

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Wednesday, 14 June 2023**

**Time: 2.00pm,**

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

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

**committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

Members: Councillors: R Henry (Chair), J Thomas (Vice-Chair), S Barr, L Briscoe, J Hollywell, Mrs J Lloyd, L Rossati, S Speller

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## AGENDA

### **PART 1**

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

#### **2. MINUTES - 15 MARCH 2023**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 March 2023 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 10

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

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

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 22 February 2023

Community Select Committee – 9 March 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 21 March 2023

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 23 March 2023

Community Select Committee – 29 March 2023

Pages 11 – 38

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION OF BUILDING SAFETY ACT 2022**

To consider the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 and a proposed policy to meet those requirements.

Pages 39 – 66

**5. DLUHC FUTURE COUNCILS GRANT AWARD**

To consider the proposed approach to utilising the DLUHC Future Councils grant funding of £750,000 successfully bidden for by the Council.

Pages 67 – 76

**6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**7. 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.

**8. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 15 MARCH 2023**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 15 March 2023 for signature by the Chair.

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**9. APPOINTMENT OF DEVELOPER AT BRENT COURT GARAGES AND SHEPHALL VIEW DEVELOPMENT SITES**

To consider a report regarding the appointment of a developer for the Brent Court Garages and Shephall View development sites.

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**10. 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, 14 June 2023 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 15 March 2023**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Jeannette Thomas (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Sandra Barr, Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Mrs Joan Lloyd and Simon Speller.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 2.00pm  
End Time: 3.12pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Richard Henry (Chair).

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 MINUTES - 8 FEBRUARY 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 8 February 2023 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

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

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 17 January 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 24 January 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 14 February 2023

#### **4 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2022/23**

The Executive considered a report in respect of Corporate Performance for Quarter 3 of 2022/23.

The Chair advised that the report provided performance and risk updates relating to delivery of the Future Town Future Council Programme; corporate performance results across the Council's business units; progress against the actions set out in the Cost-of-Living Action Plan; and a summary of the Strategic Risks identified and managed by the Council. Stevenage Borough Council, like all local authorities, was challenged by significant spending reductions and workforce pressures. The report also included a number of areas of progress and delivery against the FTFC programme.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation concerning the Quarter 3 report, and summarised the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) performance highlights throughout the Quarter, under the headings of Transforming Our Town; More Social and Affordable Housing; Co-operative and Neighbourhoods; Making Your Money Count; and a Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town.

The Chief Executive reported that, as at Quarter 3, of the 63 Corporate Performance Indicators, 42 were at Green status; 3 were at Amber; 12 were at Red; and 6 were outstanding (mainly relating to voids, household waste and community safety), the reasons for which he outlined in his presentation.

The Chief Executive presented the improvement activities for the customer services and voids red indicators, and explained the performance challenges being experienced with regard to the human resources and other red indicators.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A to the report) and service performance across the key themes for Quarter Three 2022/23 (Appendix B to the report) be noted.
2. That the strategic risk updates (Section 4.6 of the report) be noted.
3. That the performance challenges in relation to housing voids (Section 4.4.5 of the report), customer services (Section 4.2.5 of the report) and human resources (Section 4.2.13 of the report) be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
4. That the Executive Action Tracker (Appendix C to the report) be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **5 THIRD QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Third 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 the General Fund was showing a net decrease in expenditure of £205,150, made up of a number of variances, but predominately from release of insurance provision of £135,000, and a reduction in budget of £70,000 required for Bed and Breakfast, as homelessness presentations had reduced. This had been offset by a reduction in forecasted income across a number of areas, including parking - £91,000 and trade waste - £67,000. A full breakdown was set out in Section 4.1 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the £205,150 underspend carried the following risks that were yet to be evaluated:

- the risk that an underspend on salaries would not materialise. Budgets were set to include 'transitional vacancy', ie. a short gap between the exit of a postholder and a new starter commencing. This was included in the budget and equated to £280,000; and
- Potential that there was housing benefit subsidy gap, where work was ongoing. An update would be included in the Quarter 4 monitoring report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that, in line with the anticipated forecast, £1.728Million of General Fund reserves would be utilised based on the Quarter 3 monitor. This represented an improvement of £205,000, which would leave the Council with just under £5.2Million of reserves going into 2023/24.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT explained that the report was seeking approval to change the 2023/24 General Fund budget of £12,000 in relation to payment card charges linked to parking.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that the HRA was showing a net increase in expenditure of £157,730 made up from a reduction in rental income of £371,000 due to the delay in anticipated new dwellings coming on line and an increase in council tax on void properties of £107,000. These matters had been partly offset by the improvement on interest on balances of £340,000. A full breakdown of variances can be found in Section 4.4 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT commented that the report was also seeking approval for two virements of £250,000 each, one from the decent homes budget and the second one from the cyclical maintenance budget. Both of these virements related to the funding of works to bring void properties into occupation.

The Assistant Director (Finance) added that the cumulative changes to the General Fund and HRA remained within the increase variation limits delegated to the Executive by the Council.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the 2022/23 Third Quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £205,150 be approved.
2. That it be noted that the cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive.
3. That the changes to the 2023/24 General Fund budget of £12,000, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.5 of the report, be approved.
4. That the 2022/23 Third Quarter projected net increase in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) expenditure of £157,730 be approved.

5. That two virements from the HRA planned maintenance budgets to fund the works to void properties be approved, namely a virement of £250,000 from the decent homes budget and a second virement of £250,000 from the cyclical maintenance budget, as set out in Paragraph 4.4.4 of the report.
6. That it be noted that the cumulative increases made to the HRA net budget remain within the £250,000 increase variation limit, delegated to the Executive, after the Council endorsed charges made in the January 2023 budget report.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **6 THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

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

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT advised that the report was seeking approval to the reprofiling of £9.006Million from the 2022/23 budget and £12.8Million from the 2023/24 budget into future years. The majority of the reprofiling was connected to Housing Development schemes associated with the Kenilworth project. In respect of the Kenilworth project, Phase 2 could not commence until phase 1 had been completed. Phase 1 completion was now forecast for completion in winter 2023 and the New Build Programme reflected the upcoming in-year opportunities within the programme as sites progressed through Planning.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Transformation and ICT stated that there were three virements which Members were requested to approve, moving underspends from these schemes totalling £144,000 back into the Deferred Works Reserve (contingency) which could then be re-allocated in the future.

The Assistant Director (Finance) explained that the actual spend as at the first week of March 2023 represented 75% of the revised General Fund budget for 2022/23, and 80% of the revised HRA budget. Based on trends, the Council was ahead on spend in comparison to previous financial years.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That capital budget re-profiling of £9.006Million from 2022/23 to future years be approved.
2. That an in year virement of £66,000 to reallocate unspent resources to the Deferred Works Reserve from underspends on vehicles within the SDS Capital Programme be approved.
3. That an in year virement of £68,000 to reallocate unspent resources to the Deferred Works Reserve from underspends on the Finance & Estates Capital

Programme be approved.

4. That an in year virement of £10,000 to reallocate unspent resources to the Deferred Works Reserve from underspends on the Communities & Neighbourhoods Capital Programme be approved.
5. That capital budget re-profiling of £12.781Million from 2023/24 to future years be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

### **Zero Emission Bus Scheme**

At the Leader's request in advance of the meeting, the Chair invited the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport to provide an update on the Zero Emission Bus Scheme. He conveyed the very challenging news that Arriva had opted not to progress with the Zero Emission bus scheme in Stevenage.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council had been recently notified, by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), that Arriva planned to withdraw from the Government-funded Zero Emissions Bus programme. This was very difficult news for the town, local commuters, and those of Members and officers of the Council who had been working very hard to tackle the climate crisis.

The Portfolio Holder reminded Members that the Government had awarded funding to the HCC and Arriva partnership in March 2022, as one of 12 areas that could bring forward electric or hydrogen buses. Nationally, this was intended to deliver 943 zero emission buses, from a national fund of £196M. For Stevenage, this would have meant 27 new, electric, modern and state of the art buses. At the time, this investment was greatly welcomed by the Council as, with a first-rate new bus interchange and new buses, there was an outstanding opportunity to help tackle climate change, and provide the high quality public transport that local people deserved.

The Portfolio Holder commented that this followed news from Milton Keynes at the end of 2022, where Arriva had pulled out of the electric bus funding programme planned there too.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council was led to believe that lower than expected passenger numbers had made it difficult for Arriva to justify their business case of match funding the Government's investment. Without question it was a very challenging time for local buses. While the overall number of journeys that people made was starting to recover to the 2020 level, it was reported that there had been a slower return of passenger numbers for some local buses, as well as the train network.

