

Public Document Pack



EXECUTIVE

Date: Wednesday, 7 December 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE (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 - 16 NOVEMBER 2022

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

Pages 5 – 10

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

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

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 20 October 2022

Community Select Committee – 2 November 2022

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 17 November 2022

Pages 11 – 30

4. COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE

To consider an update on the progress that the Council and partners have made in implementing the action plan agreed by Executive in October 2022 in response to the national cost of living crisis.

Pages 31 – 48

5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 2 2022/23

To consider the Corporate Performance report for Quarter 2 of 2022/23.

Pages 49 – 90

6. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023/24

To consider and approve the Council Tax Base for 2023/24.
Pages 91 – 98

7. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2023/34

To consider the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget and Rent Setting report for 2023/24.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

8. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

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

10. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 16 NOVEMBER 2022

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 November 2022 for signature by the Chair.
Pages 99 - 102

11. LEISURE SERVICES AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

To award the Council's Leisure Services and Active Communities Management Contract for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2033, following the outcome of an extensive procurement process.
Pages 103 - 228

12. REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE AND SG1 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

To consider a progress report on the delivery of the Council's 'Transforming the Town Centre' regeneration programme, including the delivery of projects supported through the Stevenage Town Deal funding package; and proposals to re-negotiate parts of the SG1 project Development Agreement to enable delivery of this vital regeneration programme in a challenging economic climate.
Pages 229 - 244

13. MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24 (PART 2)

To update Members on the Making Your Money Count (MYMC) Future Town Future Council stream and the recommended MYMC 2023/24 budget options, following on from the November 2022 Executive report.
Pages 245 - 322

14. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 7 December 2022 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 16 November 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

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

Start / End Start Time: 2.00pm
Time: End Time: 2.54pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 12 OCTOBER 2022

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

3 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES

In respect of the Community Select Committee's review of Void properties, the Leader referred to the serious Coroner's case of a two-year old in Rochdale who had died from a severe respiratory condition as a result of the damp and mould in the social housing property in which he lived. As the Community Select Committee had carried out a review of damp and mould in SBC-owned properties in 2016, officers were asked to bring the Coroner's report, and in particular the associated recommendations concerning the Rochdale incident, to the attention of the Community Select Committee.

With regard to Minute 3(5) – Climate Change Annual Update: October 2022 of the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2022, the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change supported the Committee's request that each of the 13 wards in the Co-operative Neighbourhood areas should be allocated a sum of £7,500 per annum for physical climate change-related improvements in their areas.

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

4 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Executive considered a report in respect of Second Quarter Revenue Budget monitoring 2022/23 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that there was a net underspend for the Quarter 2 General Fund of £199,920. The refuse Alternative Funding Model (AFM) income from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) regarding recycling gains was projected to be £237,000. There was no budgetary provision for this during the Covid-19 pandemic as there was no income, and HCC had confirmed that they were ceasing the AFM from 2023/24 to make a saving. There was a further increase in the Council's forecast Interest on Balances of £215,000 following the increase in the bank rate (prior to the November 2022 increase of 0.75%).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that another significant pressure was the in-year staff salary increase (of £197,000), which includes £154,000 within Refuse and Recycling for agency staff due to vacancies and some long- and short-term sickness.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT reported that the staff pay award for 2022/23 had now been accepted and would add circa £662,000 to the Council's staffing costs and General Fund budget. This had not been included in the Quarter 2 figures as the award was not confirmed until after the report was finalised.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was reporting a net underspend for Quarter 2 of £263,000. This was made up of a number of variances, including a reduction of £399,000 on loan interest payments and interest on balances due to the timing of when the Council would be looking to take external borrowing (which was being reviewed following the recent increases in the cost of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board). This was being monitored on a daily basis and, if conditions improved, planned loans may still be taken during the year.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that a further pressure was an increase in Repairs and Voids costs of £130,000 due to the cost of materials continuing to increase in line with those seen nationally, and a reduction in income due the volume of repairs and the previously reported vacancy/capacity challenges within the team.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that, similar to the General Fund, the HRA would also be updated at Quarter 3 to reflect the recently approved pay award for 2022/23, which would add in the region of £352,000 to the HRA budgets.

The Assistant Director (Finance) added that the impact of the latest inflation figures,

which had risen to 11.1% (Consumer Price Index) and 14.2% (Retail Price Index) would add further pressures going forward.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change referred to the climate change implications set out at Paragraph 5.6 of the report, and stressed the point that in the long run climate change mitigation projects and initiatives would reduce energy usage and other budget costs.

In reply to a question from the Leader, the Strategic Director (RP) confirmed that the underspend in Street scene salaries was due to staff recruitment and retention challenges following a recent restructuring of the service.

It was **RESOLVED**:

General Fund

1. That the 2022/23 2nd Quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £199,920 be approved.
2. That it be noted the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive.

Housing Revenue Account

3. That the 2022/23 2nd Quarter projected net decrease in HRA expenditure of £263,300 be approved.
4. That it be noted 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.

5 2022/23 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

The Executive considered a report in respect of the 2022/23 Mid Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the Council's cash balances were projected to be £63Million by 31 March 2023, however all of these sums had been committed to be spent, were planned to be used/drawn down, or were being held on behalf of others. Unless it was determined that allocated reserves were no longer needed in the future, there were currently no cash resources available for new projects. In addition, the capital programme approved by the Executive on 12 October 2022 required external borrowing of £20.522Million in 2022/23.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that, as at 30 September 2022, total borrowing was £246.849Million. This could rise to

£267.371Million if all approved borrowing was taken as per the revised capital programme which the Executive approved at its meeting held on 12 October 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT reported that the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charged to the General Fund in 2022/23 was forecast to be £214,609.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the average yield on investments was 1.04% for April to September 2022. The rate earned in 2021/22 was 0.35%, due to the ultra-low Bank of England Base Rate. The average yield is expected to rise to 2.01% for the full 2022/23 financial year, as current fixed term investments matured and were replaced with new investments at current higher rates. This equated to forecast 2022/23 interest earned of £935,000 against a budgeted amount of £330,000.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT concluded by stating that there had been no breaches of the Treasury Management Strategy in 2022/23 to date.

The Assistant Director (Finance) advised that the report had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 9 November 2022. No substantive comments had been made by the Committee.

In reply to a question from the Leader regarding local authority borrowing, the Strategic Director (CF) explained that of the £291M figure for SBC borrowing, 71% of that figure related to the financing deal that the Council entered into to buy back its housing stock from the Government. All four Hertfordshire District/Borough Councils with their own housing stocks had significant levels of borrowing. A further 19% of the SBC borrowing figure related to investment in the Council's housing stock, including the Housing Development programme for the provision of brand new Council homes. 90% of the overall borrowing debt related to the Housing Revenue Account, with 2% (£6 Million) for Regeneration projects.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2022/23 Mid Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators be recommended to Council for approval.

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

6 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they 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.

8 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 12 OCTOBER 2022

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

9 MAKING YOUR MONEY COUNT OPTIONS 2023/24

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the proposed Making Your Money Count options for 2023/24.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in report.

Other Options considered: As contained in report.

10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 20 October 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, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Claire Parris and Lorraine Rossati.

Start / End Start Time: 6pm
Time: End Time: 8pm

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

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 20 SEPTEMBER 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 20 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

The Chair welcomed the three SBC Executive Portfolio Holders for Deputy Leader, Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People, Cllr Richard Henry; Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr and Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People, Cllr Jackie Hollywell.

Executive Portfolio Holder for Deputy Leader, Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People, Councillor Richard Henry

The Committee had received a written response from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Deputy Leader, Culture, Leisure, Children and Young People, Councillor Richard Henry, to questions that the Chair had set in advance of the interview session.

The Chair asked Cllr Henry to expand on the issues that had been provided in writing.

Councillor Richard Henry made the following comments:

- In time, there would be opportunities for low carbon buildings linked to the new leisure contract.

- Regarding the cost of the utility bills for the new leisure contract, there won't be a big saving in year 1, but there would be carbon saving in future years.
- The current buildings are not at all energy efficient. A balance needs to be struck between what to do with the existing buildings regarding their medium to long term use including and a cost benefit analysis of repurposing buildings or providing a new build, and the climate change considerations were part of the mix.
- In response to a question by the Chair regarding the food offer in the leisure facilities, Cllr Henry confirmed that they would be looking for a healthy range with consideration to lower carbon too, and will seek to negotiate this into new contracts.
- In response to a question by the Chair regarding making future Stevenage Day's a more environmentally friendly day, Cllr Henry stated that they would be including an eco-audit of Stevenage day next year and would promote other climate change initiatives there, including a Green zone in the future.
- In response to a question regarding providing water fountains and more shading in parks Cllr Henry agreed that these were the sort of issues that would need to be considered as part of the ongoing impact of climate change
- officers who had been focused on the leisure contract will shift their focus onto areas like events in the park which will support climate change themes, building on initiatives such as the Bike Hub in Fairlands Valley Park.

Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People, Cllr Jackie Hollywell.

The Committee had received a written response from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People, Cllr Jackie Hollywell, to questions that the Chair had set in advance of the interview session.

The Chair asked Cllr Hollywell to expand on the issues that had been provided in writing.

Councillor Jackie Hollywell made the following comments:

- Health inequalities had come to the fore during Covid and were now present in the cost-of-living crisis and climate change is an interlinked part of this. The Council is talking to people about these issues as they try to navigate the mental health challenges that it is bringing up.
- The Council is working in partnership with the County Council and with the voluntary sector regarding addressing public health issues as these link to climate change.
- Regarding equalities – Although people from a lower socio-economic group are not officially one of the 9 protected characteristic groups of the Equalities Act, the Council considers people in poverty as a vulnerable group and who are most affected by climate change.
- The NHS has particular challenges regarding climate change, such as patients not returning medical equipment such as walking frames and crutches because of infection control, which is very wasteful and bad for the environment, as is the huge quantities of single use PPE and other medical

- dressings.
- How different equalities groups are affected is an important issue and is something we need to really consider. In the future eco audits will be really important.
 - A Member suggested that there was not a great difference between younger and older people regarding the levels of engagement on climate change; they both had people engaged and cynical about the issues. By and large older people were more likely to reuse and recycle as this was often embedded in their thought processes.
 - The extreme heat and cold really affects older people, so the Council would need to look out for vulnerable residents in this regard.

Executive Portfolio Holder for Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr

The Committee had received a written response from the Executive Portfolio Holder for Communities, Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council, Cllr Sandra Barr, to questions that the Chair had set in advance of the interview session.

The Chair asked Cllr Barr to expand on the issues that had been provided in writing.

Councillor Sandra Barr made the following comments:

- Councillor Barr is working with the Portfolio Holders Richard Henry and Simon Speller on healthier living options. Councillor Barr said that she is hearing young families say they can't afford to be eco-friendly.
- There will be a £15,000 grant per cooperative neighbourhood area to encourage individuals or groups to do environmental projects. St Nicks Pick a Muslim Women's Group who are divided North & South across the town were providing food teach skills to local people to cook tasty and wholesome meals for very small amounts of money. This skill was needed as many young parents have not picked up these skills from food tech at school or from their families.
- Councillor Barr is working with Community Officers and talking to them about a scheme where the public can claim food at wholesale value. Areas in town need a cultural shift to see they can recycle and can take steps to be environmentally minded in their behaviours. Councillor Barr would be looking at what she can do to get the positive messages out to people.
- Regarding whether climate change has the priority it needs across Council, Councillor Barr stated that each Portfolio Holder is looking at it relevant to their remits, so working together is very important. Outlying areas of the Town could benefit from more satellite bike repairs. There may be economic choices e.g., eat or pay for bike repair, with decisions around the former.
- Councillor Barr affirmed that Cllr Speller had previously explained the concept of the "Dragons Den" style bids for small environmental projects. This provides small pots of money to help.

It was **RESOLVED** that the interviews with the three Executive Members were noted,

4 **TREE CANOPY COVER**

The Chair welcomed the Environmental Policy and Development Manager, Julia Hill and the Arboriculture and Conservation Manager, Cristian Pinta to the meeting. The Chair asked if the cost £250 for the planting of a sapling tree was accurate?

Cristian Pinta stated that now the costs were up to £350 a tree as prices have increased due to high inflation and the rise in demand for trees, as the interest in tree planting has gone up so have the costs gone up.

Julia Hill informed Members that all Schools in Stevenage had been offered the opportunity to plant trees. All tree planting required supervision and ongoing management so that trees have a chance to become established.

In response to a question the Chair had regarding requests for tree planting for memorials, Julia Hill said that the Council tries to facilitate this where it is appropriate to plant trees, but this would be helped in the long term with a tree and woodland strategy. It's important to plant the right trees in the right place. Tree planting will be easier to promote once we have a strategy.

The Chair asked officers what is the right type of tree? Cristian Pinta stated that the honest answer is that at this moment we don't know because of the impact climate change is having, we are planting trees now that may not survive longer term. Some experts are saying plant trees that are traditionally flourishing in the climate of the South of France. However, biodiversity impacts are complicated and it's important to have a diversity of species in the local tree stock. There are various diseases to contend with such as Ash dieback, with only 20% being resistant.

Julia Hill informed Members that HCC has launched a 4-year-tree planting initiative "Your Tree, Our Future" (information on this had been sent to all ward Councillors on 28 September 2022). Over the four years 100,000 trees will be made available to residents and community groups to plant on their own land. In 2022/23 the County Council has allocated all 10 districts with 1,000 trees for distribution with residents. HCC ran the application process and in Stevenage all 1,000 trees had been taken up quickly. Distribution of the trees to those successful residents, will be from Fairlands Valley Park in December. The trees will all be 2-3-foot tall whips and all will be native species.

Julia Hill said that when the public collect their tree they will be provided with instructions re how to plant and look after it. In these circumstances it is down to residents to take the care of the tree and it was hoped that as the residents had shown the interest to request the tree that they will look after it.

A Member asked what schools had been involved in the community woodland at Fairlands Valley Park? Julia Hill stated that a number of schools had expressed an interest, but it was not easy for all of them to get to FVP for a tree planting session. 8 schools have expressed an interest to date, 1 secondary school and the rest were

primary schools. There would be a further date in January for the community to come to and plant a tree.

A Member stated that trees that provide shade in parks and open spaces will be very important as a climate mitigation, and it was not just the number of trees that was important but how large each tree species was when mature that was important. Trees can have some unintended consequences; some had been planted in Broadhall Way and had been planted in between the streetlights and the cycleways, and the foliage obscured the lights. In the report a figure of 300,000 trees had been mentioned. This seems to be more theoretical rather than practical. Trees were important but were part of a wide package of measures to tackle climate change.

A Member asked if it possible to plant the wrong trees? Cristian Pinta agreed, for instances Poplar trees grow very large and are prone to drop limbs so can be dangerous in the wrong locations. Some tree species have thorns and some trees are very large so if they are planted in the wrong area they can cause problems to urban infrastructure.

Julia Hill stated that as part of planning gain from Section 106 and CIL, the Town was receiving some biodiversity net gain funding from larger development. In the future it may be a struggle to deliver all the gain on the Council's land, but officers would seek to ensure that it was delivered within Stevenage.

A Member asked if the Council was meeting its target of planting 250 trees a year? Cristian Pinta said that currently the Council was only planting around 160 trees a year. However, these were 2 to 3 metre trees not small whips, so there is a desire to plant at the rate of the target but, at the moment, the focus is on quality tree planting over quantity. Trees need nurturing or they will fail to establish and if not looked after they will die off.

A Member asked why trees had not been planted on the A1M next to a new development rather than the very tall sound barrier? Cristian Pinta stated this was a Planning matter, but trees are good and often used in a way to screen visually and for sound but to have the same effect as the sound barrier fence there would be a need for many layers to block sound and this may not have been possible at this location.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on the Tree Canopy Cover was noted.

