room - gas suppression air permeability prevention works	18,649		60,649	42,000	0	0	0
KR161	Cavendish Depot IT/CCTV gas suppression works	6,800	1,825	6,800	0	0	0	0
	<u>Other</u>							
KE556	MSCP: Urgent and H&S Works	20,000			(20,000)	0	0	0
KE558	MSCP resurface worn stairwell floor	20,000		40,000	20,000	40,000	40,000	0
KE536	Multi Storey Car Park - Installation of emergency lighting	46,419	11,195	121,419	75,000	0	75,000	75,000
KE557	MSCP lighting upgrade - LED (phased)	75,000			(75,000)	75,000		(75,000)
KR158	Town Plaza	3,084	17,482	3,084	0	0	0	0
KR162	Fairlands valley farmhouse roofing works	35,000		45,000	10,000	0	0	0
KE559	MSCP / Indoor Market guttering	30,000		0	(30,000)	0	30,000	30,000

APPENDIX A - GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals at 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Council Offices							
KR141	Corporate Buildings - H&S		6,883					
KR151	Daneshill: Urgent and H&S Works	49,886	11,895	49,886	0	65,000	65,000	0
	Operational Buildings							
KR152	BTC 2019/20 Backlog H&S Works	27,934		27,934	0	0	0	0
KR153	BTC Urgent and H&S Works	65,783		65,783	0	0	0	0
KR154	BTC Planned Preventative Works	605,354	280,974	605,354	0	0	0	0
GROWTH	and control upgrade and replacement of lift in the new	0		0	0	195,000	195,000	0
	Total Finance & Estates	3,187,332	521,157	2,860,761	(326,572)	780,000	1,164,726	384,726
	Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology							
	IT General							
KS268	Infrastructure Investment	532,407	17,394	300,000	(232,407)	104,220	336,627	232,407
KS318	Core ICT Equipment for Additional Staff	140,000		75,000	(65,000)	0	65,000	65,000
KS319	2012 Migration Servers	26,130		6,130	(20,000)	0	20,000	20,000
	Total IT General	698,537	17,394	381,130	(317,407)	104,220	421,627	317,407
	Connected to Our Customer (CTOC)							
KS271	Corporate Website - Redesign	6,889		0	(6,889)	0	0	0
KS274	New CRM Technology	29,815	1,450	36,704	6,889	0	0	0
	Total CTOC	36,704	1,450	36,704	0	0	0	0
	Total Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology	735,241	18,844	417,834	(317,407)	104,220	421,627	317,407
	Regeneration							
KE505	Demolition of Towers Garages and other sites (GD1)	278,887	182,632	278,887	0	0	0	0
Various	Land Assembly (GD1)	278,887	182,632	278,887	0	0	0	0
KE466	Bus Interchange (GD3)	0	67,189	0	0	0	0	0
KE533	Multi Storey Car Park (GD3) 'Sustainable Transport'	0	15,561	0	0	0	0	0
KE506	Public Sector Hub	4,992,200	15,950	4,992,200	0	0	0	0
KE541	Railway Station Multi-Storey Car Park	3,492,500	3,521,054	3,492,500	0	0	0	0
KE538	Towns Fund	1,413,259	30,625	1,413,259	0	0	0	0
KE562	Station Gateway		28,170	0	0	0	0	0
KE563	Marshgate Biotech		133,205	0	0	0	0	0
KE564	Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre		16,775	0	0	0	0	0
KE567	Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity		10,152	0	0	0	0	0
KE568	Diversification of Retail & Garden Square		164,962	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Regeneration	10,176,846	4,186,275	10,176,846	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX A - GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals at 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>Community & Neighbourhoods</u>							
KC202	Fairlands Valley Park - Aqua	11,360		11,360	0	0	0	0
KC224	Leisure Stock Condition	20,000		20,000	0	0	0	0
KC230	Pin Green Play Centre Equipment	19,010		19,010	0	0	0	0
KE224	CCTV - Replacement Cameras (Community mobile camera	5,000	950	5,000	0	5,000	5,000	0
KE507	grant bid)	10,000		10,000	0	0	0	0
KC232	SALC and the Swim Centre Urgent and H&S Works	249,256	71,125	249,256	0	45,000	45,000	0
KC231	SALC, Swim Centre, and Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre	19,950		19,950	0	0	0	0
KC233	Stevenage Arts & Leisure Water leak - Reroofing	28,856	9,800	28,856	0	0	0	0
	<u>C&N cont.</u>							
KC242	SLL Leisure management - end of contract capital provisio	150,000		150,000	0	0	0	0
KC236	Ridlins Athletics	100,000			(100,000)	0	0	0
KC237	Fire stopping works at SALC	100,000		100,000	0	0	0	0
KC238	Lift replacement at SALC	140,000		140,000	0	0	0	0
KC239	Replacement bridge at Golf Centre & other bridge works	90,000		90,000	0	0	0	0
KC240	Replacement Camera programme	25,000	12,844	25,000	0	35,000	35,000	0
KC241	ASB team mobile camera	5,000		5,000	0	5,000	5,000	0
	Total Community & Neighbourhoods	973,431	94,719	873,431	(100,000)	90,000	90,000	0
	<u>Planning & Regulatory</u>							
KE119	Off Street Car Parks (Multi Storey Car Parks)	221,244		125,000	(96,244)	250,000	346,244	96,244
KE530	Car Park Equipment - Digitalisation	20,000		20,000	0	0	0	0
KE516	Town Centre Ramps Improvements	402			(402)	0	0	0
KE201	Hard standings	42,607	20,533	42,607	0	25,000	25,000	0
KE100	Residential Parking	21,846		21,846	0	0	0	0
KE217	Parking Restrictions	16,183	4,130	16,183	0	15,000	15,000	0
KE444	Coreys Mill Lane - Additional Parking Capacity	22,130		22,130	0	0	0	0
KE531	Workplace Travel Plan	27,519		27,519	0	15,000	15,000	0
GROWTH	Cashless on street parking transition	0		0	0	60,000	60,000	0
	Total Planning & Regulatory	371,932	24,663	275,285	(96,646)	365,000	461,244	96,244
KR911	Deferred Works Reserve	1,117,640		1,059,485	(58,155)	200,000	200,000	0