The Portfolio Holder was of the view that a good, well-functioning bus network was

vital for the town's economy. Indeed, around half of all public transport trips were made on buses. In Stevenage there had been some very difficult impacts, including too few drivers, disruption and delay to bus services. The Council offered its support to local bus drivers who were doing a great job keeping the town on the move. However, it was also clear that the country, and Stevenage, needed a properly funded bus strategy. Without investment into new, climate friendly, and regular buses, a difficult future was envisaged. It was vital the Government learnt lessons from this zero emissions programme, recognised the damage caused by a lack of drivers and funding, and came up with a long-term plan to protect and improve buses.

The Portfolio Holder advised that officers were engaging with HCC, who had led this bid, to help consider if there were any solutions or routes forward.

The Executive was extremely disappointed to receive this news, especially in the light of Arriva's supposed long-term commitment to climate change issues.

## **8 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.

## **9 YOUTH SKILLS INVESTMENT IN STEVENAGE**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of youth skills investment in Stevenage, and seeking agreement for the Council to act as the accountable body for a programme to support disadvantaged and under-represented young people in the town to consider and potentially secure careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sector.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **10 AFFORDABLE OLDER PERSONS HOUSING STOCK - NEW SUPPLY AND STOCK MANAGEMENT**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of a new supply and management of the Council's Affordable Older Persons Housing Stock.



It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report, together with an additional recommendation circulated at the meeting, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **11 LAND ACQUISITION AND SCHEME CONTRACT APPROVAL**

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval for the acquisition of land and appointment of a contractor for the development of a site in Bandley Hill Ward.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **12 SITE DISPOSAL REPORT**

The Executive considered a Part II report seeking approval for the disposal of surplus amenity land in Roebuck Ward, as identified in the Locality Review, to generate a capital receipt for the Council.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **13 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT - THE FORUM**

The Executive considered a Part II report providing an overview of proposals for a new Life Sciences development on the site of the Forum shopping area in the town centre, and the commercial and legal position of the Council as landowner of the car park.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **14 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

## **CHAIR**

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 22 February 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath and Claire Parris.

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

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

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Loraine Rossati.

Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren was absent.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2      **MINUTES - 17 JANUARY 2023**

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3      **COST OF LIVING CRISIS - FOCUS ON THE IMPACT ON BUSINESSES**

The Chair introduced the speakers which included Simon Holmes, Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager and Emma Wright, Client Services Operations Manager from Wenta (an independent, not-for-profit social enterprise that run the Council's Business Technology Centre (BTC)), and Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager at Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). He also introduced the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Councillor Lloyd Briscoe. He stated that SBC worked hard to support businesses in the town and there was importance in sustainable growth as well as collaborative working, such as the work with Wenta.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager introduced Wenta and stated they had 100 clients who operated from their facilities and they offered business advice and support services. He then gave a presentation on their work at Wenta.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager stated that there

had been pressures on businesses and there had been issues faced particularly around staffing retention.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager informed Members that in Autumn 2020, there were 22 vacant offices in the BTC. Over the last 2 years this had changed and there was 6 vacant at the start of the year. In terms of office movements, in 2021 there were more moving out than moving in, whereas in 2022 there were more people moving in to the BTC. Larger offices were also beginning to be less popular. The leads had reduced on office enquiries as brokers were not as active, there had been increased competition in Stevenage and Hertfordshire, as well as working from home having an impact. He stated that other factors such as aged debt had increased as well as short term cash flow became an issue.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager informed Members of some of the successes which included:

- The virtual clients remained strong.
- Incubator and co working spaces bounced back.
- Over the last 6 months meeting rooms had picked up again.
- Wenta had partnered up with SBC on the Net Zero programme and had 65 organisation who had committed to net zero and measuring their carbon foot print.
- Wenta had encouraged people to join the BTC and offered upskilling to clients.
- Wenta had partnered with organisations such as Google Digital Garage to deliver specialised content and nationally recognised webinars to clients.

The Client Services Operations Manager gave the Committee information on some of the business advice offered by Wenta. In terms of support required, in 2020/21 the top three subjects needing support were how to start (52%), finance funding, and business planning. In 2021/22 how to start support rose (60%), as well as marketing and funding. In 2022/23 how to start decreased (40%), as well as net zero and funding (11%) which was the highest since the pandemic.

The Client Services Operations Manager stated that in 2020/21 the top age of businesses seen were prestart businesses (55%), in 2021/22 prestart was 65% but in 2022/23 prestart dropped to 41% and it was the highest percentage of 5+ years (16%) which wasn't usually seen. In terms of businesses being supported, in 2020/21 it was consulting, food and drink, and retail. In 2021/22 it was retail, repairs and maintenance, and design and creative. In 2022/23 it was retail, food and drink, and entertainment and arts. She summarised that pre-start businesses reaching out for support, as well as support for how to start businesses were reducing. She also stated that more established businesses were reaching out for support.

The Director of Client Services and Enterprise Partnership Manager advised that Wenta wanted to focus on incubated growth and supporting employment in Stevenage through the development of growth sectors and supply chains. He added they wanted to expand their work with North Hertfordshire College, as well as Action Zero Accreditation. Additionally, Wenta was supporting Tom Pike, Strategic Director,

with an Enterprise Centre in the town, as well as a partnership with Stevenage Community Trust to support the community. He brought attention to the Feel Good discounts area on the Wenta website which offered help to SMEs on services.

In response to Members questions regarding the BTC, it was advised:

- Churn was not new to the BTC, and Wenta offer roll on roll off monthly terms.
- Upsizing and downsizing did happen as people were more flexible
- The average length of stay wasn't often analysed but figures can be brought back to the Committee.

In response to Members questions regarding SME's, it was advised:

- The financial stability of being a green business was less of an issue with Wenta services. There were different tiers offered, bronze, silver, and gold. Bronze was free and there was advice around green services, silver and gold were small monthly fees. Business advice offered by Wenta was always free.
- In 2021/22 there was a spike in pharmaceutical organisations. Smaller organisations did face challenges now, as they didn't have as much access to resources, people etc. therefore they could lose out to bigger businesses, but this came down to their responsiveness.

A Member asked a question regarding the online vs physical shopping. In response, it was advised that traditional retailers moved online in the pandemic and people have come up with products they wanted to sell on online sites such as Amazon. Wenta had seen an increase in retail businesses, some are small spaces such as market stalls, but online outweighed this.

Another Member asked whether there was a strong online presence in terms of training for climate change accreditation and what Wenta offered, as well as how easy it was for businesses to apply for government funding. In response, it was advised that there was face to face training and support offered in the BTC. The majority of clients preferred digital training. Wenta offered different webinars on topics such as finance, cashflow management, social media, marketing, websites, and cyber security. This was complimented by business advice services. He advised that clients could speak on a one-to-one basis in person or on the phone. The net zero services and virtual offices were online and there was a live chat to a business advisor that was accessible to all. Additionally, it was advised that Wenta hadn't had any challenges from businesses and so it felt like an easy process.

A Member asked how many grants were available for SMES. In response it was advised that the grants are funded by the EU which was coming to an end and will be replaced by the UK shared prosperity fund. Wenta always gave out grants where possible and would be around £3,000 for start-ups or early stage within the first 3 years. He stressed that grants were important for SMEs and Wenta worked with businesses if grants aren't available to find other options.

The Business Relationship Manager gave a presentation on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) in Stevenage. The annual inflation rate had risen since February 2021. By January 2023 the electricity prices rose by 66.7% and gas prices rose 129.4%. She informed the Committee that

regular pay for UK employees fell in December 2022 and Stevenage resident weekly real pay had gone up since 2021 (£612.50) but was behind the Hertfordshire average (£736.10) and the national average (£642.20). She added that the average house price in Stevenage was £356,799, with this being the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive month of house price growth, and the average property rent was £1,539pcm.

The Business Relationship Manager stated that 41% of businesses reported a rise in the price of goods and services bought in December 2022. Construction was the largest industry group in Stevenage (18%), and the scientific, professional, and technical industry came second (13%). The retail industry group saw a steady growth until 2020. Small enterprises had increased by 13.6% and medium sized businesses had increased by 28.5%.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted the opportunities for SMEs through the Stevenage Regeneration. The town centre investment continued, as well as mixed use development and the co-space area which opened in 2021. There were new leisure opportunities, such as NEWVU and Geek Retreat. Additionally, there was investment into life sciences. This includes the £65m Autolus investment and the new Forum development which brought science labs, STEM teaching and retail units. These supported the revitalisation of the town centre and created wider employment and apprenticeship opportunities for residents.