5 **FOCUS ON IMPROVED RECYCLING**

Colin Littlechild, Acting Assistant Operations Manager, Stevenage Direct Services introduced the report to Members. Colin said that Officers were looking at various measures to improve recycling rates in Stevenage. A major problem with moving forward on any new recycling options, including co-mingling of recycling, is that the Council is still waiting for the Government to finalise the Resources and Waste Strategy. The Council needs to understand the outcome to determine what requirements the Government will place on local authorities.

Whatever steps the Council takes to encourage recycling it should be viewed in the

'Waste Hierarchy' terms, with 'use less' and 'reuse' being the priorities above recycling.

Julia Hill stated that the Council promotes recycling in various ways such as at Stevenage Day and going into schools to promote it. As part of waste management, the environmental team are working with the communications team on a comms plan.

Flats and recycling

Julia Hill informed Members that recycling in flat blocks is a challenge for all local authorities. There would be a pilot in 6 areas of Stevenage during 2022/23. Residents in those flats are currently being consulted to find out why they don't currently recycle and/or how we can help them recycle more. The results of this consultation will inform how we deliver improvements for these sites, for some it might be signage needed and some targeted leaflets could be produced. Part of the approach will be to invite residents to be recycling champions. Officers would support them to take on this role.

Some Members stated that they did not accept that residents in flats should not be expected to recycle and suggested that there should be an expectation on all residents to recycle. Julia Hill agreed with this; there is an expectation that all residents should recycle, but there is also recognition that those living in flats might find it more difficult.

Separation or co-mingling of recycling

A Member suggested that the separation of waste was a barrier to recycling and queried whether Stevenage was the only council in Hertfordshire that requires residents to do this? The Members asked if there had been a financial comparison done to show what the cost is per head and whether there was a net cost benefit of our approach vs other authorities in the County's approach? It was stated by a Member that Basildon has one bag for all dry recycling and that they state that there are additional costs to separate it. Who is right and who is wrong? In response Officers said they would need to see the specific details of each offer side by side to be able to adequately comment on this.

A Member asked if there had been any specific engagement with Ward Councillors in the pilot flat block? Julia Hill said that officers hadn't engaged with the specific ward Councillors so far but was open to doing so as they could help get the message out to residents in the flats who are taking part in the survey. Members asked for ward by ward % please of the outcome of the survey and pilots. Officers agreed to provide this when it was available.

A Councillor suggested that they would support less bins and was concerned that the focus should be on using less and reusing above recycling which was no 3 in the Government's hierarchy for waste. The Member suggested that flats actually use less waste compared to large properties and households. If larger household, who generate more waste recycle more, they are still creating more waste. When the Herts Waste Partnership publish their figures, they should put the amount of waste

produced per district first as the top figure then followed by the percentage of that waste that is recycled in the area.

A Member asked about data on residents' re-use of items. Julia Hill stated that measuring reuse is very difficult as it isn't data that is readily available. The Council can measure recycling as it collects and weighs it. The Council will look to promote reuse as it's a positive aspect of the waste hierarchy.

A Member asked what type of flat blocks were included in the pilot and survey? Is there a height restriction for the flat blocks included in it? Is it SBC tenants only or will it include private dwellings or Housing Associations?

A Member said that fair comparisons from one district to another was difficult as socio economic factors also have a part to play. Unfortunately, recycling, and other climate change, and other environmental considerations become a less significant issue for people to focus on if they are preoccupied with concerns about rent and food costs in low wage high inflation economy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report on improved recycling was noted.

6 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.

The Chair reminded Members that there would be an informal meeting between Committee Members and representatives of the local Friends of the Earth organisation on Monday 24 October and the next committee meeting would focus on interviews with the Hertfordshire County Council Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment and the Chair of the Hertfordshire Sustainability Partnership on 17 November.

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

7 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

8 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Not required.

9 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 2 November 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 11 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The Select Committee interviewed the Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development in respect of void properties.

The Chair referred to a series of questions she had asked in advance, and to which the Portfolio Holder had answered. These had been circulated to Members of the Select Committee, and the Chair stated that they would form the basis of any supplementary questions asked at the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder's (and officers') responses to a series of supplementary questions and statements included the following:

- there was a requirement for recruitment of both front line operatives and support staff to bring the repairs service back up to a full complement;
- it was planned to introduce a cyclical service of gutter cleansing in the near future, which was an example of enhancing the focus on planned/cyclical preventative maintenance works;
- statistics would be provided on the number of housing tenants who vacate properties without leaving any forwarding address details;

- the legalities of imposing a form of deposit system would be investigated, as would a possible incentive scheme to reward tenants for leaving a property in a decent condition;
- Repairs Team response times were monitored by the Executive on a quarterly basis. In terms of fencing, the Team was geared up to respond to fencing repairs e.g. a broken panel, rather than demands for the installation of replacement runs of fencing. The fencing policy would be reviewed. Officers were seeking to enhance the delivery of planned and cyclical maintenance through the HRA Business Plan, which would better maintain the assets, and reduce the reliance on the repairs service;
- in respect of benchmarking with comparable authorities with its own housing stock, it was confirmed that a meeting had been set up for this purpose with officers of Welwyn Hatfield District Council; and
- of the average of 80 voids per quarter, these properties were at various stages of review before repairs commenced (some jobs were carried out in-house and others by external sub-contractors). This was managed through the Northgate IT system, which was currently under review regarding data quality, inputting and reporting.

The Chair invited the Housing Operations Manager (Providing Homes) to give a short slide presentation on housing voids – refusal of Council houses. The Select Committee was advised that 57 general needs properties had been let between April and September 2022 (Quarters 1 and 2). Of these, 10 properties were refused by prospective tenants, some more than once.

The Housing Operations Manager (Providing Homes) explained the reasons for these refusals, including not meeting expectations; some areas were seen as less desirable; fear of heights and/or anti-social behaviour in high rise flat blocks; the poor aesthetic condition of properties (cleanliness, decorative state, condition of kitchens/bathrooms); no space for washing machine; garden too large to manage; and incorrect information available about the property.

The Housing Operations Manager (Providing Homes) stated that the focus on improvement to address some of the above issues would include the Investment Team reviewing the elements of each property; an updated Asset Management Strategy, targeting more funding through the HRA Business Plan towards cyclical/planned preventative maintenance works; Repairs Service review; increased tenancy audits; lettable standard review; re-engineering the lettings process; and benchmarking with a comparable housing stock holding authority.

In response to a question regarding Choice Based Lettings, the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development stated that this system had operated for the past 10-12 years. With regard to bidding on properties, the assisted bidding process was available for vulnerable groups, whereby applicants from these groups could be helped by officers. In extreme circumstances, the direct process could also be used.

4 FEEDBACK FROM THE MEMBER SITE VISIT TO VOID PROPERTIES - 13 OCTOBER 2022

The Select Committee considered a report providing feedback from Member site

visits to three void properties on 13 October 2022.

Although not a Member of the Select Committee, Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren, accompanied by Councillors Stephen Booth, Jim Brown (who had attended the second site visit to Homestead Moat) and officers, had visited these properties. The councillors provided feedback on these visits, which included:

- walls were not freshly painted – officers advised that it could cost up to £3,000 for a professional re-painting of the whole property, including the glossing of all the replaced internal doors, although it was reported by officers that it would be considerably less than this if the property was simply whitewashed. The amount of cleaning/re-decorating and repairs, including clearing the garden and property of extensive rubbish, replacement of all internal wooden doors, new bathroom and floor, toilet and replacement kitchen units and new ceiling required for the property visited in Homestead Moat had cost in the region of £13,000 so far;
- the Repairs service was understaffed for the number of voids coming through the system;
- the property visited in Homestead Moat needed a thorough cleaning out, with a shed that required removal;
- Councillor Ashley-Wren had visited a further property with the SDS Commercial & Contracts Manager. The garden at this property required extensive attention and officers had estimated that the cost of clearing the garden area and rectifying the interior was approximately £25,000;
- although new tenants were provided with a £250 decorating voucher, it was considered that the baseline condition of the properties they were moving into needed improvement (noting that the current Lettable Standard was part of the wider review); and
- there appeared to be cost-cutting involved in replacing items, for example replacing wooden fence posts with similar, rather than with concrete posts.

The Chair thanked the Members for their feedback. In opening the item for questions and discussion, the following emerged:

- officers agreed to look into the reasons and report back as to why one of the visited properties had been empty for over a year. In some void cases, the occupants may have moved out, but had not formally ended their tenancy;
- some ancillary items, such as the removal of the not fit for purpose shed identified at one of the properties, could be carried out after the new tenants were in situ, rather than holding up the letting process;
- it was confirmed that the Lettable Standard was in the process of being reviewed;
- officers advised that pre-void inspections and completion inspections were carried out. An issue picked up at the Homestead Moat property concerning defective-looking guttering, and damp inside the property, had not been indicative of a problem, although this would be double-checked;
- assurances were given that the properties would meet the current Lettable Standard by the time they were handed over to tenants;
- the void-letting process required revision, including a review of the Lettable Standard, following appropriate benchmarking;

- the Schedule of Rates for repairs and redecorating should be reviewed;
- the overall inspection regime should be improved. For example, there should be a requirement for non-Repairs Team operatives (Tenancy Officers, Gas Boiler engineers, etc.) to flag up issues relating to the condition of properties when they visited, and report them back to the Repairs Team;
- although it was acknowledged that potential occupants had to be educated in ways to look after their homes properly, although it was felt that this was the responsibility of families and schools rather than SBC, as there were no resources/finances to assist in this regard;
- it appeared obvious that the Repairs Team was under-staffed, and that the Council could not afford to match the pay offered by the Private Sector, which potentially increases the amount of works that had to be sub-contracted;
- the introduction of a higher Lettable Standard (and therefore higher costs) could equate to the need to increase rents, or even some form of tenants' deposit;
- there was a need to keep in touch with tenants on a regular basis, perhaps through newsletters; and
- officers had commenced work on process mapping to map a Voids repair from start to finish. The Operations Director agreed to share this process mapping information at the next meeting of the Select Committee.

5 UPDATE MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR HOUSING VOIDS REVIEW

The Select Committee considered an updated mapping exercise document for the Housing Voids review.

In reply to a question from the Chair, the Operations Director advised that the intention would be report back to the January 2023 meeting of the Committee on a number of issues contained in the document, including re-engineering the letting process; a better definition of the thresholds for stand voids; and reviewing the lettable standards.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development acknowledged that up to date statistics would be vital to the work on improving the voids process, including within a certain timescale (say the previous 6 months) how many were standard voids and how many were major voids; and how quickly (typically) were voids turned around and brought back into use.

The Scrutiny Officer clarified that the mapping document was for the scrutiny review of voids, as distinct to any possible future mapping of the actual voids process.

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

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 17 November 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm

Time: End Time: 7.44pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Stephen Booth.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 20 OCTOBER 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 20 October 2022 be approved for signature by the Chair.

3 **INTERVIEWS WITH HCC EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO FOR ENVIRONMENT & CHAIR OF HERTFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY PANEL**

Members received a presentation from Hertfordshire County Council Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Eric Buckmaster and from the Chair of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), Councillor Graham McAndrew.

Councillor McAndrew advised that the HCCSP had been formed in January 2020 following the Herts Leaders' Group had considered a report setting out opportunities for collaborative working on climate change at a county level. The Stevenage representative on the Partnership was Councillor Simon Speller, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, supported by the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation, Zayd Al-Jawad.

The following points were made by Cllr McAndrew:

- the key aim of the HCCSP was to develop county level interventions to support local efforts that all Councils were making to meet their respective climate change targets. The HCCSP respected local District /Borough and

Herts County Council Climate Change Plans and strategies and did not seek to duplicate effort.

- the broad linkages between HCCSP and the other key groups within the county in particular Herts Growth Board, the Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) and the relatively recently formed Infrastructure and Development Forum;
- HCCSP had approved four action plans – carbon reduction, water, transport and biodiversity. Cllr McAndrew informed the Committee of practical examples from each of the action plans. The fifth plan on behaviour change was in draft form and currently out to stakeholders for feedback, and a sixth topic on Adaptation was shaping up with a clear focus now in place.
- Examples of what HCCSP had worked on included:
 - shared communication campaigns such as the Affinity Water ‘Save our Streams’ campaign and Clean Air Day which covered interventions to address engine idling;
 - collective lobbying on issues including single use plastics, sewage discharge and sustainable drainage;
 - the delivery of climate and carbon literacy training to partner organisations as well as the delivery of on-line events with external speakers;
- A publicly available calendar for events had been produced;
- Regular meetings were held between HCCSP’s Co-ordinator and all Comms leads from districts and boroughs to disseminate information and share learning;
- Collaborative working opportunities on projects such as EV infrastructure roll out and shifting Private Hire Vehicles and Hackney Carriages to low emission vehicles.

The Chair then invited Councillor Eric Buckmaster to respond to the questions set from the Committee for this session.

1. Where can local authorities turn to for financial assistance, to assist the transition to net zero and is there a real risk that actions that are required now will be delayed because of other priorities?

There were a number of opportunities for Local Authorities to access funding from external partners and via Government funded schemes from sources including the LGA, BEIS, OZEV, DEFRA, Forestry Commission, and Natural England.

Members were encouraged to hear about the network of sharing information around funding opportunities and were encouraged if they had not already done so to look at downloading the Energy Saving Trust Heat App.

2. What plans are there in Hertfordshire regarding upskilling and training opportunities for a green economy in the County?

The provision of Green Skills was a key and growing area for the LEP going forward. An Environment and Green Careers profile page for HOP (Hertfordshire’s Opportunity Portal) had been created to encourage residents

(particularly young people) to go into green careers. Working with FE Colleges and major landowners/ developers to develop and deliver a coordinated and consistent approach from pre-construction, construction and post construction phases of the Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter and Hemel Garden Communities developments.

A question was asked regarding the capacity and skills gap in the local area for the green industry. Julie Greaves, HCC Head of Sustainability, advised that the skills gap in this area was recognised but that the college and LEP was working towards filling this gap.

In response to a question, members were advised that any net zero new builds were not regularly monitored but the responsibility of the building occupier to maintain the net zero standard.

3. How are you reaching out to influence partners, residents and businesses in Hertfordshire towards our shared climate change ambitions?

HCCSP has worked closely with partners in developing the strategic action plans for water, biodiversity, carbon and transport. Communities, partners and businesses have benefitted from free training delivered by HCCSP. Behaviour change projects were planned to engage on key issues identified by Communications Strategy. An Autumn Event for community stakeholders to be held in November would feature behaviour change breakout groups and advice and insight on community resilience and adaptation.

SBC have been active members of HCCSP since its inception and are represented at the HSOG and HCCSP and actively participate in discussions. Matt Partridge is the lead officer for climate change for EELGA and represents the Herts Chief Exec Group at the HCCSP executive meetings and also represents the County at the East of England LGA Climate Change Forum.

Members agreed that although the work undertaken so far was effective in engaging partners, organisations and groups, the general public also needed to be empowered to make the change to behaviour and sustainability.

4. What actions would you highlight as the most significant towards Hertfordshire Councils achieving their Net Zero ambitions, specifically regarding (i) domestic housing and (ii) transport?

It was noted that there were some actions that are within the control of Local Authorities and which may be easier and cheaper to implement than others, eg switching energy suppliers to a renewable contract, updating of heating controls, switching to LED lights, cavity wall insulation, double glazing, replacing gas boilers with heat pumps etc.

It was noted that all local authorities were now being looked at in terms of the potential retrofitting of housing stock but the knowledge and skills gap

alongside the lack of funding was a major issue for Councils.

Julie Greaves, HCC Head of Sustainability, stated that it was accepted across local government that legislation on building control measures needed to be tighter on developers for new builds moving towards carbon neutrality. All now agree that there should be PV solar panel on all new builds and Passivhaus Standards.

In relation to transport, the aim was to get a draft Local Transport Plan for public consultation and final adoption in May 2024. The main focus for HCC was supporting the local bus market through bidding opportunities to access electric bus investment. The first electric vehicle would also be running on HertsLynx (with some stops in Stevenage and the surrounding area) in the coming months and used as an opportunity to learn lessons on its operation and efficiency.