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APPENDIX B - HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	SUMMARY							
	Capital Programme Excl New Build (Housing Investment)	26,687,959	7,099,098	26,687,959		17,155,630	17,155,630	
	Special Projects & Equipment	63,462		63,462		25,000	25,000	
	New Build (Housing Development)	54,153,867	9,019,669	27,409,758	(26,744,109)	19,954,250	34,356,359	14,402,109
	Digital & Transformation	689,187	124,585	494,152	(195,034)	51,330	246,364	195,034
	TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME	81,594,475	16,243,351	54,655,332	(26,939,143)	37,186,210	51,783,353	14,597,143
	HRA USE OF RESOURCES							
BH930	MRR (Self Financing Depreciation)	23,784,921		22,138,775	(1,646,146)	19,373,244	16,200,536	(3,172,708)
BH902	Land Receipts	8,899,708		7,133,163	(1,766,545)			
BH901	New Build Receipts	12,803,988		4,655,808	(8,148,179)	3,901,991	9,662,835	5,760,844
BH903	Debt Provision Receipts	936,391			(936,391)	975,881	975,881	
BH905	Section 20 Contribution	500,000		500,000		1,129,846	1,129,846	
	Borrowing	20,190,458		10,156,678	(10,033,780)	11,805,248	23,814,256	12,009,008
	S106	735,565		735,565				
	Developer Contributions (Kenilworth)	4,728,545		4,728,545				
	Revenue Contribution to Capital	6,611,861		2,203,760	(4,408,101)			
BH905	Grant	2,403,038		2,403,038				
	TOTAL HRA RESOURCES FOR CAPITAL	81,594,475		54,655,332	(26,939,143)	37,186,210	51,783,353	14,597,143
	CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD							
	Planned Investment including Decent Homes							
KH157	Decent Homes - Redecs		(155)					
Various	Decent Homes - Internal/External Works	3,264,060	575,064	3,264,060		5,450,000	5,450,000	
KH308	Decent Homes Internal/External Works Contractor 1	2,304,060	383,137	2,304,060		2,600,000	2,600,000	
KH309	Decent Homes Internal/External Works Contractor 2					2,600,000	2,600,000	
KH310	Decent Homes Internal/External Works Voids	250,000	180,062	250,000		250,000	250,000	
KH143	Decent Homes Internal/One off Heating Works	110,000	1,610	110,000				
KH141	Decent Homes Electrical	600,000	10,255	600,000				
Various	Decent Homes - Flat Blocks	12,250,000	1,773,608	12,250,000		6,600,000	6,600,000	
KH311	MRC Flat Blocks - Wates	5,500,000	760,433	5,500,000		3,200,000	3,200,000	
KH312	MRC Flat Blocks - Mulalley	6,450,000	949,354	6,450,000		3,200,000	3,200,000	
KH313	MRC Flat Blocks - Misc	300,000	59,147	300,000		200,000	200,000	
KH231	Window Replacement		200					
KH111	Roofing		(640)					
KH300	MRC		5,115					
KH205	Communal Heating	1,700,000	1,197,685	1,700,000				
KH092	Lift Installation - Inspection & Remedial Works	750,000	276,455	750,000				
KH291	Sprinkler Systems - Flat Blocks	727,955	864,873	727,955				
KH294	High Rises - Preliminary Works	44,098	28,145	44,098				
KH321	High Rises - Improvement Works	1,000,000	14,643	1,000,000		1,750,000	1,750,000	
Future Year	New Schemes to be created							