The Business Relationship Manager brought attention to the continued investment through unique Stevenage sector activities which included:

- In 2021 the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) site was refurbished which supported the highly innovative and technology smart workspaces for 580 members of staff.
- The new £35m UK Space and Defence HQ opened by Airbus which supported Airbus' continued investment in British space capability and toward the UK plan to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030
- Activities at Stevenage Biosciences Catalyst which £64m and 1,050 jobs contributed to the local economy
- Sycamore House which was estimated to result in £150m gross GVA and 2,800 jobs when fully occupied in 2027
- GSK created Europe's largest life sciences campus in Stevenage "fostering next generation of world-class scientists and biotechnology firms".

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted the Herts Growth Hub who conducted a cost-of-living survey across businesses in Hertfordshire which revealed how the cost-of-living crisis has affected businesses. In this, 61% stated they had increased their price of goods and 71% were concerned about the impact of the rising cost of living on their employees financial and mental wellbeing. She outlined the impact on Stevenage businesses, such as leisure, who had experienced a number of issues, such as recruitment and retention and decreasing customers.

The Business Relationship Manager brought attention to the Government support to businesses. The Energy Bill Relief Scheme was eligible to businesses and organisations to receive 6 months support from October 2022. This scheme ended in March 2023 but organisations that needed further support after this date could get

help from the Energy Bills Discount Scheme. She also highlighted the grants funding, such as reducing carbon footprint.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted various business support that was offered including:

- Herts Growth Hub – offering resources to support businesses tackle rising costs which fell under three categories, boosting business resilience, reducing costs by increasing the efficiency and sustainability of businesses, and helping businesses owners/leaders to maintain their own wellbeing and that of their workforce. Herts Growth Hub hosted an event on 10<sup>th</sup> March.
- Wenta – there were various schemes offered such as Action Zero Support, Savings Support, and training and events to encourage.
- Networking opportunities through Biz4biz, Co-space monthly networking meetings, and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce.
- SBC – Shop Stevenage Portal which provided businesses in the High Street with a digital presence.

The Business Relationship Manager highlighted SBC Mission 44 which was to provide a supportive environment for Stevenage's disadvantaged young people to access wider STEM opportunities with businesses. Stevenage was a key innovation partner globally, but also key for investment. The supply of land and manufacturing space as an issue and young people had limited employment and apprenticeship opportunities. She also brought attention to the Generation Stevenage event in May 2023 at Knebworth Barns to connect local employers to local talent.

A Member suggested that the Council should encourage businesses to go into schools and tell young people what was available. Young people needed all the information before they left school. It was advised that new employers wanted to employ local people and were offering entry level jobs which were good for Stevenage. The careers enterprise programme and Herts opportunities portal promoted opportunities and encouraged employers to go into schools and work with young people.

Another Member asked whether interest rates were a factor in slowing down investment. He then queried the census information into current attainment rates, as well as house prices and wages. It was advised that Wenta said that businesses had mentioned interest rates and although this was not in the Herts Growth Survey, it was a factor. COVID was a big factor affecting young people with employment access and work experience. Additionally, house prices were increasing, and residents' earnings were behind East Hertfordshire national levels. It was advised that there were new opportunities for local people and opportunities to upskill.

A Member asked how many businesses were being supported with a digital presence, and how many people are commuting out of Stevenage. It was advised that 63 businesses were taking part in ongoing activities to support digital presence. According to census data, 28% of residents were travelling out of Stevenage, however there was a similar number of people travelling into Stevenage.

A Member suggested that it wasn't only young people who needed upskilling, other

people needed to be given opportunities as well. It was advised that people of all ages needed this. The Hertfordshire Chambers of Commerce were commissioned by central Government to support the Local Skills Improvement Plan and led on a number of sector led workshops to address the skill needs to businesses in Hertfordshire.

Another Member suggested that the Council needed to counter thinking of young people as there was a perception that they should work outside of Stevenage. It was advised that there was an issue within Hertfordshire but through Regeneration the facilities were improved, and this gave young people a reason to stay.

4 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**



# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 9 March 2023

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 Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.28pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies received.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - MONDAY 9 JANUARY 2023

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 January 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

### 3 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023-24

The Chair presented the draft Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023-24 to the Committee. Each scrutiny Member was encouraged to choose a maximum of three suggested items as part of an annual scrutiny survey. The items listed in the report were made up of Members suggestions. The Committee was advised that ideally there was one main scrutiny review item and then shorter updates/one off performance meetings. The Members discussed and debated the following potential scrutiny items currently on the Work Programme for 2023/24:

- Local Community Centres/Local Committees/Resident Meetings – An update on the work on community centres was considered something that would be useful, and this was potentially a substantial piece of policy development work. Another Member highlighted the importance of local committees. The Operations Director advised part of the challenge regarding Community Centres was looking at the existing estate and all the buildings and see housing development opportunities would be possible. There were new schemes, such as the Oval, which bring a lot of opportunities. He also advised that the item was worthy of two separate Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) sessions as, although they were related, there was a lot of

work to be done.

- Repairs – The Committee needed a better understanding of this to look at the problems to help residents. A Member suggested there were problems with repairs and the organisation needed to respond quicker to tenants reporting problems. Another Member agreed stating that the majority of resident frustration comes from communication problems. A Member proposed that the Committee should look at the customer journey through repairs, as repairs as a whole subject was too broad.
- Cultural strategy – This was significant to the town and it was useful to see where the redevelopment of Stevenage was at. A Member suggested it would also be helpful to see where the town stood post-covid and what challenges the town faced. The Scrutiny Officer advised this item should be one update and one presentation at most.
- Public Health Scrutiny – The Scrutiny Officer advised this was good practice to look at once a year, and the Committee needed to prioritise this as this year's session didn't take place.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that there were some items that were legal requirements, such as Crime and Disorder, so they weren't included on the list of items.

The Committee decided that some suggested items were better suited for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This included SBCs use of consultants, the analysis of the census process and results, and the customer experience. The Operations Director suggested that the census item could also be done in an all-Member briefing as this was relevant to everyone and all policy areas and decisions. The Chair proposed that the suggested item of a cross party team on change and improvement would be better implemented by an executive Member and could be forwarded to the Leader.

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the draft Work Programme for 2023-24 and agreed that the work programme should include:

- A review of repairs (main review item)
- An update on the Cultural Strategy (one off performance review)
- A policy development item on Community Centres (Portfolio Holder Advisory Group)
- A Public Health meeting
- Statutory Crime and Disorder Committee meeting

4

## **DRAFT REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOUSING VOIDS**

The Chair introduced the draft report and recommendations of the scrutiny review of housing voids. She summarised that this review was to look at why the voids

process took so long.

In response to Member comments/questions, Officers advised:

- There was room for improvement and the Council was reviewing processes but reminded Members to be mindful of the resources available.
- The 26-day target was a historic target. This didn't just include void repairs but the entire letting process. There was national benchmarking data available, but national standards can't always compare to local levels. It was advised data and comparisons were being identified from neighbouring districts.
- The tenant's responsibility was contained in the letting agreement, but it would be useful to remind them periodically through communication and inspections. Proactive inspections were important to prevent issues such as unreported damage or repairs and unauthorised modifications.

Members agreed on the following recommendations, with the additional conditions/changes:

- 4.2.1 "Carry out a programmed cycle of inspections on properties. See paragraph 3.1.3. Consideration would need to be given to how such an inspection regime would be instigated and whether there could be agreed triggers that would necessitate a visit, such as complaints from neighbours due to the dumping of rubbish, non-payment of rent, as well as any planned maintenance or reactive maintenance visits to the property etc. and on any such visits a checklist in relation to a disrepair/defects survey should be completed."
- 4.6.1 "That Officers provide Members with a detailed proposal of the end-to-end void process..."
- 4.7.1 "The Committee is keen for Officers to explore ways to hold tenants to account for keeping SBC's property/their home in good repair. Where there are rechargeable repairs identified in inspection activity or otherwise, throughout the term of the tenancy that the tenant is charged, at discretion, to avoid leaving multiple repairs and a large bill at the end of the tenancy. This should include unauthorised modifications."

The removal of recommendation 8 – Undertake a review of the lettable standard.

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the draft report and supported the recommendations of the scrutiny review of housing voids, with the above amendments.

## 5 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was none.

6      **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7      **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Philip Bibby CC (Vice-Chair), Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Michael Downing, Bret Facey, Wendy Kerby, Conor McGrath, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris and Anne Wells.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.47pm

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Loraine Rossati.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 14 FEBRUARY 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 14 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

**2. Minutes – 8 February 2023**

Noted.

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

Noted.

**4. Corporate Performance Quarter 3 2022/23**

The Strategic Director (RP) advised that the Executive had received a presentation from the Chief Executive regarding Quarter 3 performance against the Future Town Future Council indicators, together with other corporate indicators, and proposed improvement activities for the red indicators. All four recommendations in the report were approved by the Executive.