Members agreed the importance of increasing the patronage of the bus service but this would not happen until there was an improvement in the service both in terms of reliability and cost. Transport also needed to be looked at holistically with trains, coaches and buses linking up.

5. What mitigations and adaptations over the current decade and beyond do you see might be necessary if the global target of keeping temperature increases to 1.5 degrees centigrade this century is not achieved?

There was a statutory obligation on councils to prepare for and minimise the longer-term impacts of climate change. This was reinforced by expectations for community resilience and business continuity by both residents and businesses.

Through an Adaptation Sub-Group, work would be undertaken to facilitate councils' adaptation plans, identify key risk leads and provide them with the necessary guidance and direction using the Local Partnerships adaptation toolkit as a guide. HCCSP members would be maintained as informed advocates to cascade the importance and urgency of this piece of work, while providing managerial support that officers in the sub-group would need to support delivery of this work.

Members agreed the importance of recognising the needs of some residents during extreme heat periods as well as extreme cold weather. Julie Greaves, HCC Head of Sustainability, advised that HCC had an extreme weather plan for summer heatwaves and winter extreme cold. Officers at HCC were working on adaptations. However, not many local authorities had embraced adaptations yet, but this needs to become a 'business as usual' activity in all authorities. Julie agreed to share with Members the HCC extreme heat and cold plans.

6. From what you know about Stevenage Borough Council's efforts to move the area to net zero, how would you describe the Council's

strategies and progress so far to move towards Net Zero? What areas should SBC be looking to improve upon?

SBC had declared a climate emergency in 2019 and have a strategy in place based on the principles of Lead, Enable and Inspire which is similar to the HCC strategy and action plan. The Plan had been prepared with community engagement, youth engagement and input from Friends of the Earth and University of Hertfordshire. SBC was an active member of HCCSP and provided input to the officer meetings and delivery of the regional work.

7. Across Hertfordshire do you think climate change yet has the priority it needs?

The County Council and the ten District and Borough Councils have either declared a climate emergency or passed a motion recognising the importance of climate action. All LA's were progressing with their individual climate action plans in addition to actively working on countywide plans. All LAs were represented on the HCCSP and HSOG and provided officer support and resources to work on the subject specific topic groups. A Behaviour Change Strategic Action Plan was presented to and agreed by HCCSP at its meeting in January 2022 and approved by partners in June 2022. It was advised that cost could be a barrier to success being achieved in this area. Accordingly, this will need to be given thought as the interventions were scoped. Officers were now working internally to develop climate adaptation plans, using a Local Partnerships toolkit, in anticipation of subsequently developing a county-wide risk assessment if deemed appropriate.

The Chair thanked Councillors McAndrew and Buckmaster for their presentations who advised that any further feedback could be shared via the Chief Executive, Matt Partridge or the Climate Change Portfolio Holder Councillor Simon Speller.

4 UPDATED MAPPING EXERCISE DOCUMENT FOR THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW

The Scrutiny officer presented an updated Mapping Exercise Document for the Climate Emergency Review for noting and any potential additions.

In response to a question regarding how the Council would know that the work on sustainability was making a difference, Members were advised that indicators provided by the Government were regularly reported to Members although 12 months behind. The last update had been included in the October Executive report.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a productive meeting had been held with Members of the Youth Council.

The Chair advised the Committee that in addition to the Climate Change Scrutiny Review he was keen for the Committee to look at the Cost of Living Crisis and in particular from the viewpoint of residents, local businesses as well as the Council. It was suggested that a presentation from the Citizen's Advice Bureau could also help

the Committee get a clear view of the implications for residents.

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

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Leader of the Council
Date 7 December 2022



COST OF LIVING CRISIS RESPONSE

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Executive on the progress that Stevenage Borough Council and partners made in implementing the action plan agreed by Executive in October 2022 in response to the cost of living crisis in this country

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the updates to the Action Plan, attached at Appendix A, are noted.
- 2.2 That the Council continues to work with key local partners, including through the Stevenage Together Partnership, to develop a co-ordinated response across agencies to support residents, businesses and community groups
- 2.3 That further cost of living progress updates will be reported as part of the quarterly Corporate Performance and Budget Monitoring Reports. The next of these, for Quarter 3 of 2022/23, will be in March 2023.

- 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 continue to be closely monitored and reported to Executive as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and budget setting process.

3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 As reported to Executive in October 2022, 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; and 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 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.
- 3.4 Executive approved a draft Action Plan for Stevenage at its meeting in October. This plan set out how the Council and its partners would continue to respond to the cost of living crisis, and mitigate the potential impacts on residents, businesses, council employees and Council finances as much as possible.
- 3.5 This report sets out the most significant announcements and changes since the previous report in October, as well as progress in implementing the actions agreed at that meeting.
- 3.6 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 Co-operative Council.

4 AUTUMN BUDGET STATEMENT

- 4.1 The Chancellor presented an Autumn Budget Statement to Parliament on 17 November 2022. The statement was intended to provide some certainty for households, businesses and the financial markets are a turbulent period, and set out the support that would be available as well as how this support would be funded.
- 4.2 The Budget Statement was wide ranging, with the elements of most relevance to residents, businesses and the Council including:

Cost of Living

- Benefits to rise in line with inflation figure from September (10.1%)

- Pensions also to rise by 10.1% from April, sticking to the “triple lock” commitment
- National Living Wage for over-23’s to increase from £9.50/hour to £10.42 from April
- Targeted support for Cost of Living with additional payments of:
 - £900 for those on means-tested benefits
 - £300 to pensioner households
 - £150 to those on disability benefits
- Help for households through Energy Price Guarantee scheme will be extended for 12 months from April, but be less generous – the average household bill will rise to £3,000 per annum, up from £2,000 but lower than predicted £3,700 without Government help
- Freezing tax allowances and thresholds until 2028 (extended from 2026) so more people will pay higher levels of tax sooner – tax personal allowance, higher rate threshold, inheritance tax thresholds all stay the same, highest rate tax threshold reduced from £150k to £125k
- Commitment to people raising their income, with support for over 600k people on Universal Credit to meet with a work coach to help increase their hours and/or earnings
- Rent rises in the social rented sector capped at 7%

Energy / Environment

- Increased windfall tax on energy companies from 25% to 35%, extended to March 2028.
- Will also be a 40% tax on profits of older renewable and nuclear electricity generation
- Reaffirmed Government commitment to climate change measures, including a 68% reduction in emissions by 2030
- Will also double investment in energy efficiency of homes and businesses by £6bn from 2025
- Electric vehicles will no longer be exempt from road tax from April 2025.

Business

- Almost £14bn reduction on business rates, benefiting about 700k businesses nationally
- From 1 April 2023, business rate bills in England will be updated to reflect changes in property values since the last revaluation in 2017. A package of support worth £13.6 billion over the next 5 years will support businesses as they transition to their new bills
- Employment Allowance threshold retained at £5k
- 40% of all firms will pay no national insurance contributions at all
- Investment Zones will be kept focused in “left behind areas” to build growth clusters, with more detail to be announced in the Spring Budget
- Tariffs will be cut to support business supply chains

Local Government

- Likely to see a spending squeeze as a result of all Government departments being asked to reduce costs, with the exception of health
 - Departmental spending commitments in 2021 spending round will be kept, and will grow at 1% per annum in the 3 years that follow
 - Extra £2.3bn per year for education in 2023/24 and 2024/25
 - £1bn next year and £1.7bn the year after for social care, funded by savings from delaying reforms
 - £3.3bn extra for NHS, but expectation of finding efficiency savings from improved ways of working and less waste – but not impacting frontline
 - Councils will be able to raise Council Tax by up to 3% without the need for a referendum, plus an additional up to 2% social care levy for those councils providing social care (Hertfordshire County Council in this county).
- 4.3 The full impact of these announcements is currently being worked through by Officers, including the impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting for 2023/4 onwards. Executive will be kept informed of the outcome of this modelling as the impact becomes clearer.
- 4.4 At a headline level, the additional support for residents and businesses is very welcome, but is unlikely to fully mitigate the pressures that are being faced. The country has now entered a recession that is expected to last for some time, and there are predictions that unemployment is likely to rise in 2023 at the same time that living standards are predicted to fall by 7% over the next 2 years.
- 4.5 The implementation of changes to business rates will be closely monitored to track the impact on local businesses. It is hoped that the transitional funding announced will mean any reductions will be made in full, whilst increases will be staggered to lessen the immediate impact and to allow businesses to adjust. It is also important that there is an explicit commitment that local authorities will be fully compensated for the loss of income as a result of all business rates measures announced in the Autumn Statement and will receive new burdens funding for administrative and IT costs incurred in implementing them.
- 4.6 From a council perspective, the greater flexibility to raise council tax by 3%, raising the cap on social housing rent to 7% and positive news about income from business rates is also welcome, but has to be considered alongside the impact this will have on residents and businesses. As a stock-holding
- 4.7 Further announcements will come in the Local Government Finance Settlement anticipated to be announced later in December and confirmed in February 2023, but overall the measures in the Autumn Statement will not significantly relieve the financial pressures local government is experiencing. The District Councils Network predict district councils will face a total collective budget shortfall of over £900m across 2022-23 and 2023-24, due to rising inflation, rising demand and pay pressures
- 4.8 As a result, the Council will continue to face difficult decisions how best to continue to help local residents and businesses with cost-of-living pressures whilst also setting a balanced budget.

5 LOCAL INTELLIGENCE

- 5.1 The Council continues to monitor the impact of the cost of living crisis locally, and share this information with partners. In particular, a cost of living dashboard has been developed jointly with Citizen's Advice Stevenage, and also including information from other partners such as Mind in Mid-Herts as well as nationally available data.
- 5.2 In addition to the overall impact mentioned above and reported nationally, four key trends are emerging from the data:
- **Tenant rent arrears** has increased by 13.32% since Quarter 1 of 2022/23, with 71% of this arrears attributable to tenants in receipt of welfare benefits (Universal Credit and Housing Benefit). There is also an increase in the numbers of complex cases, with people seeing a change in financial circumstances, multiple debts, need for urgent support, and associated health and wellbeing concerns. This also makes people more susceptible to scams and fraud, with targeted advice and support needed.
 - **Domestic abuse referrals** to SADA and the NO More Service have also seen a significant increase, up 88% compared to 12 months ago. This trend is likely to reflect heightened pressures that households are facing, and mirrors similar increases during the Covid-19 pandemic and previous economic downturn in 2008.
 - **Discretionary Housing Payment requests** are increasing significantly with almost 300 received between April and September this year. This comes at the same time as the funding the Council receives has reduced by almost 30% and the Government has raised the threshold for support. This means that more tenants are being refused support (11% in Quarter 1), and those that are successful are getting less money.
 - The number of **Council Tax Support Scheme claimants** has reduced by almost 10% compared to 2021/22, at the same time as Citizens Advice are seeing an increasing number of clients with council tax arrears (35% increase comparing August 2021 to August 2022). Targeted communications to increase awareness of the support available are underway.
- 5.3 This information is being used to inform partners, and to help shape further targeted support and action in response.

6 PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The Council is also concentrating on 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
- 6.3 An update showing progress against the previously agreed action plan is attached as Appendix A.
- 6.4 Particular highlights worth drawing attention to include:

Residents

- The Cost of Living Hub on the website continues to be reviewed and updated as more relevant information is released locally and nationally. The layout of the site has been amended to make it easier to navigate.
- Leaflets about the support available have been developed jointly with Citizen's Advice Stevenage and are being distributed by the Council Income Team.
- The Council is now part of the Money Advisor Network to broaden offer and ability to refer people for support, including training for Income Officers, referral routes and access for staff to complement existing Employee Assistance offering
- The Stevenage Warm Spaces Network launched in November, promoting opportunities in council-owned buildings across the town as well as those offered by voluntary and public sector partners. The focus is having Warm Spaces as close to people's homes as possible, that there is a good spread throughout the week and across the town, and there is the option of meaningful activities and advice as well as some spaces that are simply available for people to sit and spend time. The scheme is being promoted both online and via community noticeboards, direct mail, the Chronicle magazine and through community partners, recognising the target audience may not use our website. The Stevenage scheme is aligned with the Herts County Council offer, unlocking potential support and funding as well as wider promotion through the online directory.
- Cost of Living Crisis event hosted by Reed in Partnership at Argyle Way on 18 October, supported by the Council's No More Service and SADA. This was aimed at their clients, but was also open more widely.
- The Council also supported a mental health and wellbeing event "Creating a resilient mind-set and face every challenge" on 15 November in partnership with ActionCoach.

Businesses

- Businesses are being signposted to the Herts Growth Board online hub as a key source of support and advice.
- The Hertfordshire Growth Hub has launched a 'Cost of Living Business Survey', which SBC is helping to raise awareness of and will benefit from the findings and feedback. The Hub recognises that local businesses and

employers are also facing similar challenges to those of their staff, with rising costs and other inflationary pressures.

- All commercial tenants are being proactively contacted and individual circumstances reviewed where appropriate

Council Employees

- A dedicated online hub for staff is now live and being regularly updated, including financial advice and signposting to the Council's Employee Assistance Programme should people want to access it. This content has been shared with other local authorities who are interested in replicating it.
- The national pay award was agreed and is now being implemented as swiftly as possible for all staff. It will be backdated to April.

Council Finances

- The Council continues to model the adverse impact of the crisis on council finances, and in particular rising inflation and energy costs, the higher than anticipated pay award for staff, reductions in income including rent arrears and council tax as well as parking (for example), and the impact on tenants and leaseholders.
- This modelling links to reviews of the MTFs, Housing Revenue Account and budget setting conversations for 2023/24, and reflects announcements as part of the Autumn Budget statement on 17 November.
- Engagement with existing suppliers is ongoing to understand current and predicted situation. The pipeline of upcoming contracts is also being reviewed to understand where potential increases and challenges in procuring competitive suppliers may come, and where increases to budget may be needed
- Communications to residents are underway setting out the impact of current financial situation on the Council and the potential impact on council tax

Governance, collaboration and oversight

- The Executive Member Working Group and Officer Working Group continue to meet regularly and oversee the response to the crisis.
- All Councillors have been briefed in writing, about the support that is available to them and to residents and businesses, and an all-Member Briefing on 7 November was well attended.
- Two meetings of the Stevenage Together Partnership have taken place to share intelligence and planned actions. Examples of partnership working include promoting the social value benefits to local businesses of supporting the warm spaces scheme, development of "full financial MOT's" for residents and reinvigorating healthy eating and cooking programmes run by Stevenage FC Football Foundation and Step 2 Skills.
- A dashboard has been developed and is being regularly updated and reviewed by the Welfare Reform Group and Cost of Living Officer Working Group. This includes input and data from partners including Citizen's Advice and has already helped to identify key trends such as increases in rent arrears, domestic abuse referrals and requests for

Discretionary Housing Payments as well as reductions in council tax collection and requests for Council Tax Support.

7 FURTHER ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 The Environment and Economy Select Committee is scoping a review into the cost of living crisis. Whilst appreciating the Committee's desire to understand the impact of the crisis locally, Officers are supporting the scoping to ensure it is mindful of the exceptional challenges and pressures being faced by the Council, the fact the crisis is evolving and developing, and the capacity needed to report in detail to multiple bodies. To avoid duplicating the focus of the existing Executive Member and Officer Working Groups and the Stevenage Together Partnership, it is proposed that information and updates will also be shared with the Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee.

8 NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 The ongoing implementation of the action plan will continue to be overseen by the Executive Member Working Group, supported by the Officer Working Group.
- 8.2 The ongoing 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 further relevant announcements from Government and other sources, and any funding that is made available.
- 8.4 Further cost of living progress updates will be reported as part of the quarterly Corporate Performance and Budget Monitoring Reports. The next of these, for Quarter 3 of 2022/23, will be in March 2023.
- 8.5 The Stevenage Together Partnership will continue to coordinate joint responses to the cost of living crisis and is scheduled to meet again early in 2023.