APPENDIX B - HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Health & Safety							
KH085	Fire Safety	1,062,772	182,468	1,062,772		85,000	85,000	
KH317	Additional fire stopping works		21,329			917,420	917,420	
KH112	Asbestos Management	300,000	119,908	300,000		300,000	300,000	
KH114	Subsidence	135,903	54,473	135,903		100,000	100,000	
KH144	Contingent Major Repairs	467,306	523,087	467,306		365,440	365,440	
GROWTH	Building safety							
	Estate & Communal Area							
KH223	Asset Review - Challenging Assets	852,691	338,060	852,691		857,770	857,770	
KH224	Asset Review - Sheltered (non RED)		59,638					
	Other HRA Schemes							
KH318	Stock condition Surveys	110,000	1,610	110,000		60,000	60,000	
KH174	Energy Efficiency Pilot Projects	587,853	729,660	587,853		20,000	20,000	
KH094	Disabled Adaptations	585,320	296,812	585,320		650,000	650,000	
KH319	Decarbonisation	2,550,000	37,343	2,550,000				
KH320	Decarbonisation	300,000	4,393	300,000				
	New Business Plan expenditure							
	TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD	26,687,959	7,099,098	26,687,959		17,155,630	17,155,630	
	SPECIAL PROJECTS & EQUIPMENT							
	HRA Equipment							
KH015	Capital Equipment (including Supported Housing Equip)	44,160		44,160		25,000	25,000	
KH278	Vans for RVS	19,302		19,302				
	Sub Total Special Projects & Equipment	63,462		63,462		25,000	25,000	

APPENDIX B - HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2022/2023				2023/2024		
		Working Budget	Actuals 16 September	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget	Working Budget	Q2 Revised Budget	Working v Q2 Revised Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD							
	New Build Programme - eligible for 1-4-1	42,630,864	3,820,787	15,167,068	(27,463,796)	18,268,990	32,671,099	14,402,109
	New Build Programme - ineligible	11,523,003	5,198,882	12,242,690	719,687	1,685,260	1,685,260	
KH233	Open Market Acquisitions (4 units in 20/21)		2,873,052	2,267,813	2,267,813			
KH233	Open Market Acquisitions (4 units in 20/21) (Ineligible 141)	280,313		1,000,000	719,687	930,790	930,790	
KH241	Ditchmore Lane 6 units (Ineligible 141)		(26,401)					
KH247	Kenilworth Close (105 units) (Ineligible 141)	11,242,690	5,211,540	11,242,690		754,470	754,470	
KH247	Kenilworth Close 1 for 1 Expenditure (61.8%)	7,848,177		7,848,177				
KH280	Symonds Green	997,680	507,613	997,680				
KH279	Shephall Way		(27,670)					
KH307	The Oval (70 Units)	12,718,207	192,293	1,000,000	(11,718,207)	12,342,000	8,730,707	(3,611,293)
KH282	North Road (Ineligible 141)		10,888					
KH301	Redcar Drive aka Cartref	8,193,630	11,292	750,000	(7,443,630)		7,443,630	7,443,630
KH314	Ellis Avenue	1,922,878	2,838	200,000	(1,722,878)		1,722,878	1,722,878
KH303	Dunn Close (27 units, 21 in main block, supported accommodati	3,155,096	240,190	2,103,398	(1,051,698)		1,051,698	1,051,698
KH304	Shephall Social	5,542,166	21,178		(5,542,166)	1,587,960	7,130,126	5,542,166
KH305	Mary Mead Social	2,253,030			(2,253,030)	3,444,120	5,697,150	2,253,030
KH306	Ely Dell Social					894,910	894,910	
KH072	L.S.S.O. Buy Back		2,855					
	TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD	54,153,867	9,019,669	27,409,758	(26,744,109)	19,954,250	34,356,359	14,402,109
	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY							
	IT General (IT)							
KH268	Infrastructure Investment	223,214	5,544	120,000	(103,214)	51,330	154,544	103,214
KH315	Core ICT Equipment for Additional Staff	60,000		30,000	(30,000)		30,000	30,000
KH316	2012 Migration Servers	12,870		6,000	(6,870)		6,870	6,870
	Total General IT	296,084	5,544	156,000	(140,084)	51,330	191,414	140,084
	HRA							
KH218	ICT Programme (Business Plan)	66,123	95,200	66,123				
	Total Other HRA	66,123	95,200	66,123				
	Connected To Our Customers (CTOC)							
KH271	Corporate Website - Redesign	3,542			(3,542)			
KH272	Electronic SMB Reports System		13,200					
KH288	New CRM Technology (Digital Platform)	121,408	4,641	70,000	(51,408)		54,950	54,950
KH289	Future Online Development of Civica Icon Payments							
	Total CTOC	124,950	17,841	70,000	(54,950)		54,950	54,950
	Housing All Under One Roof programme (HAUOR)							
KH283	Housing Improvements - Northgate online	71,130	6,000	71,130				
KH260	On-Line Housing Application Form - RAPID KZ107	52,000		52,000				
KH286	Housing Document Mgt System (Repairs end to end)	78,900		78,900				
	Total HAUOR	202,030	6,000	202,030				
	TOTAL ICT INCLUDING DIGITAL AGENDA	689,187	124,585	494,152	(195,034)	51,330	246,364	195,034

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