**5. Third Quarter Revenue Monitoring Report 2022/23 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**

The Assistant Director (Finance) advised that the Executive had approved a Quarter 3 net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £205,150 and a net increase in Housing Revenue Account expenditure of £157,750. All six recommendations in the report were approved by the Executive.

**6. Third Quarter Capital Monitoring Report 2022/23 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**

The Assistant Director (Finance) advised that the Executive had approved all five recommendations in the report, which primarily concerned the reprofiling of Capital projects from the 2022/23 budget to 2023/24 and/or future years.

**7. Urgent Part I Business – Zero Emission Bus Scheme**

The Strategic Director (TP) stated that the Executive had received a verbal report from the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport conveying the disappointing news that Arriva had opted not to progress with the Zero Emission bus scheme in Stevenage. The Portfolio Holder had informed the Executive that the Council had been led to believe that lower than expected passenger numbers had made it difficult for Arriva to justify their business case of match funding the Government's investment for the scheme. He had commented that SBC officers were engaging with HCC, who had led this bid, to help to consider if there were any solutions or routes forward.

In response to a series of Members questions, it was confirmed:

- HCC was in discussions with a bus operator in another part of the county to see if a zero emission scheme could work for that provider in that location; and
- There was no indication from the Department of Transport as to when and if any other rounds of support funding would be provided in the future for zero emission bus schemes.

A Member stated that the Committee's anger, as well as disappointment, at Arriva's decision to not participate in the scheme should be conveyed to the Executive. The Member hoped that a report would be presented at a later date on the progress made with regard to potential solutions for the future.

The Chair of the Environment & Economy Select Committee commented that he would give consideration to the inclusion of an item on bus services in Stevenage, including the zero emission scheme, on the agenda for a future meeting of that Committee.

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

None.

#### **5 WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report requesting the Committee to agree its Work Programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

The seven Member suggestions for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24 were referred to as follows:

- ICT performance and future direction;
- Census data assessment;
- Re-assessment of Scrutiny of Scrutiny review carried out in 2021;
- Joint Service provision/Shared Services;
- Review of SBC's use of consultants;
- Possible changes to SBC services that would benefit the customer experience; and
- The establishment of an autonomous cross-party team (with a membership without senior Members or officers), including employees from each department, to identify areas requiring change or improvement.

The Committee debated these suggestions and, whilst appreciating that there would be capacity issues associated with delivering them all in 2023/24, agreed that Members be invited to rank them. In addition, it was agreed that officers be requested to give consideration to, and report back to the Committee on, the method of delivery of the seven suggestions, which for some could be via informal methods of delivery other than review by formal meetings of the Committee.

In relation to the Scrutiny of Scrutiny review, the Scrutiny Officer agreed to re-circulate the 2021 review report to Committee Members, together with the then Leader of the Council's responses to the recommendations contained in that report.

The Committee discussed scrutiny of the budget, and expressed disappointment that the Leader's Financial Security Group (LSFG) had not met at all during 2022/23 to consider the 2023/24 Revenue Budget and had only met on one occasion to consider the 2023/24 Capital Budget. The Committee was advised that this had been due to the complex and challenging nature surrounding the preparation of the 2023/24 budget. The Strategic Director (TP) and Assistant Director (Finance) agreed to seek confirmation from the Strategic Director (CF) regarding the plans for LSFG meetings later in the year to scrutinise the 2024/25 budget proposals, and to advise Members of the Committee accordingly.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas from improving Scrutiny (as set out in Section 4 of the report, be noted.

2. That Committee Members be invited to rank the seven suggestions for inclusion in the Committee's Work Programme for 2023/24.
3. That officers be requested to give consideration to, and report back to the Committee on, the method of delivery of the seven suggestions, which for some could be via informal methods of delivery other than review by formal meetings of the Committee.
4. That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings to carry out policy development work identified so far for the Committee, as set out in Section 7 of the report, be noted.

## **6 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

## **7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

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

### **9. Youth Skills Investment in Stevenage**

The Committee raised a number of comments regarding this item.

### **10. Affordable Older Persons Housing Stock – New Supply and Stock Management**

The Housing Development Delivery Manager answered a Member's question regarding this item.

### **11. Land Acquisition and Scheme Contract Approval**

The Committee noted this item.

### **12. Site Disposal Report**

The Assistant Director (Finance) and Commercial Asset Manager answered a number of Members' questions regarding this item.



**13. Proposed Development – The Forum**

The Assistant Director (Regeneration) answered a number of Members' questions regarding this item.

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

None.

**10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 23 March 2023

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, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.

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

**Time:** End Time: 7.49pm

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

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Michael Downing.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023**

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 22 February 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **COST OF LIVING CRISIS - FOCUS ON THE COUNCIL'S EMPLOYEES**

The Chair introduced the item that looked at the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) teams. He stated that the unions, Unite and Unison, offered insights into the impact by asking open questions. This item and the documents circulated before the meeting looked at the responses from both Human Resources (HR) and the unions. He highlighted that previous meetings had looked at the cost-of-living impact on both residents and businesses.

The Heads of HR, Kirsten Frew and Clare Davies, provided a written update to Members in advance of the meeting and then gave a verbal presentation and provided a summary of the responses. They stated that HR ensured signposting to financial wellbeing resources was available to staff and highlighted the dedicated area on the intranet that contained links to support and information, as well as the other resources such as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). They advised that HR ran a series of resilience sessions, one of which focused on financial wellbeing.

The Heads of HR advised that there was a pay award of £1925 received across all

salaries in 2022/23, which was a 10% pay rise for the lowest pay band. The pay awards were negotiated nationally between the Local Government Association (LGA) and the unions. They highlighted that there were increments in pay each financial year until the employee reaches the top of the pay band.

They informed Members the EAP was a free service for staff that offered services such as financial resources, free legal advice and 6 counselling and support sessions for free. During a staff survey, 85% of respondents said they were aware of the EAP, but there had not been a big increase in users.

They advised that managers were having regular 'real conversations' which were structured around the individual and any support they needed. Members were informed that the absences related to things such as stress or anxiety were similar this year compared to last year. In terms of staff turnover there were 81 leavers compared to 78 last year. In terms of the number of vacancies, there were over 100 roles advertised. There had been challenges but these reflected the national position of the employment market. Some of these challenges had been in areas such as customer service and technical roles.

A Member suggested that there was a stigma around asking for help and this could affect the use of the resources available. The HR managers advised that a lot of the resources were anonymous, for example the EAP, and the Council didn't receive any data from this. They suggested to increase internal communications to staff to remind them that it was anonymous, and no one would know they had financial support, etc. This could help remove the stigma and reassure people no one would know they have asked for help.

Following a question regarding where data on people leaving came from and whether exit interviews were conducted. It was advised that there was an exit interview in the form of an online questionnaire which was anonymous, but there was also an offer of a face-to-face exit interview with the assistant director. The question why someone was leaving was asked in the exit interview. Many people who have a longer service often move to another public sector, whereas those with a shorter service move around. More people were moving to other sectors.

Following a question regarding pre-covid data available on the differences in absences as well as staff retention. It was advised that the difference in absence was 127 to 128 and this was instances of absences rather than the amount of people. Additionally, the number of employees gained compared to the amount lost had remained stable for the last 10 years.

Following a question about whether the Council offered any assistance to those working from home and whether it was more difficult to track support when people are working from home. Members were advised that the relationships with managers were important to determine how people wanted to work and where, as well as any support they needed and the support available to them. The Council had always had staff working in different locations to their line managers in frontline services. Communication between employees and managers working in different locations was essential and Officers continued to work to improve this. The office was always

open and available to people who wanted to come in, but ways of working had changed and nationally, roles that were completely remote had the lowest turnover. The Council did not offer an allowance for homeworking as this was something that would be negotiated and had not been agreed on that level. However, laptops and other IT equipment were offered, as well as the chance to borrow office chairs which covered health and safety concerns. Homeworking allowance was being discussed as part of the 2023 pay claim nationally between the LGA and trade unions.

The Head of HR, Kirsten Frew, agreed to circulate an employee stability index report to Members.

#### 4 **CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE & RESPONSE TO THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Chair led a discussion on the climate emergency review and recommendations and highlighted final report recommendations.

The Chair suggested that decarbonisation of the Stevenage transport fleet was important in achieving net zero, as well as looking at the buildings and energy use. He also suggested that the new hub should be as climate friendly as possible.

Following a question from a Member as to whether there were other figures to track the progress against the baseline figure was from 2018, the Assistant Director agreed that people need to see clear evidence of progress and results. He advised that the Council worked closely with the Hertfordshire Climate Change Partnership (HCCP) and suggested data on a biannual basis.