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 the ongoing response to the cost of living crisis, as have partners through the Stevenage Together Partnership.
- 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 The adverse financial implications highlighted in this report will be further developed and monitored as part of the financial modelling linked to the MTFS and budget setting for 2023/24.
- 10.1.2 Officers responsible for delivering the actions set out within this report continue to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.
- 10.1.3 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.

10.2 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: Cost of Living Action Plan Progress Update November 2022.

Appendix A –Cost of Living Action Plan Progress Update November 2022

Residents			
Action	Timescale	Owner	Update November 2022
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	<p>Website continues to be reviewed and updated as more relevant information is released locally and nationally</p> <p>Layout of site has been amended to make it easier to navigate</p> <p>Leaflets about the support available have been developed jointly with Citizen’s Advice Stevenage and are being distributed by the Council Income Team.</p> <p>Specific advice on avoiding scams has been shared on social media, including links to the Herts County Council scheme on fraud awareness. Information will also be included with rent notification letters in early 2023</p>
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 / Co-operative Neighbourhoods	<p>Continue to develop and promote the range of support available and offering “full financial MOT’s” as part of any contact with clients referred for welfare support</p> <p>The Council is now part of the Money Advisor Network to broaden offer and ability to refer people for support, including training for Income Officers, referral routes and access for staff to complement existing Employee Assistance offering</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>November 2022</p>	<p>Cooperative Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Stevenage Warm Spaces Network launched in November, promoting opportunities in council-owned buildings across the town as well as those offered by voluntary and public sector partners. The scheme is being promoted both online and via community noticeboards, direct mail, the Chronicle magazine and through community partners.</p> <p>The Stevenage scheme is aligned with the Herts County Council offer, unlocking potential support and funding as well as wider promotion through the online directory</p>
<p>Advice to help people with cooking on a budget, including links to Step to Skills to develop learning opportunities</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>Co-operative Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Step to Skills are actively exploring the option to run courses locally</p> <p>Stevenage FC Foundation are also looking to provide more information on their cooking classes as part of the healthy hub programme of work, and link to further funding opportunities to improve sustainability</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>January 2023</p>	<p>Planning and Regulation / Communications and Marketing</p>	<p>Cost of Living Crisis event hosted by Reed in Partnership at Argyle Way on 18th October, supported by SBC No More Service and SADA. This was aimed at their clients, but also open more widely.</p> <p>The Council also supported a mental health and wellbeing event – “Create a resilient mind-set and face every challenge” event on 15 November in partnership with ActionCoach.</p> <p>Further events are planned for early 2023</p>

Businesses and Community Groups			
Action	Timescale	Owner	Update November 2022
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	Businesses are being signposted to the Herts Growth Board online hub as a key source of support and advice which is constantly being reviewed and updated
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	The Hertfordshire Growth Hub has launched a 'Cost of Living Business Survey' to help understand and address the issues businesses are currently facing and plan for future support requirements. The Council is helping to raise awareness of the survey and will benefit from the findings and feedback, which will also be used to lobby BEIS for further support for businesses
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	All council tenants are being proactively contacted and individual circumstances reviewed where appropriate The impact of reductions in business rates announced in the Autumn Budget Statement is also being reviewed

Council Employees			
Action	Timescale	Owner	Update November 2022
Develop an online information and support hub promoting the internal and external information, advice, support available to employees	November 2022	HR	Online hub for staff is now live and being regularly updated. This content has been shared with other local authorities who are interested in replicating it.
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	Internal communication with staff is underway to raise awareness of issues and the support available should they need it, and an all-staff briefing is planned to further explain this The Employee Assistance Programme and Good Shape are providing metrics on staff usage. Good Shape is also signposting staff to financial support services.
Implement the outcome of the national pay review, once confirmed following consultation with the Unions	January 2023	HR	The national pay award was agreed by 2 of the 3 unions, and is now being implemented. It will be backdated to April.
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	This is linked to the online information hub for staff, and reminders to managers of the support available for employees.

Council Finances			
Action	Timescale	Owner	Update November 2022
Modelling impact of inflation and other rising costs on Council budgets, in year and for 2023/24	January 2023	Finance	<p>Modelling work continues, linked to reviews of the MTFs, HRA and budget setting conversations for 2023/24. This reflects announcements as part of the Autumn Budget statement on 17 November, including raising the Council Tax threshold, extending the energy price guarantee, and setting the social rent cap limit at 7%.</p> <p>Communications to residents are underway setting out the impact of current financial situation on the Council and the potential impact on council tax</p>
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	Engagement with existing suppliers is ongoing to understand current and predicted situation. The pipeline of upcoming contracts is also being reviewed to understand where potential increases and challenges in procuring competitive suppliers may come, and where increases to budget may be needed
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	This was considered and approved by Executive on 12/10/2022, and work on the bid is ongoing.

<p>Modelling the impact of energy increases in the charges to tenants and leaseholders, to consider how best to support people with managing costs</p>	<p>December 2022</p>	<p>Finance</p>	<p>Modelling work continues, linked to reviews of the MTFs, HRA and budget setting conversations for 2023/24</p> <p>600+ tenants will not be covered by district heating scheme and won't get an energy rebate. Financial pressures are likely to lead to more communities wanting help, more homeless presentations, impact on our fees and charges e.g. service charges.</p> <p>Details of how the latest energy payments to residents and businesses will be paid through the recently announced Energy Bills Support Scheme and alternative funding support for those who do not have a domestic electricity meter or a direct relationship with an energy supplier are also awaited, and if required to be distributed by the Council this will be done as swiftly as possible</p>
<p>Governance, collaboration and oversight</p>			
<p>Action</p>	<p>Timescale</p>	<p>Owner</p>	<p>Update November 2022</p>
<p>Continue to work through the Stevenage Together Partnership to share learning and best practice and to co-ordinate activity where appropriate</p>	<p>January 2023</p>	<p>Corporate Policy</p>	<p>Two meetings of the Stevenage Together Partnership have focused on the cost of living crisis, and shared detail of the evidence organisations are gathering about the impact locally.</p> <p>Examples of partnership working include promoting the social value benefits to local businesses of supporting the warm spaces scheme, development of "full financial MOT's" for residents and reinvigorating</p>

			<p>healthy eating and cooking programmes run by Stevenage FC Football Foundation and Step 2 Skills.</p> <p>The next Stevenage Together Meeting is planned for January 2023. All partners have been asked to continue sharing issues they are identifying, and actions they are taking in response to the crisis.</p>
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	Continue to link with others. Primary link currently is to the countywide Warmer Spaces work being led by Herts County Council, and the online directory and funding schemes in partnership with Herts Community Foundation and Communities 1 st .
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	<p>Dashboard has been developed and is being regularly updated and reviewed by the Welfare Reform Group and Cost of Living Officer Working Group. It includes input and data from partners including Citizen's Advice and is also being aligned with the countywide dashboard being developed by Herts County Council</p> <p>Key trends are included within report to Executive in December, and were shared with Stevenage Together Partnership in November.</p>
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	Co-operative Neighbourhoods	This work is currently being scoped.

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Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date December 2022



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2022/23

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter two 2022/23 and provide an update on the current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Members information, a presentation will be provided at the Executive meeting which will cover updates in relation to delivery against FTFC Cooperative Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the quarter two performance data.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A) and service performance across the key themes for quarter two 2022/23 (Appendix B), be noted.
- 2.2 That the strategic risk updates be noted.

- 2.3 That the performance challenges in relation to housing voids, customer services and human resources are noted, and the planned measures to improve performance are endorsed.
- 2.4 That the Executive Action Tracker at Appendix D be noted.

3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 This report covers progress in quarter two against the Corporate Performance Suite that was agreed by the Executive in July 2022.
- 3.2 Many of the programmes and key performance measures are a continuation from previous years. As such, we continue to build on a strong programme of Future Town Future Council (FTFC) activity, and a predominantly positive performance base. For more information, please refer to the Quarter 4 Performance Report and the Annual Report (21/22) presented to the Executive in July 2022.
- 3.3 There are some areas where performance is not yet at the desired levels, specifically housing voids, customer service and human resources. Improvement Plans, which set out how officers are seeking to address the performance concerns, are in place and are regularly monitored. The plans are owned by the relevant service and overseen by the responsible Portfolio Holder. Performance Clinic sessions are also held on a quarterly basis at which progress against Improvement Plan is monitored, and further potential improvement activity is considered.
- 3.4 The Council continues to deliver a wide range of services in an increasingly challenging environment. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, the significant reductions in funding from central Government, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis have all put additional pressure on resident and Council budgets.
- 3.5 The increases in inflation, utility, materials and fuel costs have had an impact on service delivery. Industry and media reports indicate that this situation is likely to continue for some time. In response, work is being undertaken by the Council through the Stevenage Together Partnership and the Cost-of-Living Executive Member Working Group to formulate a clear plan for the Town and for the Council that seeks to mitigate the impact on residents, businesses, council services and council employees.
- 3.6 The Council is committed to the delivery of its priorities and its local services, to the benefit of local residents and businesses. This is challenging in a very competitive, employee-driven market and there is a risk that not being able to retain, attract and recruit the right people and skills at all levels could continue to impact on the Council's capacity to deliver all of its priorities as well as provide core services and implement new government legislation. The Council is continually reviewing its recruitment and retention approaches to strive to ensure it maintains the right capacity, skills, values and experience amongst staff at all levels.
- 3.7 In this context, the report that follows highlights some impacts on performance caused by the cumulative effect of these multiple challenges. However, it also demonstrates the continuing commitment of this Council to implementing clear action plans to address and improve performance where necessary.
- 3.8 As part of its corporate governance responsibilities, the Council will also undertake a review of its performance suite for 2023/24 to ensure ongoing data

assurance and robust performance management arrangements. This review is being overseen by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change.

4 QUARTER TWO CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 A summary of progress against the FTFC Programme is attached at Appendix A. Key highlights are also summarised in sections 5-7 of this report under the key themes of Transformation and Support, Place and Customer. For further information on the aims and objectives of the FTFC programme in 2022/23 please refer to Appendix B of the Quarter One Corporate Performance Executive report: [Future Town Future Council Summary \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk)
- 4.2 In addition to tracking progress against the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across all Council services is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify areas for improvement.
- 4.3 Service performance is understood in the context of the Customer, Place and Transformation and Support themes. The Council’s Business Units are aligned with a theme, and each is focused on delivering the right services, to the right standards, at the right time for the town’s residents and businesses, using the most cost/resource effective delivery models.
- 4.4 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 1 below. For the purposes of this report only commentary for Red Status measures is provided. The full set of current corporate performance measures results are attached at Appendix B.

Total number of measures reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data
63	34	7	14	8

Fig 1.

- 4.5 At the time of writing, there were eight indicators where performance could not be reported. Four indicators relate to housing voids and an explanation of the reasons why this data cannot be provided is in paragraph 7.4 below.
- 4.6 The other four indicators are reported in arrears via an external source. These relate to household waste collections (2) and community safety measures (2). As these measures are reported in arrears they won’t be presented as part of the report until the next quarter. This means that the measures for quarter 1 are included in the compendium for quarter 2 (Appendix B), and quarter 2 will be reported within quarter 3.

5 TRANSFORMATION AND SUPPORT THEME

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data
20	10	1	9	0

Fig 2.

5.1 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units and Future Town Future Council Programmes:

- Corporate Services
- Digital and Transformation
- Finance and Estates
- Making Your Money Count FTFC Programme

5.2 Further information on the measures included in this theme can be found in Appendix B. Further detail on projects for Making Your Money Count can be found in Appendix A.

5.3 Highlights

5.3.1 Key Future Town Future Council (FTFC) highlights for Quarter Two include:

- Following the introduction of the Council’s commercial filming strategy in quarter one, a further three filming opportunities were secured generating £10,100 of income for the Council. Enquiries continue to be made and opportunities explored by the Council’s contractor Fame.
- The Council’s 21/22 financial outturn is still subject to audit and work is now underway focusing on the 2022/23 monitoring as well as the development of the 2023/24 budgets. An informal Executive session on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) took place which outlined potential areas for savings and increases to fees and charges. A report was presented to the September Executive meeting and work took place to inform the proposed saving options for quarter three.
- In line with plans agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process, the transformation programme Phase 1 (Customer Services) is being progressed. Key changes will be introduced this financial year with the goal of improving the customer experience and delivering a budget saving. Highlights include:
 - the new Digital First phone messaging option went live this quarter
 - technical work has progressed on digital complaints and garage
- Further digital services are also due to launch in the second half of the year, this includes the “MyStevenage” online account; an online routine repairs reporting service; and the launch of digital lockers for key returns and pick-ups.
- Detailed analysis work is underway to support the design of a phase 2 of the Transformation programme which is due for implementation in 2023/24. The service delivery programme will focus on the creation of a “Customer Hub” focusing on Localities, Advice and Support, Income & Debt, and Lettings & Bookings.

5.3.2 Key service performance highlights for Quarter Two include:

- The percentage of customer satisfaction with the Customer Service Centre continued to improve from 85% in quarter one to 88% in quarter two.
- The number of apprentices in post showed a sustained improvement on last quarter and the Learning and Development team continue to have conversations with service managers to identify new apprentice opportunities

5.4 Areas for Service Improvement








TRANSFORMATION & SUPPORT		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Direction of travel since last quarter
CompHRA1: % of housing service customer complaints responded to within deadline	Customer Focus	Not collected			57.93%	69.91%	78.00%	
CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the customer service centre	Customer Service Centre	35.10	33.80	35.50	39.80	32.10	15.00	
Dig1: % of digital customer transactions	Digital	20	19	23	24	25	30	
BV9: % of Council Tax collected	Finance & Estates	59.3	86.1	94.5	32.4	59.3	61	
EoCrec: Time to recruit (days)	Human Resources	47.60	40	41	45	60	45	
Pe2: % of Agency Work assignments exceeding 12 weeks	Human Resources	61.22	49.20	54.00	63.00	74.70	50.00	
Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Human Resources	7.03	9.17	10.63	11.07	10.54	8.00	

Fig. 3

CompHRA1: % of housing service customer complaints responded to within deadline

- 5.4.1 This measure narrowly remains red in quarter2 although performance improved by 11% compared to Quarter 1. Ongoing resourcing challenges and increased levels of complaints have contributed to performance falling below target, particularly in the area of Property Repairs. Weather related damage to fencing, guttering and roofing meant waiting times for these repairs has been longer than usual resulting in an increase in complaints for these trades.
- 5.4.2 An additional Complaints Officer is being recruited and will join the current Housing Strategic Complaints Management Team. The increased capacity will enable the team to work in collaboration with service areas to better understand complaints activity, including the identification of root causes to inform the Council's understanding of gaps in service and complaint trends.
- 5.4.3 Alongside recruitment activities, work is underway to reduce the volume of complaints received by the repairs service. This includes the mobilisation of new fencing and guttering programmes, and the embedding of new Repairs Supervisors who are responsible for ensuring repairs are undertaken in an efficient, timely and effective way. The launch of a new online reporting repairs service in early 2023 will also help to reduce the level of complaints received as Customers will be able to select their own repair appointment times in future. This programme of work is being monitored on a weekly basis by the Assistant Director (SDS) and Operations Director (Housing and Communities).

CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the customer service centre

- 5.4.4 The call abandonment rate has improved by 7.70% in comparison to quarter one of this year. The key challenge for Customer Services remains the high turnover of advisors and the lack of suitable candidates for the roles, which has led to a resource gap and reduced skills / experience within the team. The related impact of this ongoing challenge is longer waiting times and a higher than acceptable level of abandoned calls.
- 5.4.5 Recruitment processes continue to evolve and the service conducts regular ongoing advertising to encourage candidates to express interest in vacancies. The pay scales for Customer Service Advisers have also been reviewed and it is hoped the increase to the starting salary will assist broader efforts to recruit and retain staff.
- 5.4.6 Advisors also continue to report that at times, calls can be particularly lengthy due to complex and multi-service enquiries. To help address this matter and ensure advisors can easily access service information, the Council are exploring the development and implementation of an online knowledge base for staff. This will complement the existing activity to develop an improved training and development approach for Customer Services. This is an ongoing piece of work which includes working with Service Managers across the organisation.

5.4.7 Dig1: % of digital / online customer transactions

Customer use of digital services has continued to increase in quarter 2, although not at the expected rate. Uptake reached a new peak of 29% in July but has subsequently declined following the end of Government Covid schemes, which required online applications to be completed. It is anticipated that uptake will

increase again with the rollout of the new online 'Digital First' services. This will give residents the option to report waste & recycling and environmental nuisances make complaints online, apply for a garage letting and request assisted waste collections. Moreover, in quarter 4 customers will be able to report and book routine repairs which should result in a further increase in digital activity.

BV9: % of Council Tax collected

5.4.8 Feedback received from the Shared Revenue and Benefits service indicates that the cost-of-living crisis is leading to an increase in payments being missed and requests for alternative payment arrangements. Customers are also moving from 10-month Direct Debits to 12 month Direct Debits to try and spread payments and lessen the impact.

EoCrec: Time to recruit (days)

5.4.9 The time to recruit new staff has taken longer this quarter for several reasons including having two internal candidates for one role where a later start date has been agreed and two external candidates with long notice periods. The Human Resources Team has also experienced delays in receiving responses to reference requests during August, which is a peak leave period. Nationally recruitment remains challenging for the public sector which has also impacted the Council's reliance on agency recruitment (para 5.4.10). The Human Resources team continue to try and get successful candidates into post in a timely manner to ensure effective service delivery.

Pe2: % of Agency Work assignments exceeding 12 weeks

5.4.10 74% of the agency workers in post have been in position longer than 12 weeks. The levels of agency use continues to reflect of the very challenging recruitment market nationally, with the UK having its highest levels of employment in 50 years. Agency workers are recruited to help maintain operational efficiency and fulfil roles where there are skills gap. The Senior Leadership Team continue to monitor recruitment activity and undertake analysis of hard to recruit to posts. There is also permanent recruitment activity underway for some key posts in order to seek to reduce extended agency usage. A breakdown of hard to recruit to posts by service area can be seen in Appendix C.

Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)

5.4.11 Sickness has reduced by 0.53 days compared with quarter one. However, the sickness absence rate is 2.43 days longer than it was 12 months ago. Absences are split 49% short term and 51% long term.

5.4.12 Covid absence accounted 252 days of the total during quarter two, with July recording the second highest level during the year. With Covid related sickness removed, the sickness rate would be 9.3 days per FTE the quarter. The increase in sickness absence levels during 2022 is also being experienced across other Hertfordshire local authorities.

5.4.13 The Council's HR Business Partners continue to work with Assistant Directors to support their teams. This includes the use of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and signposting to relevant agencies where

appropriate. Seasonal flu and Covid booster programmes are also widely promoted to staff and they are encouraged to take these up if they are eligible.

6 PLACE THEME

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data
28	19	3	4	2

Fig.4

6.1 The Place Theme incorporates the following Business Units and Future Town Future Council Programmes:

- Planning and Regulation
- Stevenage Direct Services
- Transforming Our Town FTFC Programme (Regeneration)
- More Social and Affordable Homes FTFC Programme (Housing Development)

6.2 Further information on measures included in this theme can be found in Appendix B and more detail on the projects for Transforming Our Town and More Social and Affordable Homes Programmes can be found in Appendix A.

6.3 Highlights

6.3.1 Key FTFC highlights for quarter two include:

- The Council is working closely with its partner Mace to seek to progress the development of Plot K (Former Police Station and Towers Garages) and Plot A (Swingate House) sites following their demolition. UK Power Network (UKPN) are currently undertaking works on Plot A relating to a substation diversion and these are due to be completed in quarter 3.
- The final stages of the hardscape and landscaping works have now been completed at the former bus station site. A soft launch event was held on 21 October followed by the official public launch on 28 October.
- The five new affordable homes on Stirling Close are due for handover shortly with internal works now completed.
- The Oaks Cross housing scheme is now completed. The 11 new one-bedroom bungalows represent a low carbon development and have minimal running costs for residents.

6.3.2 Key service performance highlights for quarter two include:

- 100% of communal areas within the Council's housing stock have a valid electrical certificate.
- Offers for garage lettings has continued to improve due to an eight percent increase in the number of void acceptances compared to quarter 1. This increase in acceptances is due to the focus on the maximisation of lettings following the recruitment of a new Garage Lettings Officer and weekly chasing of non-respondents.

6.4 Areas for Improvement





PLACE		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Direction of travel since last quarter
HDD1e: Number of affordable homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)	Housing Development	6.00	3.00	5.00	7.00	37.00	50.00	
VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	Investment	40.84%	48.54%	62.95%	87.85%	92.09%	100.00%	
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Planning & Regulation	16.00	20.00	35.00	6.00	7.00	36.00	
BTC1b: New business start-up in Business Technology Centre	Planning & Regulation	15.00	19.00	30.00	4.00	5.00	14.00	

Fig. 5

HDD1e: Number of affordable homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)

6.4.1 In quarter one and quarter two, 37 new affordable homes were delivered by the Council. Due to construction industry related delays, some development schemes have been impacted including the Symonds Green Helston House scheme, which will provide 29 units of affordable accommodation. This scheme is now forecast to be completed in 2023.

BTC1a New jobs created through Business Technology Centre and BTC1b: New business start-up in Business Technology Centre

6.4.2 The Business and Technology Centre (BTC) has again seen a high turnover in businesses during the last quarter, with existing business clients moving around the centre and some businesses moving out for financial reasons. The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact locally with some businesses choosing to make savings by switching to virtual working spaces instead.

6.4.3 Wenta, which manages and promotes the BTC, continues to work with local businesses and start-ups to assist them to access information and guidance on savings, skills and training programmes, accommodation, and business support. To help promote this service Wenta have increased their social media presence and updated their posts to reflect selling benefits to clients rather than just space. Wenta is also targeting brokers to help fill empty units, diversifying space and length of tenancy, and reviewing pricing incentives to encourage take up.

VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate

6.4.4 Work continues at pace on domestic electrical inspections across the Council’s housing stock; with an improved position of over 92% compliance now secured. Officers are working with contractors and other internal teams to arrange access for some of the harder to access properties, which is delaying the completion of these tests. Subject to gaining access to the remaining properties, it is anticipated that all tests will be completed by the end of quarter three.

7 CUSTOMER THEME

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data
15	5	3	1	6

Fig. 6

7.1 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units and Future Town Future Council Programmes:

- Communities and Neighbourhoods
- Housing and Investment
- Co-operative Neighbourhoods FTFC Programme
- A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town FTFC Programme

7.2 Further information on measures included in this theme can be found in Appendix B. Further detail on projects for Co-operative Neighbourhoods and

Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town Programmes can be found in Appendix A.

7.3 Highlights

7.3.1 Key FTFC highlights for quarter two include:

- Following a successful funding application to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Proptech Engagement Fund, officers have been engaging with residents on what areas they would like to see focussed on in their Neighbourhoods throughout quarter two. Visioning workshops with Members will begin in the new year to help identify tangible outcomes of the engagement work. This builds on previous engagement activities carried out in the last financial year as part of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme which helped identify residents' priorities in their local areas. This initial tranche of approximately 1,300 results is currently being analysed, and the consultation period has been extended into quarter three to capture more views
- The Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) has now concluded its themed meetings and the final report is being produced. This is anticipated to be presented to the Executive in quarter four
- Five Green Flag Awards were awarded and retained this quarter for Fairlands Valley Park (14 years), Town Centre Gardens (12 years), Hampson Park (8 years), Shephalbury Park (4 years) and Weston Road Cemetery (2 years)
- Since the Nightlight Crisis Café launched in quarter one, 264 visits have been recorded with a range of mental health outcomes, gathered following one to one (face to face) support intervention. The service continues to provide advice, emotional and practical support and to signpost or refer to other local sources of therapy or advice
- The Local Investment Plan (LIP) for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was submitted to Central Government. Upon approval this plan will provide for the continuation of European Social Fund local business and skills investment through to 2024/25
- £10k from the Environment Agency is being used to support daylighting works to Stevenage Brook. It is envisaged this work will open up the area and restore it to a more natural condition encouraging ecological vegetation and wildlife

7.3.2 Key service performance highlights for quarter two include:

- The number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation continued to reduce from 174 in quarter one to 163 in quarter two. Officers have been working hard to ensure that the supply of accommodation meets demand including taking swift action for serious breaches and non-occupation which led to a number of license terminations.
- Income officers are working closely with tenants to ensure they gain access to Central Government financial support where applicable. This enables tenants to continue to pay their rent and this has been evident this quarter with the rent collection rate achieving target.

7.4 Areas for improvement


CUSTOMERS		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Direction of travel since last quarter
Void Loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Voids and Housing & Investment	£279,964	£419,701	£532,510	£174,371	£353,269	£194,520	
Void re-let measures (Various – See Appendix B)	Voids and Housing & Investment	Quarter 2 data not available (see para. 7.4.3)						

Fig. 10

Void Loss 1: Void loss in year (£) and Void Re-let Measures

7.4.1 The void loss target for quarter 2 has not been met. In response, and to ensure that void performance is tackled as a priority, the Council has established a Housing Improvement Board which meets on a fortnightly basis to review the factors contributing to void loss, and the wider void performance challenges. This includes:

- economic impacts on the increasing cost of goods and services required to bring void properties up to an acceptable letting standard
- shortfall of operatives to repair voids, and the recruitment and retention of specialist trades within the voids service
- the increasing number of void properties returned by tenants which require extensive repairs (Major Works).

7.4.2 To ensure the Housing Improvements Board has a clear understanding of issues, the Council is undertaking a review of the Voids end to end process with a specialist housing contractor. The review will seek to identify an optimised voids pathway from when a tenancy ends to when a tenancy starts. This work, which will complement the review being undertaken by the Community Select Committee, will include:

- reviewing the Lettable Standard,
- benchmarking with comparable housing stock providers to understand relative performance and identify examples of good practice,
- identifying reasons for refusals,
- providing early opportunities for applicants to view a property once it has been made safe,
- reviewing the programme of tenancy audits and pre-void inspections,
- ensuring robust arrangements for recharging unauthorised works in properties,
- minimising void repairs times

7.4.3 Integral to the forthcoming recommendations will be the work the Council is currently undertaking to map data input into Northgate as part of the voids pathway. To ensure reporting mechanisms and performance trends are reported accurately, and that the parameters for measuring performance are consistently applied, it will be necessary to pause the reporting of the four measures below until the void pathway work is complete:

- Voids Sheltered Major Works: The time taken to re-let major works sheltered voids
- Voids Sheltered: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids
- Voids Sheltered General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids
- Voids General Needs Major Works: The time taken to re-let major works general needs voids

7.4.4 To ensure that performance reporting of the four void measures is resumed as quickly as is possible, the Housing Improvement Board will implement void pathway recommendations as they are identified. Regular updates on progress of the work and service improvements will be provided to the Portfolio Holder through Improvement Plan reporting arrangements. Updates on progress of the work will also be provided as part of quarterly performance reporting to the Executive. The services will also continue to work closely with the Community Select Committee as part of the committees focus on the voids process for the municipal year 2022/23.

7.4.5 Underpinning the improvement activities mentioned will be the recruitment of an Empty Homes Co-ordinator who will oversee the end-to-end void process. The Co-ordinator will help drive performance by managing the complete voids pathway as the property moves between service areas and will work closely with suppliers to seek to provide good availability on product lines and stock.

8 STRATEGIC RISK

8.1 The risks as outlined in Table 1 below reflect the current strategic risks facing the Council. The risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 13 October 2022, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 19 October and noted by Audit Committee at its meeting on 9 November 2022.

8.2 A risk is a future event which has the potential to impact on the Council's ability to deliver services, projects and achieve its ambitions. Conversely an opportunity will enhance the Council's ability to achieve and effectively deliver, however, there are often risks inherent in pursuing opportunities. By being alert to and putting in place mechanisms to manage both the risks and opportunities effectively, the Council is in a better position to continue to deliver services, remain viable, continue to innovate and use resources more efficiently. Some risks will always exist and will never be eliminated.

8.3 Each risk is measured in terms of a combination of the likelihood of a perceived threat or the opportunity occurring and the magnitude of its impact on the Council's objectives. The table below outlines both the inherent and residual risk scores. Inherent risk is the risk present in any scenario where no attempts at mitigation have been made and no controls or other measures have been applied to reduce the risk from initial levels to levels more acceptable to the Council. Residual risk is the risk remaining after efforts have been made to reduce the inherent risk. The risks below all have mitigating actions which are being worked through and risks scores are reviewed quarterly to assess whether completion of actions has reduced the level of risk.






Table 1: Strategic Risks, Scores and Direction of Travel Risk	Inherent Risk Score	Residual Risk Score Q1	Residual Risk Score Q2	Direction of Travel since last quarter
General Fund Asset Management: If sufficient capital funding from land/asset sales is not received, there is a risk that there will be insufficient funding available to invest in the Council's non-housing property portfolio to ensure Council properties remain sustainable and fit for the future	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Building Management: In the event of failure to proactively maintain the Council's non-housing property portfolio there is a risk that required remedial work is not carried out in a timely way. This could lead to an increased health and safety risk for service users, buildings having to be taken out of use and increased repair costs	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Building Safety/Fire Safety Act: In the event of failure to meet the new requirements of the Building Safety/Fire Safety Act, there is a risk of enforcement action or fines	12 High		12 High	NEW FOR Q2
Capacity: The Council is committed to delivery of its priorities and its local services. If the Council fails to retain, attract and recruit the right people and right skills at all levels, there could be an impact on its capacity to deliver all of its priorities as well as provide core services and implement new government legislation	12 High	9 Medium	9 Medium	
Commercialisation: If the Council fails to achieve its commercial ambitions within desired timescales or at the scale hoped for, it will be unable to support the Council's financial security objectives	16 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Contract Management: A failure to ensure resilience, quality and best value are being provided by suppliers and contractors could have a negative impact on the performance of Council's services and achievement of priorities	16 Very High	9 Medium	9 Medium	















Table 1 continued: Strategic Risks, Scores and Direction of Travel Risk	Inherent Risk Score	Residual Risk Score Q1	Residual Risk Score Q2	Direction of Travel since last quarter
Council Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme: The Council's housing programmes are now well established, providing benefits such as homes for social and affordable rent as well as private sale homes. The delivery of each scheme, and the delivery of homes through the Wholly Owned Company, creates a financial risk surrounding estimated build costs and projected sales income materialising as forecast, as well as risks in relation to the servicing of debt. This may create revenue pressures on the General Fund to meet the loan repayments to the Public Works Loan Board	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Covid-19/Flu/Pandemic: If COVID-19/flu or other illnesses this winter are significant and protracted, the Council's ability to maintain delivery of essential services and support the community could be severely impacted. There could also be an impact on the Council's finances due to loss of income and increased reliance on services.	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Fraud: As a result of the scale and scope of services delivered by and through the Council, there is a risk of fraud which could lead to service disruption, financial and reputational loss.	16 Very High	6 Medium	9 Medium	
IT Resilience and Cyber Security: Failure of ICT services as a result of a cyber-attack or IT resilience issues could cause significant service disruption, possible data loss and financial implications for the Council	25 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Health and Safety: In the event of failure to maintain adequate and effective safety management arrangements there is a risk of injury, illness and death to both service users and employees.	20 Very High	15 High	15 High	
Housing Revenue Account Business Plan: There is a risk that changes to legislation and new local authority responsibilities could negatively affect the medium to long term viability of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Information Governance: There is a risk that the loss, inappropriate acquisition or disclosure of sensitive personal or commercial data and/or breach of data subject rights (contrary to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation) could negatively impact on the individual(s) affected and lead to significant financial implications for the Council	16 Very High	9 Medium	9 Medium	
Leisure Provision: There is a risk that external factors (including cost of living, Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine etc) could impact the viability of leisure provision in Stevenage	16 Very High	12 High	12 High	