Following a question from a Member about whether things such as the carbon footprint of the housing stock were included in the Borough Council figures or recorded as Borough area data. The Assistant Director advised that this was complicated as the buildings including their insulation levels and energy sources were included in the data for the Council but the use of the building, such as the use of heating etc, were factors influenced by the tenant. Also, it was important to look at the Councils processes and actions as well as getting networks in place to collaborate effectively on climate change.

Following a question from a Member as to whether there was a clash of priorities in reducing climate change and the budget. Members suggested that there should be a similar scheme to the warm spaces scheme during winter but for cool spaces when it was hot in summer. Following a further question regarding how many council offices had air conditioning, the HR manager responded that the new blocks have climate control air conditioning, and some older buildings have had climate control installed. The Assistant Director advised that some front-line staff were exposed to high and low temperatures and extreme weather, and there were measures in place to help mitigate the impact on staff such as weatherproof clothing or alternative working opportunities in extreme heat. The Climate Change Lead Officer also advised that as part of the HCCSP partnership, strategies for climate change adaptation were being worked on and this included operational risk.

The Chair highlighted the work going into climate change and the number of bodies outside of SBC involved in the work, as well as the SBC Chief Executives work on climate change in Hertfordshire. The Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change, Councillor Simon Speller, advised that to work with other agencies SBC needed time and people to improve the issues. SBC needed to work up the community and engage young people and listen to residents' voices.

The Chair suggested that climate change was linked to cultural change. Cllr Simon Speller advised that the senior team at SBC were onboard with climate change and were helping to progress climate change responsibilities within the Council.

The Chair highlighted the high temperatures in the summer and the many dangers to health for older residents. The Assistant Director advised there was support for workers and SBC adjusted their ways of working.

A Member suggested that air conditioning was just as bad and that the design of buildings needed to be adapted as it was being built rather than after. Cllr Speller advised that Executive Portfolio Holders Cllr Jeanette Thomas and Cllr Jackie Hollywell could give a more specific answer. Another Member asked whether HCC would be included and that certain buildings, such as classrooms, were too hot in the summer. Cllr Speller advised that schools were a Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) matter and could be raised further.

The Chair suggested that behavioural change was key to influencing the wider community and SBC should look at what the County was doing. Cllr Simon Speller brought Member's attention to community events, such as the Leys School planting in Welford Court. He suggested that behavioural insight and change needed to take place and it was specifically important in young people who could share this with their families and school networks. He added that the Stevenage Football Club were promoting community engagement and were working with the local college. Cllr Speller suggested that the Council had a role to play regarding behaviour change, but it was important to recognise that the Council had limited scope to do this work.

The Chair suggested that these processes should be reported back to the Committee and should be brought back on a regular basis. He added there was an online platform to track the climate actions SBC lead or took part in. Cllr Speller advised that training and development was important. The Climate Change Lead Officer advised the online platform was launched last week internally to track all actions related to climate change. This was still a work in progress and wasn't available to people outside SBC yet.

A Member queried the response given. Cllr Speller advised that the Portfolio Holder Advisory Groups (PHAG) and Select Committees should work together. A yearly review would be positive.

The Chair suggested training packages and working together in a collaborative and cooperative way was positive and could be used to raise awareness of climate change and issues locally.

A Member asked where climate change courses were available. Cllr Speller advised

the Local Government Association (LGA) do some work, as well as training from the individual political groups. Certain groups, as well as online resources and YouTube videos were helpful. Another Member advised that Members who were part of the LGIU had a training budget and different courses were available.

Another Member highlighted the need for data to see what works and what doesn't, then SBC can decide what training was needed.

The Chair then invited Councillor Simon Speller, Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, and Veronica Chan, the Climate Change Lead Officer to give a presentation updating Members on the Dragons Den Project which included:

- Ward Members have £7,500 per ward per year, which would roll forward into the next year.
- Community Groups needed a consistently sustainable way to launch and run the green initiatives to improve their area and looked to deliver on three key criteria
  - A project that saved SBC running costs (or were at least neutral)
  - A project that brought social values to community groups
  - A project that mitigated or adapted to climate change
- Cllr Speller advised that residents should come to ward Members if they have a green idea, which made the scheme more manageable.
- There would be a Climate Change Progress Group consisting of some Members and Portfolio Holders which would be reassessed, and any Member could get involved before the panel was finalised.
- There were three sections in Baddeley Close which were proposed to be a vegetable patch and a sensory garden.
- The scheme was in partnership with Peartree School and was hopeful to have Barnwell School involved.
- The first pilot scheme should be running by July 2023.

The Climate Change Lead Officer gave an overview on how the process worked. An application form would be filled out detailing who championed the project, what support was needed (e.g., financial), and how it met the criteria. Officers would review this, and it would be sent to a panel to decide whether it should be funded or not. The whole process should take around 4-6 weeks. When residents get funding, they could start the project and would have to demonstrate evidence of its success. Cllr Speller informed Members there was no deadlines and residents can apply at any time of the year. He urged Members to look at school, groups and communities in their wards who would be interested in the scheme.

Following a question regarding where the money was going. Cllr Speller advised the timeline presented to Members was the timeline specifically for the Baddeley Close scheme, but this would be different for every scheme. The money awarded went to the items the scheme would be built around.

Another Member suggested that Officers should assess the viability and the process

needed to be made simpler. Cllr Speller advised the Climate Change Progress Group assessed the criteria and the process was easy for residents to talk to a champion. The process shown to Members was to visualise it for the Committee.

A Member asked whether a piece of land could be adopted for things such as planting flowers. Cllr Speller suggested that something small such as planting a wildflower meadow should be done informally, noting that permissions would be required if it was SBC land. These smaller initiatives don't cost much money and approval from the Council didn't need to come from the Dragons Den Scheme.

Another Member queried whether if permission for a piece of land was obtained from another source, such as HCC or the environment agency, could projects be done on this. Additionally, they asked whether tree planting was included in the scheme. Cllr Speller advised that tree planting could be done with small schemes. The Dragons Den Scheme could be done with any piece of land as long as permission was given by the landowner.

A Member asked whether it was compulsory to meet all three criteria to qualify for the scheme. Cllr Speller advised that the criteria were a guideline, not a strict rule, but they wanted groups to take part in this, not just individuals.

It was **RESOLVED**: That the Committee noted the climate emergency review and recommendations.

## 5 **DRAFT E&E SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023-24**

The Chair presented the draft Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023-24 to the Committee. He suggested that an important piece of work was to look at the buses and electric buses in Stevenage. This was important for residents and for climate mitigation and was good to look at in more detail as the town had not received what was promised. He suggested this could either be done as a one-off meeting or as a larger piece of work. If it was a larger piece of work, the Committee could ask external people such as Arriva, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), etc. to gain a more extensive response. It was noted that buses and public transport was not a matter directly in the Council's control, but invitation could be extended.

Members agreed this was a significant problem and should be scrutinised as it was in public interest. One Member suggested it was too big for a one-off meeting, but it depended on who could attend the meetings. Another Member agreed and stated that the Council needed to look at other options going forward to work towards net zero with Stevenage transport and lessons needed to be learnt.

The Chair then suggested other items to be added to the work programme. He advised that the work on the cost-of-living crisis should be completed and there would be another small piece of work on residents and the work would be summarised into a report on the impact on the local community. He suggested the work on climate change should continue (in the form of monitoring progress), and there should be a piece of work next year on employment opportunities for young people.



Members suggested that it was important that local residents should be included in roles in the growing life sciences sector in Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Committee noted the draft Work Programme for 2023-24 and agreed that the work programme should include:

- Buses/trains (main review item)
- Finishing the cost-of-living review (one or two items)
- Continuing the climate emergency (monitoring twice a year)
- Employment opportunities for younger people

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**

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**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 29 March 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Alex Farquharson (Vice-Chair),  
Jim Brown, Nazmin Chowdhury, Wendy Kerby and Anne Wells.

Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren (Substitute)

**Start / End**      Start Time:    6.00pm  
**Time:**            End Time:        7.20pm

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

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Stephen Booth (substituted by Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren), Adrian Brown and John Duncan.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2      CRIME & DISORDER COMMITTEE**

The Select Committee sitting as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, received a presentation from Inspector Patrick McPeake from Herts Constabulary on community safety matters that the Police had been engaged in over the past year.

As well as Inspector McPeake, the Executive Portfolio Holder responsible for Community Safety, Councillor Jackie Hollywell and the Council's Community Safety Manager were also in attendance at the meeting.

The Chair advised that she had asked the Police for a statement in relation to the recent review by Baroness Casey into the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service.

Inspector McPeake began by giving assurances to the Committee that Hertfordshire Police had the appropriate processes and procedure in place to address those issues raised in Baroness Casey's report. He advised that the mechanisms for anyone both internal and external to the Police, were in place for them to come forward with any concerns. He did, however, agree there was work for the Police to do to restore and maintain public confidence and trust following recent troubling incidents.