Table 1 continued: Strategic Risks, Scores and Direction of Travel Risk	Inherent Risk Score	Residual Risk Score Q1	Residual Risk Score Q2	Direction of Travel since last quarter
Making your Money Count: Due to the ongoing financial impact of Covid-19 and following years of funding reductions from central government, there is a risk that the Council does not have sufficient resources to fund its medium- and long-term service plans	20 Very High	16 Very High	16 Very High	
Regeneration Risk – Capital Funding Risk: In the event of insufficient capital funding, the Council would not be able to fulfil its obligations for the SG1 Regeneration Scheme and will also not be able to match fund the money received from the Towns Bid meaning priority improvements could not be delivered	12 High	8 Medium	8 Medium	
Regeneration Risk – Delay: As a result of delays due to possible shortages of construction materials, labour and other factors beyond the Council's control, there is a risk of construction projects associated with the regeneration programme taking longer to complete than anticipated which would affect the delivery of the overall Regeneration Programme	12 High	8 Medium	8 Medium	
Repairs and Maintenance: Due to current recruitment pressures, the backlog of repairs due to Covid-19, storms and the availability of materials as a result of the war in Ukraine, there is a risk that the repairs service will not be able to carry out repairs in a timely manner	16 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Social Housing Regulation Bill: In the event of failure to meet the new requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Bill, there is a risk of enforcement action or fines	12 High		12 High	NEW FOR Q2
Socio-Economic Impacts: As a result of the combined socio-economic impacts of welfare reform, the Covid-19 pandemic, an economic downturn and a cost-of-living crisis, it is likely there will be a significant adverse effect within the community. This will cause increased complexity of needs which will increase demand on Council services which could lead to capacity issues in some areas, as well as reduced income for the Council and increased arrears.	20 Very High	12 High	12 High	
Transformation Programme: The Council is operating in a rapidly changing environment with increasing financial challenges which are expected to become more demanding in future years. There is a risk that due to capacity and other priorities, the Transformation Programme the Council is implementing may not meet its aims and ambitions to improve customer experience, increase workforce productivity and organisational resilience, whilst also meeting financial security targets	16 Very High	8 Medium	8 Medium	

8.4 The Social Housing Regulation Bill and Building Safety Act risk is a new risk which was approved in Quarter 1. It reflects the risk that failure to meet the new

requirements could lead to enforcement action and the potential for unlimited fines.

8.4.1 When scoping this risk, it was suggested that this risk should be split into two separate risks as they have different timescales, scope, action plans and regulators. This was agreed by Corporate Risk Group and SLT. It was also agreed that the new Fire Safety Act should also be added to the Building Safety Act risk. Two new risks have therefore been added to the SRR this quarter, as follows:

- **Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act** – In the event of failure to comply with the new requirements of both the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act, there is a risk of enforcement action against Stevenage Borough Council or fines for non-compliance.
- **Social Housing Regulation Bill** – In the event of failure to meet the new requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Bill, there is a risk of enforcement action against Stevenage Borough Council or fines for non-compliance.

8.4.2 Both of these risks have been scored as high risks.

8.4.3 Mitigation has already begun for these two risks. There is a Building and Fire Safety Action Plan which is currently being implemented and is on track. There is also an action plan to meet the requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Bill.

Capacity Risk

8.5 As previously noted and reported there are currently a significant number of vacancies across a range of services, which is impacting on service delivery. The local position reflects the national trend of recruitment and retention challenges, with unemployment currently at an all-time low. Despite ongoing attempts to recruit using a multitude of approaches, there are challenges in recruiting to some key posts. Key areas to highlight are as follows:

- Vacancies in Asset Management and Estates which are being supported by agency staff where they can be sourced.
- Vacancies within Finance and IT which are affecting performance in these areas. Agency staff support is being sought where appropriate.
- There are significant challenges in recruiting to Repairs Operatives and Customer Services. Again, agency staff are being engaged to support where suitably experienced and qualified cover is available.
- Vacancies in the Customer Services Centre continue to affect performance

8.5.1 As highlighted above agency staff are being sought / engaged to help cover vacancies however it should be noted that the availability of agency staff is also an issue in some areas of the Council's operations.

8.5.2 The Human Resources team are working with a recruitment marketing expert to provide ongoing support to review adverts and the approach taken to fill some of the more difficult to recruit to posts. Human Resources are also continuing to work with managers to support them to agree the best way to advertise their

roles. SLT are monitoring recruitment activity and undertaking analysis of hard to recruit posts and reviewing the proposed approaches.

- 8.5.3 Corporate Risk Group and SLT will review whether the above activity has helped to improve the situation next quarter. This risk may need to be escalated to a High risk for Quarter Three if the current situation continues.

Covid-19/Flu/Pandemic Risk

- 8.6 At Corporate Risk Group, it was suggested that the Covid-19 risk could be widened to include other illnesses, due to the increased levels of Covid and flu expected this winter and the impact this could have on the Council's capacity to deliver services. The Senior Leadership Team agreed for the title and focus of this risk to be amended to reflect this.

Fraud Risk

- 8.7 It was agreed by the Senior Leadership Team that the likelihood score for the Fraud risk be increased from 2 to 3 this quarter due to the increased likelihood of fraud as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. This however does not change the overall risk level which remains at Medium.

Building Management Risk

- 8.8 The Corporate Landlord function remains of particular interest to Corporate Risk Group, and a separate meeting is being held to fully understand the steps to implement the new Corporate Landlord operating model. This includes a specific focus on how it will help to meet compliance requirements such as fire risk assessments across the estate.

Strategic Risk Register

- 8.9 For further information regarding action being taken in relation to the Council's current risks please see the Quarter Two Strategic Risk Register which as a Part II item can be provided as a Background Document upon request.

9 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 9.1 The information presented in this report is collated from the information provided to monitor delivery of the Future Town, Future Council Programme and corporate performance for the quarter. It aims to give Executive an overview of the achievements the Council has made for the year to date, with a focus on the previous quarter and identifies plans for continued improvements in some areas to ensure the Council is fit for the future.
- 9.2 The Senior Leadership Team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to identify the key achievements.

10 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Financial Implications

- 10.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the

priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

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 priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

10.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

10.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report, although examples are given in the Annual Report 2021/22 where positive action has been taken to advance equality, diversity and inclusion across our workforce and the community. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects, service changes and improvement activity identified.

10.4 Risk Implications

10.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity 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.

11 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- [Strategic Risk Register \(Part II\)](#)
- [FTFC Plan on a Page](#)
- [FTFC Programme Performance for Quarter 1 22/23](#)

12 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: FTFC Programme Performance for Quarter Two 22/23
- Appendix B: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Two 22/23
- Appendix C: Hard to Recruit Posts by Service Area
- Appendix D: Executive Action Tracker

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Meeting Executive
Date October 2022

APPENDIX A: FTFC PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER TWO 2022/23

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This is a written update on progress on live projects in quarter two 2022/23 and forecasted plans for quarter three 2022/23.
- 1.2 To note the progress achieved by all programmes in quarter two 2022/23 and forecasted progress for quarter three 2022/23

2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY UPDATES

Transforming Our Town Programme

2.1 The project team are working closely with development partner Mace to progress Plot K (Former Police Station and Towers Garages) and Plot A (Swingate House) sites following their demolition. UK Power Network (UKPN) are currently on the Plot A site for work to a substation diversion and works are due to be complete in early quarter three.

2.2 The final stages of the hardscape and landscaping works are currently taking place at the vacant bus station site. There will be a soft launch event on 21 October with the public launch coinciding with town centre management's Halloween event on 28 October.

2.3 The school competition for young people to come up with a name and to design a matching logo for the bus station space completed and a winning entry was chosen. The name announcement has taken place – Event Island Stevenage. School visits to John Henry Newman and Woolenwick have taken place to announce the name to the competition winner and runners up. The announcement of the name was featured in The Comet newspaper.

2.4 Contractors Huber for the multi-storey car park (MSCP) and cycle hub are on site and works are progressing well. Hoarding for the site has been commissioned and is due to be installed imminently. The secure cycle parking facility design has been finalised and costs have been agreed.

2.5 Consultation work has been complete with external consultant support in to exploring the opportunities and aspirations of a new museum facility. A 12-month work plan is being established with colleagues in the Culture & Leisure team including an Audience Development Plan and Business Plan for the new facility. Officers are learning best

practice from several regional and national partners on creation of a new facility through a series of visits and also exploring funding opportunities for future projects.

More Social and Affordable Housing Programme

2.6 Work has continued at the Symonds Green (29 Homes) site with roof work now completed, internal works being progressed and the lift for the scheme is on site and being installed. The impact on the construction industry of Covid and the conflict in Ukraine has caused some delays on site, however the anticipation is that the scheme will complete in quarter three.

2.7 The affordable homes on Stirling Close are due for handover shortly. The internals of the units have now completed with flooring works completed throughout.

2.8 On the main site, work continues at pace, with extensive brick and block work approaching roof height. Lifts are currently on site and will be installed following the completion of roof works. Work is also underway to finalise materials for marketing the retail units.

2.9 The planning application for the Shephall View & Brent Court sites was submitted in early October following extensive consultation with the public on the scheme. The plans have now been finalised and will be submitted with a decision expected early in 2023.

2.10 Work continued at the Dunn Close (27 Homes) scheme this quarter. Brick and block work has commenced, and planning conditions have begun to be discharged. Engagement with the local schools to design the hoarding on the site, as well as enhancing the woodland walk in the nearby area is also ongoing.

2.11 The Oaks Cross scheme is now completed with residents occupying the properties from the last week of September. The scheme took a total of 6 months from start on site to completion and delivered 11 one-bedroom bungalows which represent a low carbon development and have minimal running costs for the final residents.

2.12 The Courtlands scheme within the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) completed demolition on site. The section 106 has been finalised and work is ongoing to discharge the relevant planning conditions at the site.

Co-operative and Neighbourhoods Programme

2.13 The next steps for the Cooperative Neighbourhood programme were shared with Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working, as well as the Leader of the Council and implementation will begin in quarter three.

2.14 A key area of work will be to conduct visioning workshops in each Neighbourhood area which will establish community led priorities for each area, which can then be built upon and delivered through Neighbourhood teams.

2.15 Work to deliver the Digital Neighbourhood Newsletters continues with over 2,800 residents signed up to the platform. Initial drafts of the newsletters have been created highlighting key projects in each neighbourhood area. Work is underway to produce and distribute the first set of newsletters for each neighbourhood area in quarter three.

2.16. Following a successful funding application to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) PropTech Engagement Fund, the preferred supplier (Novoville) have undertaken consultation throughout quarter two. This initial tranche of approximately 1,300 results is currently being analysed, and the consultation period has been extended into quarter three to capture more views.

2.17 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) have released an additional funding opportunity for successful Round 2 applicants from PropTech Engagement Fund. As a successful applicant, a further application has been submitted to continue plans for digital engagement through Cooperative Neighbourhoods.

2.18 All of the Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) themed meetings have now taken place and the final report is being produced. This is anticipated to be presented to the Executive in quarter three.

2.19 Phase four and five of the flatblock refurbishment programme has continued to progress. Delivery will continue into quarter three, alongside customer satisfaction activities and events. Officers are also looking beyond the current phases to phase six to address the blocks added to the programme since its original inception.

2.20 The impact of Brexit, the War in Ukraine and increases in costs of fuel and raw materials continues to be felt putting cost pressures on the MRC programme. Also, the additional blocks and those blocks which have had to be carried over to later phases due to the recent pandemic have meant a formal extension of the MRC contract term to enable the contractors to deliver the remainder of the project beyond August 2023.

2.21 The garage improvement programme has made steady progress this quarter. To date, 665 garages have been refurbished to the end of September 2022 since the programme's inception. Three disposal sites have completed - The Chace, Hendren Court and Shackledell generating £447k in income.

2.22 A business case for investment in repairs to garage stock with the aim of increasing income was presented and approved by the Executive in September. The business case outlined £234k of investment to yield £312k cumulative income by year five.

Making Your Money Count Programme

2.23 The Council's financial outturn position has been confirmed and work is now focusing on the 2022/23 monitoring as well as early work on the 2023/24 budgets. An informal Executive session on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) took place which outlined

potential areas for savings and increases to fees and charges. A report was presented to the September Executive meeting and work has begun on a report outlining proposed saving options for quarter three.

2.24 Fees and Charges workshops continued through quarter two and a report was presented to the Commercial Insourcing Executive Committee on the likelihood of areas where fees and charges could be further increased or new charges created.

2.25 Progress on the closing of accounts continues. The 2021/22 accounts have been prepared and have been published on the Council's website. The 2019/20 accounts are with the auditors and the only outstanding issue being the work undertaken by CIPFA around Infrastructure Assets. The 2020/21 audit began testing, but due to the 2019/20 still to be signed off and the Council recently had a change of audit partner, it is unlikely that 2020/21 or 2021/22 will be progressed much more this calendar year.

2.26 A further six new customers have signed up to the Council's trade waste collection, providing an additional £13,600 of annual revenue.

2.27 Between July and September 2022, three filming opportunities took place in Stevenage generating £10,100 of income for the Council. Enquiries continue to be made and opportunities explored by the Council's contractor Fame.

2.28 The transformation programme Phase 1 (Customer Services) is in progress. In line with plans agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process, key changes will be introduced this financial year with the goal of improving the customer experience and delivering a budget saving in Customer Services. In Q2:

- Messaging for new Digital First phone options went live
- The Digital First communications plan has been drafted and is currently being finalised
- Technical work has progressed on digital complaints and garage lettings – both projects are scheduled for delivery in quarter three.

2.29 Detailed analysis work is underway to support the design of a Phase 2 programme (Service Delivery) for implementation in 2023/24. The programme will create a "Customer Hub" and four specialist teams (Localities, Advice and Support, Income & Debt, and Lettings & Bookings). A business case will be prepared for Executive in quarter three.

A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town Programme

Clean and Green

2.30 Five Green Flag Awards were awarded and retained this quarter for Fairlands Valley Park (14 years), Town Centre Gardens (12 years), Hampson Park (8 years), Shephalbury Park (4 years) and Weston Road Cemetery (2 years).

Healthy Stevenage

2.31 Since the Nightlight Crisis Café launched in quarter one, 264 visits have been recorded with a range of mental health outcomes, gathered following one to one (face to face) support intervention. The service continues to provide advice emotional and practical support and to signpost or refer to other local sources of therapy or advice.

2.32 As part of the ongoing delivery of This Girl Can initiative in partnership with Herts sports Partnership, 599 session attendances were completed by women and girls in Azonto Fitness, Walking Football and Walking Netball.

Community Safety

2.33 The No More service has continued to grow with funding secured until March 2023. Officers are working with probation regarding a possible County-wide service to support high risk offenders.

2.34 The Womens Centre is in use by local services including the probation service to meet with their vulnerable female clients. The formal launch of the centre has been delayed due to works required to the roof. The launch will now take place as part of the sixteen days of action for domestic abuse.

Stevenage Re-Imagined

2.35 The majority of elements of the “Out in Stevenage” public art installation are completed, with the final installation being implemented in the Event Island space in quarter three. A brief for an art installation at the bus interchange is in discussion and further details will be developed once agreed.

Community Wealth Building

2.36 The UK Community Renewal Fund programme has achieved if not exceeded all targets bar Feasibility Reports, however these are on target to achieve by programme end date of 31st December 2022:

Outputs	Total Project	Total Achieved	% of target achieved
People - Economically inactive - number of people supported to engage in job-searching	150	487	325%
People - unemployed - number of people supported to engage in life skills	350	706	202%

Business – Small - number of businesses receiving non-financial support	30	38	127%
Organisation - VCSE - number of organisations receiving non-financial support	30	51	170%
Grants - number of organisations receiving grants	40	88	220%
Outcomes	Total Project	Total Achieved	% of target achieved
People in education/training following support	50	214	428%
People engaged in life skills support following interventions	100	546	546%
People in employment, including self-employment, following support.	25	203	812%
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support.	20	92	460%
Investment attracted as a result of support.	£500,000	£497,099	99%
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support.	20	38	190%
Feasibility studies developed as a result of support	10	8	80%

2.37 Work will continue to deliver the remaining actions from individual programme workstreams and writing-up project closure reports.

2.38 The Social Inclusion Partnership, chaired by the Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau have applied for funding as part of the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) grant allocation pot for Stevenage. This funding would be used to support partnership members to build their capacity, whilst also providing greater access to business support opportunities.

2.39 The Council's Community Wealth Building steering group has had three meetings so far, which have covered the ongoing progress of the Community Renewal Fund Project, including speakers from the Centre for Local Economic Studies CLES and Mission44 as well as ongoing development around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The next meeting is scheduled for quarter three and will cover the Evaluation and Feasibility Study elements of the CRF programme.

2.40 The Local Investment Plan (LIP) for the UKSPF was submitted at the start of August. It contains provision for the continuation of county-wide European Social Fund provision around business and skills as well as a local Community Wealth Building element. This equates to £185,000 investment over the next three years through to 2024/25. All Local Authorities are due to hear back from DLUHC in October 2022 around whether LIP documents have been approved. However, due to changes in central government, there may be a delay.

Climate Change

2.35 In September 2022, a Climate Change Programme Lead Officer was appointed. This role will take the lead in delivering the essential targets which have been set in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and to reflect the ambitions of the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change.

2.36 A Climate Change annual update paper was presented to Executive in October 2022. The Executive considered a report providing an update on the Council's Climate Change Strategy and initiatives.

Sustainable Transport

2.37 The Preferred Options report for the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan was presented to the Executive in September and was approved to go out to public consultation.

2.38 Officers remain in regular contact with HCC officers, to progress the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan. A work programme, governance structure, protocols, stakeholder engagement and communications plan are all being progressed.

2.39 A "Learn and Share" event on Active Travel was held in Stevenage on 12 October 2022 and was a very successful event, raising awareness among key stakeholders to the Sustainable Travel Town programme.

Biodiversity

2.40 Funding from the Environment Agency of £10, 000 was received to support daylighting works to Stevenage Brook. It is envisaged this work will open up the area and restore it to a more natural condition encouraging ecological vegetation and wildlife.

2.41 All Stevenage schools have been contacted inviting expressions of interest in helping to plant the new Community Woodland for Fairland Valley Park South Field. To date, eight schools have confirmed an interest in taking part.

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Red - Focus of Improvement

Amber - Initial Improvement Activity Identified

Green - Achieving Target

Customers									
Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022-23	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
SLL1: SLL overall footfall (ytd)	Culture, Wellbeing & Investment	157,969	339,658	478,201	153,464	151,424	173,766	373,624	This figure does not include Fairlands Valley Park Sailing Centre
DH1: % of tenants satisfied with Decent	Investment	100.00	100.00	100.00		100.00	70.00	70.00	-
ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as	Investment	71.93	75.82	66.68	68.49	69.38	71.82	75.07	
ECHFL1nat: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	Investment				78.81%	80.18%	83.44%	86.68%	
BV66a: Rent collection rate	Managing Homes	95.64	97.10	97.23	87.99	94.45	93.44	96.39	30/09/2022 -
BV213: Homelessness preventions	Providing Homes	99.00	163.00	225.00	67.00	120.00	100.00	150.00	As with recent months, prevention's continue to be challenging due to poor availability of Private Rented Sector units, and affordability issues made more difficult due to the rise in living costs. We have recently experienced a raft of sickness which has impacted the workload of the team. In addition to this we are in the process of recruiting to a vacant position. Demand remains high. However, there has been a focus on case management which has seen a reduction in current caseloads with 485 cases open to the team as of 12.10.2022, as apposed to 526 cases open to the team on 30.06.2022. While there has been a reduction in the number of cases open to the team, the complexity of the issues faced by presenting clients continues to be challenging, with an increase in those fleeing Domestic Abuse and those with complex mental health
NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of year	Providing Homes	210.00	187.00	203.00	174.00	163.00	200.00	215.00	-
Void loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Repairs & Voids	279,964.85	419,701.87	532,510.82	174,371.00	353,269.00	194,520.00	284,299.00	30/09/2022 -

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Place									
Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022-23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupations (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Commercial and Licensing	99.56	97.72	97.24	98.61	98.62	90.00	90.00	
FT1: % of successful outcomes with flytipping	Community Safety	45.00	66.00	73.00	87.50	60.00	70.00	70.00	-
NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene laws	Environmental Health	96.60	98.30	99.60	98.70	98.60	95.00	95.00	The FSA's LA Recovery Plan, continues through to April 2023 and focuses on re-starting the regulatory delivery system in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice for the highest risk establishments while providing greater flexibility for lower risk establishments. Key milestones have been met by officers with a "temperature check" survey completed on reaching each one.
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Environmental Services	268.00	389.00	520.00	126.00		270.00	390.00	07.10.2022 The Q2 figure for residual household waste is not available at this time. The actual figure is reported from an external source and will not be available until December 2022.
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Environmental Services	43.00	38.00	35.00	40.00		41.00	38.00	07.10.2022 The Q2 figure for household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting is not available at this time. The actual figure is reported from an external source and will not be available until December 2022
CNM2g: Garage Voids (residential) as a percentage of stock	Garages	17.49	16.32	14.53	14.51	14.15	14.10	13.80	The residential garage void rate for Q2 is 14.15% against a target of 14.10%, which although is marginally higher than the target, is an improvement on 14.51% Q1.
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted	Housing Development	103.52	95.90	88.16	89.55	96.56	85.00	85.00	The reason for the increase from the previous quarter is because the speed of spend at Kenilworth is higher than the development model forecast. The budget itself is unchanged and the scheme remains on budget.
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Housing Development	278.00	281.00	286.00	293.00	330.00	355.00	357.00	Delivery was behind forecast as a result of wider delays in the construction industry impacting individual sites. The principal delay relates to the Helston House scheme which will provide 29 units of accommodation. This is now forecast to deliver in 2023.

Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022-23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
HDD1e: Number of affordable homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)	Housing Development	6.00	3.00	5.00	7.00	37.00	50.00	2.00	Delivery was behind forecast as a result of wider delays in the construction industry impacting individual sites. The principal delay relates to the Helston House scheme which will provide 29 units of accommodation. This is now forecast to deliver in 2023.
FRA1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid Fire Risk Assessment	Investment	96.94%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
VAS1: Percentage of communal areas with a valid Asbestos survey	Investment	98.21%	98.41%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
VEC1: Percentage of communal areas with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	Investment	49.38%	81.64%	95.46%	99.35%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	30/09/2022 -
VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	Investment	40.84%	48.54%	62.95%	87.85%	92.09%	100.00%	100.00%	30/09/2022 Work continues on domestic electrical inspections; with an improved position of over 92% compared to quarter one. We are working with our contractors and internal teams to arrange access for some of the harder to access properties, which is delaying the completion of these tests. Subject to gaining access to the remaining properties, it is anticipated that all tests will be completed by the end of Q3.
VGC1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate	Investment	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
VLC1: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspection certificate	Investment	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
VLT1: Percentage of domestic passenger lifts with an in date LOLER inspection	Investment			57.89%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Planning & Regulation	16.00	20.00	35.00	6.00	1.00	18.00	19.00	
BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Planning & Regulation	15.00	19.00	30.00	4.00	5.00	7.00	22.00	The number of businesses starting up and the number of new jobs created is quite bleak for this quarter. Data from the Office of National Statistics on businesses started has yet to be released for this quarter but previous data for April to June 2022 indicated a fall in business starts. The btc has again seen quite a bit of churn over the last quarter, with existing businesses moving around the centre and some businesses moving out for financial reasons. The cost of living crisis is biting and some businesses are choosing to have virtual space instead. On the flipside, the btc is also seeing businesses operating from home come into the centre, to take up accommodation. Wenta are also seeing an increase of businesses seeking advice and support and this is on par with other business support organisations, which have also seen an increase in businesses seeking advice. The Wenta marketing machine is on full throttle, with email campaigns and DMs to ensure businesses are aware of the latest savings, skills and training programmes accommodation and business support on offer.
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Planning & Regulation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	83.3%	60.0%	60.0%	31/07/2022 -
NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Planning & Regulation	94.0%	88.5%	87.4%	90.0%	79.6%	65.0%	65.0%	
NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Planning & Regulation	94.8%	89.3%	89.9%	91.9%	92.4%	80.0%	80.0%	

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Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022-23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
ECHFL5: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Repairs & Voids		85.50		84.83	84.81	90.00	90.00	
ECH-Rep3: Percentage repairs appointment made & kept	Repairs & Voids	97.48	98.18	98.87		91.76	95.00	95.00	30/09/2022 -
ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Repairs & Voids	99.91	98.68	96.89	93.16	93.95	87.50	87.50	
Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Repairs & Voids	130.45	201.19	267.62	77.00	140.33	163.54	245.30	
Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Repairs & Voids	0.34	0.65	0.60	0.27	0.24	1.00	1.00	30/09/2022 -
Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Repairs & Voids	2.87	4.76	5.82	6.41	6.95	5.00	5.00	30/09/2022 -
Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Repairs & Voids	9.30	9.39	11.36	15.59	17.33	20.00	20.00	30/09/2022 -

Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
CompGF1: % of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	Customer Focus				81.56%	84.92%	82.00%	86.00%	
CompHRA1: % of housing service customer complaints responded to within deadline	Customer Focus				57.93%	69.91%	74.00%	78.00%	Resourcing challenges and increased levels of complaints have contributed to performance falling below target, particularly in the area of Property Repairs. Weather related damage to fencing, guttering and roofing meant waiting times for these repairs has been longer than usual resulting in an increase of complaints for these trades. The Housing Strategic Complaints managers will work with service areas to better understand the complaints activity, identifying trends and root causes of complaints. Work will take place to review, improve and monitor working practices to improve the customer experience and reduce complaints. Performance is expected to stabilise once additional resource is in place and improvement works are identified
Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Customer Focus	22.67	17.56	18.20	11.63	32.00	35.00	35.00	-
CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Customer Service Centre	35.10	33.80	35.50	39.80	32.10	15.00	15.00	The key challenge for the service is the high turnover of advisers and the lack of available candidates for the roles. This means there is often both a resource gap and reduced skills set amongst the team which leads to longer waiting times and abandoned calls. In recent years of recruitment processes have been improved, and we have regular ongoing advertising for candidate to express and interest. Call coaching and support is ongoing with advisers to help them work efficiently and to improve resolution at first point of contact rate. Performance is expected stabilise providing recruitment is successful and no further advisers leave the service.
CSC13: % of calls to Customer Services reported and resolved by customer	Customer Service Centre	71	71	67	73	60	65	65	The key challenge for the service is the high turnover of advisers which often means there is a skill and knowledge gap while advisers train and settle into the role. Calls that are complex in nature are often passed to the specialist service area to fully resolve the enquiry. New starters take around 2 months of training and support to be effective, and a further 6 months to be working independently on a number of services. Work is underway to develop an improved training and development approach for Customer Services. Performance on this measure is expected to recover during quarter three as new advisers improve their knowledge and skills.
EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	Customer Service Centre	91.00	91.00	89.50	85.50	88.40	90.00	90.00	Customer satisfaction has remained above 90% until recently. Customer comments suggest the waiting times are influencing their overall experience score. Customers continue to leave positive comments about their transaction when they speak with an adviser. It is anticipated that this measure will improve, in line with the activity taking place to reduce call abandonment.
Dig1: % of digital customer transactions	Digital	20	19	23	24	25	28	30	Use of digital services continued to increase, although not at the intended rate. Uptake reached a new peak of 29% in July, before falling back. The key reason for this appears to be the end of government schemes for Covid reliefs that required online application.
BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Finance & Estates	58.2%	86.6%	98.4%	39.2%	62.9%	59.0%	89.0%	Business Rates continues to be profile continue to be impacted by COVID reliefs which skew the collection position, this is going to be further affected as a result of the announcement in December regarding the COVID Additional Relief Fund (CARF) which Stevenage has been allocated a maximum of £2.6Million to allocate to the 2021/22 financial year based on the criteria set out by the government.
BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Finance & Estates	59.3%	86.1%	94.5%	32.4%	59.3%	61.0%	88.0%	Feedback from the team at EH suggests that the cost of living crisis is leading to payment arrangements for customers and missed payments/delayed payments and moving from 10 month DDs to 12 month DDs
CR1: % of commercial rent collected from estates	Finance & Estates	85.00			91.00	95.75	95.00	95.00	

Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Finance & Estates	93.00	87.00	83.20	96.60	96.60	95.00	95.00	
FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Finance & Estates	97.00	100.00	89.00	100.00	100.00	95.00	95.00	
FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet one year target	Finance & Estates	75.06	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	95.00	A report is coming to the November Executive which has potentially a £1Million of savings for Members to approve, this would then leave a further £0.5Million to be found
FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet one year target	Finance & Estates	37.08	25.45	25.45	0.00	0.00	20.00	95.00	Work is ongoing around the budget setting for the HRA and proposals will be made to members in December Executive.
NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	Finance & Estates	7.78	11.79	2.86	11.88	7.28	12.00	10.00	
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.	Human Resources	2.11	1.05	1.07	1.38	2.61	1.80	2.00	Target exceeded - There are currently 17 staff accessing the apprenticeship levy. We continue to encourage existing staff to access continuing professional development appropriate through the apprenticeship levy. Three new apprentices are due to commence in Q3
EoCrec: Time to recruit	Human Resources	47.60	40.00	41.00	45.00	60.00	45.00	45.00	The time to recruit has taken longer this quarter for several reasons: there have been two internal candidates where a later start date has been agreed, there have been two external candidates with long notice periods and we have also experienced delay in receiving responses to reference requests during August due to peak leave.
Pe1: Workforce Stability	Human Resources	88.34	87.80	94.00	83.00	86.35	85.00	85.00	-
Pe2: % of Agency Work assignments exceeding 12 weeks	Human Resources	61.22	49.20	54.00	63.00	74.70	50.00	50.00	There are currently 83 agency workers and 62 have assignments that have exceeded 12 weeks. Those with assignments exceeding 12 weeks have assignment lengths as follows : 31% 13 - 24 weeks, 16% 25 - 36 weeks, 16% 37 - 48 weeks and 37% have assignments exceeding 48 weeks This is reflective of the very challenging recruitment market nationally, with the highest levels of employment in 50 years. SLT are monitoring recruitment activity and undertaking analysis of hard to recruit posts and reviewing approach
Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Human Resources	7.03	9.17	10.63	11.07	10.54	8.00	8.00	Sickness has reduced by 0.79 days compared with quarter one. However, sickness has increased by 2.43 days, compared to the previous 12 months, with absence being 49% short term and 51% long term. Covid absence accounted for the highest days of absence at 252 days of absence during quarter two, with July recording the second highest level during the year. In the last 12 months 1,490 working days (2.46 days per FTE) have been lost to Covid, with December 2021 being higher at 202 days. The increase in sickness absence levels during 2022 is also being seen across other Hertfordshire local authorities and the impact of the national record low levels of absence during 2020.