The Inspector then gave a presentation to the Committee around the issues of burglary in the Town and the use of cannabis in the Town.

## Burglary

The following points were made to the Committee in respect of burglary in the Town:

- 78 residential (dwelling) burglaries had been reported between 31 January 2022 and 1 February 2023. This was made up of 52 full offences, where entry had actually been gained and items stolen and 23 attempted offences where entry had been tried but was unsuccessful. The final three offences related to aggravated and distraction offences where offenders had distracted, often lied to homeowners to gain entry and steal. Members were pleased to note that this was a quite rare occurrence in Stevenage;
- A location map was shared with the Committee. Most localities had only singular offences and the most prevalent offending time period was 06:00 – 18:00 hrs;
- In relation to burglary residential (non- dwelling) there had been 62 business full offences and 8 attempts plus 42 non-dwelling full offences with 7 attempts. It was noted that the focus of this offending type was mainly within the Town Centre area;
- The Committee was advised that the Police had identified a suspect in 15.8% of investigations with a charge rate of 8%. Nationally the charge rate was 5% with the whole of Hertfordshire at 3.8%;
- Stevenage currently had the largest Scorpion Team in any CSP. These were proactive plain clothed officers who prioritised the pursuit and arrest of key individuals including burglars;
- A number of key investigatory reviews were currently being undertaken by the Police to identify patterns and themes and to ensure the standard of investigations was thorough and consistent and ensured certain actions took place at all residential burglaries. Personal attendance by both the initial officer and a detective was also a target for the Police;
- All forensic hits relating to Stevenage CSP (fingerprint, DNA, blood etc) were reviewed and it was reported that no forensic hits on burglars were outstanding.

The Chair thanked the police for their increased visible patrols of the Town including the Westgate Centre which had made a big difference and increased the confidence of the Town Centre business owners.

## Cannabis

The following points were made to the Committee in respect of the prevalence of cannabis in the Town and what was being done to address this:

- In total, cannabis accounted for 34% of drug type found across the county and was the largest single drug. Across all CSP's Stevenage had the highest for all drug type supply offending with 38 out of a countywide 238 offences;
- When narrowed to cannabis, 11 of the 81 case occurred in Stevenage placing the CSP joint 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the county;
- The Committee was advised that the Stevenage Scorpion team were proactive regarding drug supply regardless of type. In the past 12 months 24

- of the 52 searches related specifically to cannabis were positive;
- Operation SOHO, the policing response to increased tensions between two street gang/groups affiliated with differing areas of the Town which had disrupted some of the cannabis supply within the CSP.

In response to a question, Inspector McPeake advised that Operation Educate which targeted pupils in Year 9 run by the Police in collaboration with individuals with lived experiences, had been very successful and it was hoped it would be rolled out County wide. Police visits were also made to younger pupils to help build positive relationships with the Police at a young age.

The Portfolio Holder advised that she was keen to make services such as the No More Service part of the Council's core funding offer but that this was difficult due to the financial restraints the Council was under.

### Town Centre Crime

The following points were made to the Committee in respect of crime in the Town Centre:

- Between 1 January 2023 and 20 March 2023 there were 48 reported shopliftings, 16 reported theft from persons, 5 pedal cycle thefts, 5 personal robberies and 15 other thefts;
- The police response to the Town Centre included:
  - Operation target – 15 minute patrols of identified hotspots;
  - Operation Twist – plain clothes patrols to identify purse dippers within the Town Centre;
  - Various engagement events;
  - Seasonal patrols November – December 2022;
  - Policing priorities set to tackle ASB related issues within the Town.

In response to a comment from the Chair regarding police resources, Inspector McPeake advised that although the Police had more resources and larger teams than previously, the demand for those Police Officers had also increased, both in terms of the administration required and the amount of crime recorded but also the demand relating to mental health cases.

In response to a question regarding the recent Policing Priorities Group held with Members, the Portfolio Holder and the Community Safety Manager agreed to look at the arrangements alongside the police for this meeting going forward.

The Chair thanked inspector McPeake for his attendance and presentation to the Committee.

## **3 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

4      **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

5      **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Housing & Neighbourhoods  
**Date** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023



## IMPLEMENTATION OF BUILDING SAFETY ACT 2022

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to highlight the details of the Building Safety Act and set out the policy for meeting these requirements.
- 1.2 This report recommends the new Building Safety Policy for approval. (Appendix A).
- 1.3 The report also provides progress on the implementation of the Building Safety Act for the Council's five High Rise Residential Blocks and other High Risk Residential Blocks. (Appendix B).

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive approves the draft Building Safety Policy and the roles and responsibilities set out within the policy. (Appendix A).
- 2.2 That Executive note the progress against the Building Safety Act Implementation Plan. (Appendix B).

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Over a number of years the Council has continued a proactive approach to ensure the safety of residents in its High Rise buildings. This has included significant financial investment over the past 5 years including; fire suppressant sprinkler systems to all residential blocks above six floors; fire doors and other measures including fire stopping, to ensure residents' safety. The Council also continues to work closely and effectively with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HRFS) who also complete regular inspections of residential blocks.
- 3.2 In 2022, the new Building Safety Act and Fire Safety (England) Act 2021 ("The Act") came into legislation. The acts are two of several pieces of legislation and guidance being implemented by Government to enhance Building Safety. The acts will apply to all new or existing occupied buildings over 18 metres high or seven storeys or more, which contain at least two residential units.
- 3.3 **The Building Safety Act (2022)** The new Building Safety Act is a direct result of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the recommendations by Dame Judith Hackitt following her review of fire safety and building regulations in 2018. The act seeks to transform how tall residential buildings are designed, constructed and managed. It was brought in to tackle some of the fundamental safety issues, identified during the first phase of the Grenfell Inquiry. It introduces a new body The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) to oversee and licence the occupation of all in scope buildings.
- 3.4 The Act introduces a legal obligation for all contractors working on or in such buildings to be competent. Provides clear guidance on how we must manage our existing High Rise Residential Blocks (HRRB's) and how the Council as a social landlord must provide information to its residents about fire and building safety. It has also redefined a series of servicing frequencies for critical fire safety assets, such as Dry Risers and Automatic Opening Vents. It also provides guidance on the information the Council must share with the Fire & Rescue service, to assist them in managing any emergencies on site.
- 3.5 There is now a legal necessity to register all the Council's HRRB's with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and submit a Building Safety Case to support a new Licence to Occupy for these buildings.
- 3.6 The new act requires the Council to manage High Rise (Over 18 metres) and High Risk (to be defined by the council) buildings differently.
- 3.7 The act introduces two new roles to enable this:
- 3.8 **Building Safety Regulator (BSR):** A new body to manage building safety. The BSR will be responsible for overseeing the safety and performance systems of all buildings. They will have powers to enforce the rules and act against those that break them. For high-risk buildings they will be able to implement more stringent rules, including how they are designed, constructed and occupied.
- 3.9 The Building Safety Regulator, will initially be based within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), for day to monitoring of performance and issues with buildings in scope of the act. The BSR will be utilising the local Fire & Rescue



Service (FRS) to monitor and report against buildings locally. The FRS also have a duty under the act to report any significant concerns directly to the BSR.

- 3.10 **Accountable Person:** The Accountable Person will have an ongoing duty to assess Building Safety risks and provide a Safety Case Report which demonstrates how building safety risks are identified, mitigated and managed on an ongoing basis. The Accountable Person for a Council can be the corporate body.
- 3.11 Specifically, the Council must apply for a licence to occupy of its HRRB's. To achieve this licence, the Council must first register the blocks with the Building Safety Regulator and then provide clear information about the building, identifying any non-conformities to Building Regulations and how the Council proposes to remediate them, along with detailed plans of how these risks are mitigated.
- 3.12 The consequences of not complying with the act can include, being instructed by BSR to decant all of the residents. The Council can only re-occupy once the building safety case is submitted, with detailed risk mitigation for all areas, the BSR can also levy unlimited fines.
- 3.13 **The Fire Safety (England) Act 2021**, amends the existing Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, to provide clearer guidance and introduce further regulation around all areas of Fire Safety in residential buildings.
- 3.14 The act clarifies that Responsible Persons for multi-occupied residential buildings must manage and reduce the risk of fire for the structure and external walls of the building, including cladding, balconies and windows, along with entrance doors to individual flats that open into common parts.
- 3.15 A new standard of Fire Risk Assessments must be adopted (which the Council have already completed) to ensure that all areas of a block are risk assessed, including external walls and cladding, however minimal the cladding maybe.
- 3.16 **The Golden Thread:** A defining element of the Building Safety Act is the 'golden thread' of information, which will act as a digital, always accessible, audit trail throughout the life of a building. This principal is carried forward to repairs, upgrades and installation to all elements of our existing HRRB's and will be equally true of managing the conventions of the Fire Safety Act 2021.
- 3.17 Whilst it is clear that the Council has good foundations in place to manage Building Safety the new legislation will require more focused governance and management of various elements of the Council's management of HRRB's
- 3.18 The refresh of the HRA business plan during autumn 2023 will need to ensure that sufficient resources are provided to support the implementation of both acts along with appropriate investment measures for the housing stock and further considerations for new and future stock.

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

- 4.1 The Building Safety implementation plan and policy cover the key actions the Council must take to ensure compliance with the act. The Council must implement the new act and related guidance in the required timescales set by

the regulator. Failure to do so will result in potential action by the regulator, which could ultimately require the decanting of the buildings covered by the act.

- 4.2 The Building Safety policy sets out the framework for how Councils will meet and maintain the compliance with the new legislation for those buildings in scope.
- 4.3 The Council has five High Rise residential flat blocks which are in scope of the Building Safety Act and the regulations it introduces. These are listed below. The Councils High Risk Buildings, which are not over 18 metres, but due to the occupancy type are defined as high risk are also included in this plan. These are not required at this time to be registered with the Building Safety Regulator but are also listed below.:

**High Rise Residential Buildings (Required by the Act)**

Brent Court	Harrow Court	High Plash
High Croft	The Towers	

**High Risk Buildings (Not currently required by the Act but have been included to ensure best practice)**

Fred Millard Court	Grosvenor Court	Highfield Court
Norman Court	Pinewoods	Pitt Court
Silkin Court	Truro Court	Twin Foxes
Wellfield Court	Shaftesbury Court	Shephall Way 94-152
Westwood Court		

- 4.4 The Council will be required through both the existing and proposed consumer standards to report to the Social Housing Regulator its compliance with the Building Safety Act, along with other legislation required to ensure the Council's properties remain safe for its residents. Failure to meet the required standards may result in regulatory judgments and unlimited fines.
- 4.5 Duty Holders – Roles and Responsibilities**
- 4.6 The roles and responsibilities of each duty holder is defined in the Building Safety Policy (Appendix A) a summary of these are outlined below:-
- 4.7 **The Accountable Person:** Is the body corporate "Stevenage Borough Council". The oversight for all areas of the acts falls within the responsibility of the Executive and will be discharged and delegated as below.
- 4.8 **Chief Executive:** Will need to ensure that adequate resources are made available to ensure we are able to comply with the new legislation. For existing properties that fall within the BSA, the Chief Executive will delegate their

responsibilities to the Assistant Director of Building Safety and Housing Property Services and Head of Resident Safety. For properties under construction and yet to be completed the Chief Executive will delegate their responsibilities to the Assistant Director of Housing Development.

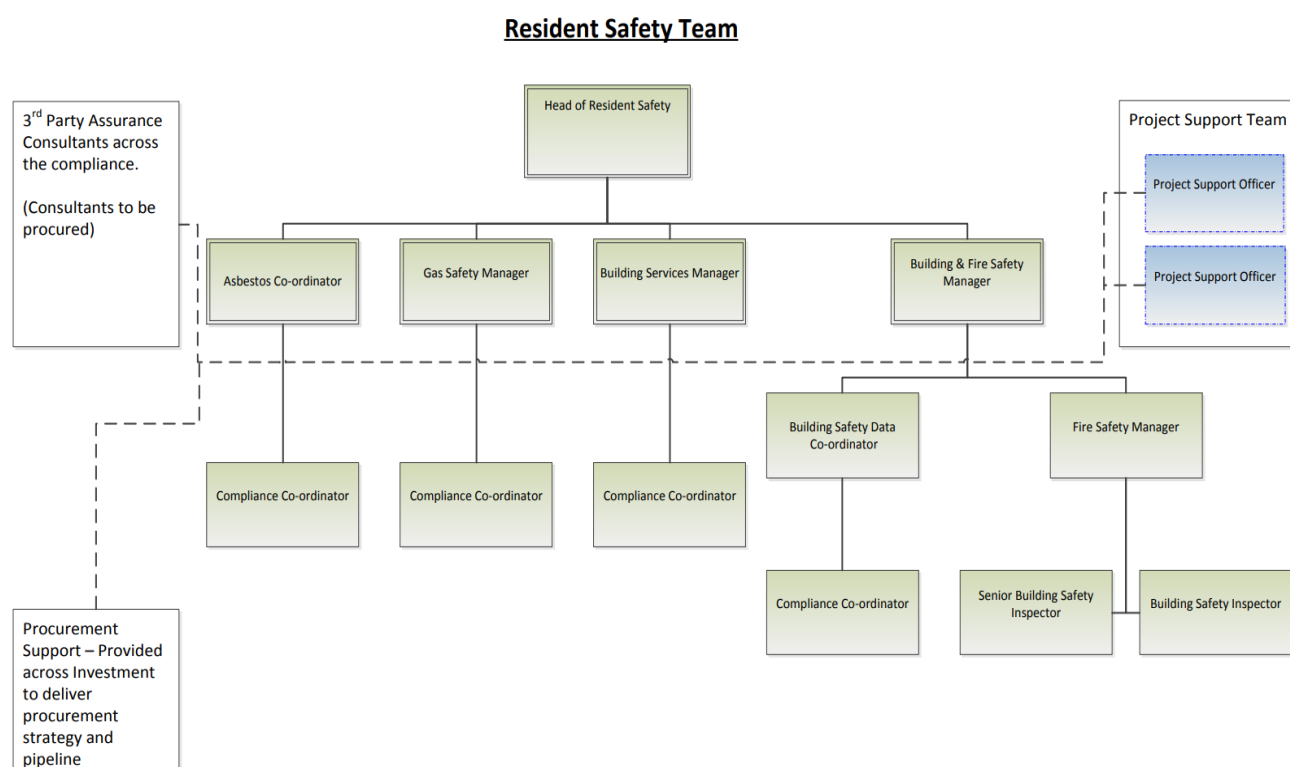
- 4.9 **Senior Leadership Team:** Will review reports that provide progress updates to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Building Safety Act, Fire Safety Act (England) 2021, this policy and the Council's Fire Safety Policy
- 4.10 **Housing Service Leads:** Will work closely with the Head of Resident Safety and others to design and implement suitable projects to ensure SBC is compliant with legislation.
- 4.11 **Head of Resident Safety:** Is responsible for the overall implementation of the policy and the development and delivery of the projects detailed within. The Head of Resident Safety will monitor and track performance to ensure SBC remains compliant with current legislation and that projects are on track to ensure we are ready for the implementation of future legislation and guidance. The Head of Resident Safety will work closely with all departments across the Council to deliver this policy and to ensure buildings within the scope of the BSA remain safe. The Head of Resident Safety will work closely with the Fire Safety Manager and Building Safety Inspector to ensure the Council maintains compliance with the act. The Head of Resident Safety will provide regular updates to Senior Leadership Team and Compliance Group.
- 4.12 **Fire Safety Manager:** Is responsible for managing all compliance activities and informing the Head of Resident Safety of any compliance related issues which may affect the safety of buildings in scope.
- 4.13 **Building Safety Inspector:** Will support the Fire Safety Manager with general administration, contract management and ensuring access is in place. They will store completion reports, ensuring that they are uploaded to central storage areas and shared with Fire Safety Manager and Head of Resident Safety.
- 4.14 Alongside the new duties and responsibilities that are placed upon the Council, the new act also provides obligations on residents. The act now stipulates that "Residents must not create a significant risk" within the building. This includes the removal of door closers, propping or wedging open fire doors or storage of combustible materials in the common parts etc.
- 4.15 It will be essential to highlight this information as part of a new tenancy sign-up and include this information in the annual fire safety advice note the Council issues. The Council will work on an education ahead of enforcement approach, although there may be cases where enforcement action is necessary to ensure the safety of other residents.
- 4.16 **Progress to Date**
- 4.17 A specific policy to support the implementation of and ongoing management of all areas of building safety has been prepared for approval by Executive (Appendix A). The review frequency has been set to six monthly, to support any new legislation, guidance or regulation that is released under the acts.
- 4.18 The Investment Team have developed a comprehensive plan (Appendix B) to further drive improvement and ensure the act is implemented within the agreed

timescales. This is reported to the Corporate Compliance Group attended by relevant service leads, Assistant Directors and chaired by the Strategic Director (RP).