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Local Based									
Measure Name	Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments

Measure Name		Actual - Quarter 2 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2021/22 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 2 2022/23 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 3 2022/23 (YTD)	Comments
Community Safety : CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population	Community Safety	6.15	5.67	8.90	5.60		7.00	7.00	
Community Safety : CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Community Safety	10.10	6.27	11.30	7.40	8.20	9.00	9.00	
Community Safety : NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Community Safety	18.15	7.80	33.10	7.60		10.00	7.00	-

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DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT TO ROLES

Business Unit	Difficult to Recruit Roles	Service Impacts
Housing and Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant difficulty recruiting to roles in Asset Management following multiple rounds of recruitment. • Independent Living unable to recruit to cleaning roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently supporting the service with agency cover for clerk of works (2 FTE), project management (2 FTE), gas safety, electrical safety and compliance. • Using SBC contract cleaners to supplement the service.
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll-several rounds of recruitment for a payroll manager have been unsuccessful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll services are now being supported by a third party local authority.
Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple rounds of recruitment for qualified surveyors and commercial asset managers have been unsuccessful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service currently supplemented by agency workers for both of these specialities.
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancies across finance business partnering team at business partner and assistant business partner level. • Sickness absence within the technical accounting team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in processing of month and year end processes • Capacity issues for guidance and support on technical accounting matters such as Capital-service supplemented by agency workers
Stevenage Direct Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs- difficulty in recruiting operatives (Of 35 FTE, 22 FTE currently in post supplemented by 10 FTE of agency resources). • Caretaking - 4 vacant caretaker roles from an establishment of 14. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced capacity to process void repairs and day to day housing repairs are seeing longer waiting times.
Digital and Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer services- this is an entry level role, however, requires an element of customer service experience and skills, so despite large volumes of applicants recruitment levels are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSC performance has been significantly impacted by these workforce gaps.

	<p>low. By end of November 2022, there will be 9.5 FTE in post, with 3 FTE of agency workers from an establishment of 18.3 FTE. A recent round of recruitment has resulted in offers to 4 candidates, however, it will take a number of months for skills training to be completed with new recruits. Difficulty retaining staff in this area after 12 months service as they gain the skills to work elsewhere in the Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management – multiple rounds of recruitment have failed to attract enough applicants resulting in vacancies within the digital PMO, a project management vacancy and a business analysis vacancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of the Transformation programme have progressed more slowly than anticipated.
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple rounds of recruitment have failed to attract candidates for key roles resulting in vacancies within the system support team (2 FTE) and the system security team (1 FTE Analyst and 1 FTE Manager)- security team manager has delayed his retirement to ensure service continuity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key IT programme of work and systems upgrades have been delayed.

EXECUTIVE – ACTION TRACKER

MEETING DATE	REPORT ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	ACTIONS	PROGRESS
14 September 2022	Garages Investment Business Case	Commercial & Insourcing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Officers were requested to ensure that Ward Members were consulted in advance on any works to Garage Blocks within their wards. 	<p>The current Garage Improvement Programme (GIP) is coming to an end in August 2023. Estates are drawing up a Garages Strategy to encompass future plans for the GIP. GIP Board meetings are held every other month between officers to discuss works that have taken place, are taking place and will take place. There is a focus during these meetings on ensuring that the works are aligned with the current strategic aims of the programme. Minutes from the GIP Board are available for viewing.</p> <p>Monthly Member updates are circulated to relevant ward members highlighting completed garage works and works in the pipeline.</p>
14 September 2022	Station Gateway Area Action Plan – Preferred Options Report for Public Consultation	Planning Policy Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preferred Options AAP: Provisional consultation dates 28th November 2022 to 22nd January 2023 (TBC, subject to change). Wide ranging consultation again (like Issues & Options last Summer) to ensure as much feedback as possible. Option 2 the Preferred Option for Lytton Way in the Preferred Options AAP, but

			through social media channels.	<p>is being written to give flexibility to shift to other options (we don't want a rigid option) and the focus this time will be more on the overall aims, vision, objectives for the Station Gateway Area in relation to the Town Centre Regeneration and other active travel projects / principles etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope for potential further highways modelling work ahead of the final version of the AAP. • Likely to go to Executive in Summer 2023 with final, Submission version of the AAP. • Examination in Public process anticipated to happen late 2023, TBC and subject to change.
14 September 2022	Corporate Performance – Quarter 1 2022/23	Commercial & Insourcing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers were asked to investigate the potential for increasing the level of commercial sponsorship of Council events and initiatives. 	Revenue from roundabout sponsorship and advertising boards in car parks continues to grow. Officers are working on the next iteration of the SBC events brochure for 2023 and are investigating sponsorship opportunities at the Bus Interchange, Event Island and for the Cycle Hire scheme.
12 October 2022	Cost of Living Crisis Response	Strategic Director (RP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was a need to communicate to residents the sources of legitimate household financial support that might be available to them, as well as 	Action complete as we have updated the website and undertaken social media messaging/signposting.

			warning them of the possibility of scams in this area.	
12 October 2022	Revised Complaints Policy and new Unacceptable Behaviour Policy	Customer Experience and Digital Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when operating the Complaints Policy, could officers look at distinguishing between complaints and service requests; • in respect of the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy, it should be made clear that the public may have to deal with a specified officer (especially in small teams), but would have the right for the matter to be escalated to more senior officers if required; and • the wording in the Unacceptable Behaviour Policy regarding behaviour on social media should be strengthened. 	

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Meeting: EXECUTIVE



Portfolio Area: Resources, Transformation & ICT

Date: 7 December 2022

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2023/24

KEY DECISION

Author – Su Tarran Ext EHC 2075
Contributors- Clare Fletcher
Lead Officer – Brian Moldon
Contact Officer – Su Tarran Ext EHC 2075

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval of the Council Tax Base for 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2023/24 will be 28,654.5 equivalent "Band D" properties, reduced to 28,153.1 equivalent "Band D" properties after making allowances for a 98.25% collection rate.
- 2.2 That the 2023/24 Council Tax Base is approved subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2023/24. The Executive approved the CTS scheme at its meeting on 12 October 2022 for recommendation to Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by legislation, local authorities are required to notify preceptors and levying bodies of their Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year. The notification must be made between the 1 December and the 31 January.
- 3.2 The Council has a statutory duty to make a resolution in respect of the Council Tax Base before the precepting and levying bodies are notified.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Taxbase

4.1.1 The actual number of domestic dwellings in the Borough, shown in the Valuation Officers list on 12 September 2022 was 38,051, compared to 37,813 as at 13 September 2021, an increase of 238 properties.

4.1.2 For each of the Council Tax bands, the tax base figure is the sum of actual dwellings on the valuation list, adjusted for estimated, newly constructed dwellings, exemptions, disabled reductions and discounts, (including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme discounts), to arrive at the net number of chargeable dwellings for each band. The projections for 2023/24 include known construction numbers planned giving a total of 212 (pro rata), new homes for 2023/24 with the majority being band B properties.

4.1.3 This net figure is then multiplied by the relevant proportions for the particular band (e.g. Band A is 6/9 in relation to Band D) in order to convert it to the estimated number of equivalent "Band D" properties for each band.

4.1.4 The relevant proportion for each band are:

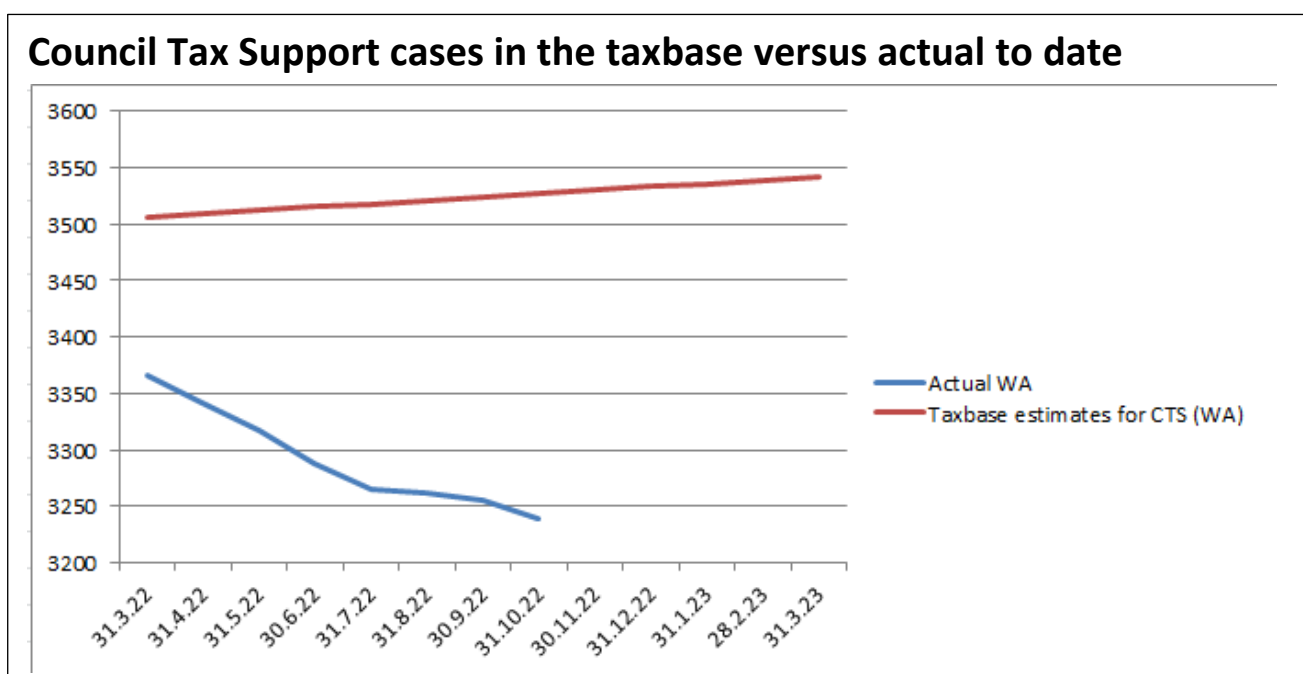
Band	Charge ratio	Valuation (at 1/1/91 prices)
A	6/9	Up to £40,000
B	7/9	Over £40,000 and up to £52,000
C	8/9	Over £52,000 and up to £68,000
D	9/9	Over £68,000 and up to £88,000
E	11/9	Over £88,000 and up to £120,000
F	13/9	Over £120,000 and up to £160,000
G	15/9	Over £160,000 and up to £320,000
H	18/9	Over £320,000

4.1.5 These "Band D" equivalents are aggregated to give the total number of the equivalent "Band D" dwellings for the authority as a whole. For Stevenage this is 28,654.5, which is less than the actual number of dwellings because the majority of dwellings in Stevenage are in Band C.

4.1.6 Stevenage Borough Council is the billing authority for all council tax in the Borough but does not keep the majority of council tax raised. The 2021/22 and 2022/23 amounts and percentage shares for the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Stevenage Council are shown in the chart below (based on Band D).

Authority	2021/22	2022/23	Charge Per day	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,470.63	£1,529.31	£4.19	3.99%	77.32%
Stevenage Borough Council	£220.57	£225.57	£0.62	2.27%	11.40%
Police Crime Commissioner	£213.00	£223.00	£0.61	4.69%	11.28%
Total	£1,904.20	£1,977.88	£5.42	3.87%	100%

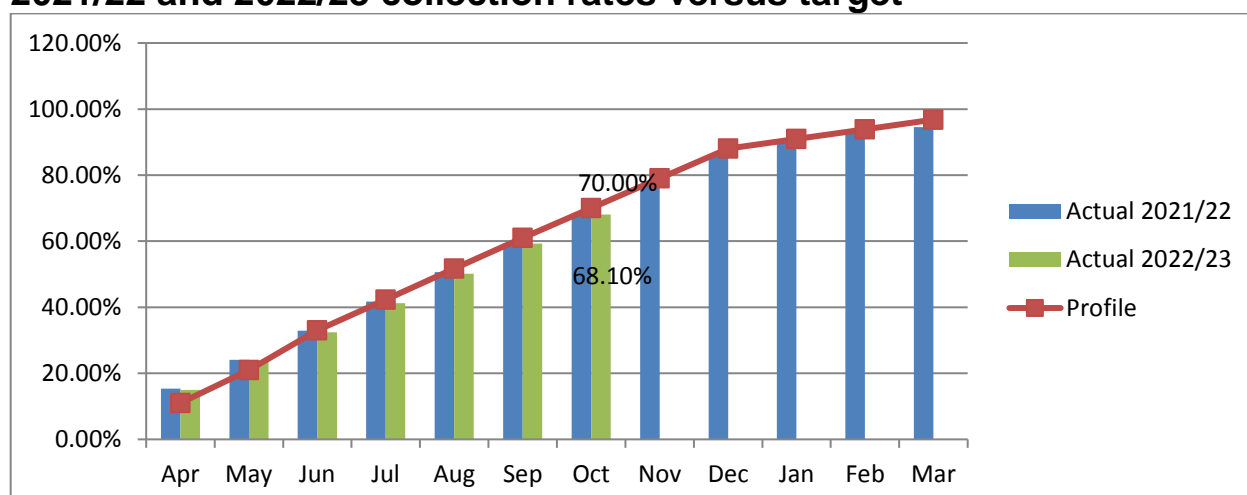
4.1.7 The 2023/24 Council Tax Base proposed is based on the current Council Tax Support Scheme liability of 8.5% and as agreed at the October 2022 Executive. The 2022/23 taxbase had assumed a projected increase in council tax support numbers as a result of COVID on the local economy. The chart below shows the 2022/23 tax base assumed CTS, versus the actual. And shows that the increase projected has not materialised.



4.1.8 The cost of CTS to the taxbase for those working and pensionable age was estimated at £6,261,425 for 2023/24, however the County Council has the biggest cost burden for this, as they account for 77.32% (2022/23) of the tax base with SBC at 11.4%. The average level of CTS in the 2023/24 taxbase is modelled as 5,382 versus 5,226 for working and pensionable age claimants as at the 1 October 2022. The numbers claiming CTS have since fallen from October to 5,204 as at 1 November 2022.

4.1.9 The proposed 2023/24 collection rate percentage remains unchanged at 98.25% as in 2022/23, reflecting sustainable long term recovery rates. The amount collected to 31 October was 68.1% (2021/22 68.2%, target 70.0%). Although the current in year collection rate is slightly lower than the target, a 0.9% under-recovery of council tax would equate to £498,491 for a full year (SBC's share would be £56,828.). This is not a significant difference and there are other factors which influence cash collected, such as the level of properties in the taxbase and the level of discounts.

2021/22 and 2022/23 collection rates versus target



4.1.10 The Council Tax Base for 2023/24, after making allowances for a collection rate of 98.25%, is 28,153.1 equivalent “Band D” properties. (The comparative figure for 2022/23 was 28,003.7).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 The increase in the taxbase is included in the General Fund assumptions in the Making your Money Count November Executive report and will be included in the Draft 2023/24 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Report to the January Executive.

5.1.2 The increase in assumed property numbers and the discount assumptions including Council Tax Support is the equivalent to a total additional 152.76 equivalent Band D properties or £33,695 before any council tax increase is considered. The reason for the increased council tax income is shown in the table below (this is before any council tax increase for 2023/24).

Increased income from 2023/24 taxbase compared to 2022/23 before any council tax increase			
	2022/23 Estimate £	2023/24 Estimate £	Increase /((decrease) £
Properties numbers	7,796,353	7,829,823	33,470
Council Tax Support Scheme	(729,643)	(714,093)	15,550
Changes to other discounts & Premium	(637,402)	(652,128)	(14,726)
Increase in bad debt 2%	(112,513)	(113,113)	(600)
Total	£ 6,316,795	£ 6,350,490	£ 33,695

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The legal implications are in the body of the report.

5.3 Risk Implications

5.3.1 The assumptions made are reasonable at the current time but, if the level of anticipated growth in the 2023/24 Tax Base is not realised and/or the council tax support caseload increases, there could be an in-year deficit on the Collection Fund.

5.4 Policy Implications

5.4.1 None

5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.5.1 There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

5.6 Other Implications.

5.6.1 There are no other direct implications to report at this time.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 – Council Tax Support Scheme

APPENDICES

Appendix A - 2023/24 Council Tax Base

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