- 4.19 All Stevenage Borough Council HRRB's over 18 metres in height have been successfully registered. Due to the number of HRRB's being registered from all housing providers across the country the Building Safety Regulator has advised that all buildings are unlikely to be reviewed before the end of 2026. In the meantime the Council can continue to occupy them.
- 4.20 The Council maintains an excellent relationship with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service locally. This partnership is developing as a "good practice" model for other housing providers, particularly given the role of FRS in the enforcement of the Building Safety Act.
- 4.21 Additionally, briefings have been held for all relevant managers in Housing and investment to update them on the acts and how the Council is interpreting and implementing them.
- 4.22 Under the new legislation the Council must clearly display key fire and building safety information, this includes details of key fire safety assets, the servicing regime and dates of last and next services. This is to provide assurance to residents that the Council is maintaining all equipment in line with recommendations and regulation.
- 4.23 To achieve this new Secure Information Boxes have been installed at each of the Council's HRRB's. These now contain full floor plans for each block and floor, along with information of key safety assets, such as Dry Risers and Automatic Opening Vents. The secure information boxes also include a list of vulnerable residents in each building, along with a list of any medical gases that they may have within a property.
- 4.24 To further support this a "Digital Noticeboard" has been piloted in one of the HRRB's. This enables the Council to electronically publish all information required, including updated servicing dates for key fire safety equipment. This also enables the Council to provide information to update residents in real time. For example, if a lift breaks down information can be provided for residents to explain that an engineer is on their way, which will also mean that the Customer Service Centre will receive less calls. This pilot has proved successful and others will be installed in the coming months.
- 4.25 The Council now has a statutory responsibility to advise all residents about fire safety in its HRRB's. A site-specific information pack has been produced for all residents. This will be provided to new residents upon sign up to a new tenancy. Residents are asked to sign that they have received and read the information. This will be stored as part of the tenancy file.

- 4.26 A change introduced under the Building Safety Act, requires the Council to develop a resident engagement strategy to ensure the “Residents’ Voice” is heard as part of any changes or improvements to building safety.
- 4.27 The Investment team have worked with Community Development to organise a series of engagement events planned at our HRRB’s. These will be used to gage concerns and to capture details of those residents who want to be included in ongoing design work.
- 4.28 Alongside the new Building Safety Policy, the existing Fire Safety Policy has been updated to incorporate all the amendments to the Fire Safety Act and introduce further areas of best practice.
- 4.29 Additionally, wayfinding signage is being improved to further highlight escape routes and to assist firefighters in locating properties in the event of a fire.
- 4.30 The act introduces new guidance to ensure that only competent contractors are working in or on the buildings in scope. The Investment Team are working with the Council’s internal repairs service and external contractors, to ensure that only competent contractors and operatives work on high rise and high-risk buildings.
- 4.31 The Council will appoint and work with external compliance consultants and specialists to ensure that all areas of our Building Safety Policy is being delivered to the required standards. This will include assistance is reviewing and approving the final specification for all compliance related works in our buildings, along with providing quality assurance that specific works such as fire stopping, installation and maintenance of fire doors and the installation of new components or systems, such as fire alarms, communal heating systems and the like are completed to the correct standards.
- 4.32 Moving Forwards**
- 4.33 It is clear that the Council will further need to further focus its resources on building safety. An Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services has been recruited and a further recruitment process has started for a Head of Resident Safety to ensure adequate oversight of all elements of building safety. The proposed team structure for Resident Safety is outlined below:

#### 4.34 Structure



- 4.35 The Corporate Compliance Group will continue to monitor the progress of the implementation plan (Appendix B). Given the need for continued focus and improvement in these areas key compliance performance measures have been included in the Council's Corporate Performance Suite and will be reported quarterly to Executive. Further developments in relation to the Implementation Plan will also be reported to a future Executive meeting.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

- 5.1 All current expenditure for the development of the policy and the implementation of the act(s) has been included a growth in the HRA's budgets .
- 5.2 The future budget implications to ensure compliance with the act will be reviewed through the planned refresh of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.3 The Building Safety Act & Fire Safety (England) Act have received Royal Assent and have now been enacted. There are clear timelines within the act to achieve certain milestones of the implementation plan. The implementation plan has been developed to ensure full compliance with the act by October 2023.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.4 There is a significant risk to the continued occupation of the five HRRB's that are covered by the Building Safety Act and total 356 residential units if the Council fails to submit and then maintain its Building Safety Case. The regulator does have the power to enforce that all properties in these buildings must be decanted if we do not comply with the act.
- 5.5 There is therefore an additional financial and reputational risk if the Council does not comply with the conventions set out in the Building Safety Act 2022.
- .

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.6 A draft Building Safety Policy has been submitted for approval. It covers all areas required under the act. As the act is enabling legislation, the government can introduce new guidance at any time. This policy will be reviewed every six months by the Head of Resident Safety.
- 5.7 It is expected that before October 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will introduce new guidance and regulation around the mandatory reporting requirements, which relate to "incidents" in the blocks within scope and how these are reported to the Building Safety Regulator. It will therefore be important for the Council to ensure its own policy is updated accordingly.

### **Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 5.8 The new role of Assistant Director of Building Safety and Housing Property has been created to take responsibility for all housing property related services.
- 5.9 For the Council to deliver the requirements of the act and the attached policy requires additional staffing resource. However, this has already been built into the HRA growth plans for this financial year. A re-structure of the compliance team to support these changes and clarify responsibilities has been agreed and the new structure outlined in section 4.
- 5.10 This will need to be further reviewed through the refresh of the HRA business plan to ensure all out obligations are met and if the buildings in scope of the act change.

### **Service Delivery Implications**

- 5.11 There will be an impact on the delivery of repairs from the repairs service in those buildings that are in scope. Additional training to ensure operatives have the correct skills and qualifications to work on fire safety assets, such as fire doors will be required.

- 5.12 The implications of the act will require all staff with responsibilities relating to the buildings in scope to be aware of and act on the guidance of the act. This will require additional training for the staff involved.

### **Information Technology Implications**

- 5.13 There is now a legal obligation to provide secure storage of information relating to the “Golden Thread” and to make this information accessible to authorised persons on a read only basis.
- 5.14 In discussions with IT, it is envisaged that the migration to Office 365 and the creation of a SharePoint site, will make available the required information.

## **APPENDICES**

- A Appendix A – Final Draft Building Safety Policy
- B Appendix B – Implementation Plan- Building Safety Act

## **GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS**

BUILDING SAFETY ACT	BSA
BUILDING SAFETY REGULATOR	BSR
DEPARTMENT FOR LEVELLING UP HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES	DLUHC
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE	FRS
HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE	HSE
HERTS FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE	HRFS
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	HRA
HIGH RISE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS	HRRB
RICHARD PROTHEROE (STRATEGIC DIRECTOR)	RP



# Stevenage Borough Council

## Building Safety Policy

<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Building Safety Policy</b>
<b>Version Number 0.1</b>	
<b>Policy Type</b>	<b>Master Policy</b>
<b>Supporting Documents / Policies</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>May 2023</b>
<b>Lead Policy Officer</b>	<b>Head of Resident Safety</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Head of Resident Safety</b>
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<b>Approved by (inc date)</b>	
<b>Date of next review</b>	

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## 01. Table of Definitions

SBC	Stevenage Borough Council
BSA	The Building Safety Act 2022
FSA	The Fire Safety (England) Act 2022
RRFSO	The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – Amended by Fire Safety Act
HRRB	High Rise Residential Building – Over 18 Metres in height
ILS	Independent Living Scheme
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
BSR	Building Safety Regulator
FRA	Fire Risk Assessment
UPRN	Unique Property Reference Number
SIB	Secure Information Box
PIB	Premises Information Box
HFRS	Herts Fire & Rescue Service

## 02. Statement of Commitment

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) are committed to providing a safe place to live for our residents and a safe place to work for our staff and contractors. To ensure this we will implement all aspects of The Building Safety Act and deliver a “Best Practice” approach to the management of our buildings and related fire safety assets that are critical to managing the buildings.

## 03. Buildings in Scope

The Building Safety Act (BSA) clearly defines the scope of buildings to which it applies, these are identified as being over 18 metres in height. We have included as Appendix A a list of these buildings.

Whilst the BSA is clear on instructing us to manage buildings over 18 Metres in height in a different way than other buildings, SBC are aware that the BSA is enabling legislation and at some point, in the future, DLUHC will lower the height of buildings to be included within scope of the BSA.

To meet the current requirements of the act, we must register our five High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRBs) and complete the building safety cases for them.

We will manage our purpose-built Independent Living Schemes in the same way as we will our HRRBs as we consider them to be High Risk buildings, at this time we do not need to register them or develop building safety cases.

## 04. Legislation & Guidance

We have given regard to the following legislation and guidance in preparing this policy.

- The Building Safety Act 2022
- The Fire Safety (England) Act 2022
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 – Amended by Fire Safety Act
- LACoRS – Fire Safety Guidance (Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services)
- Fire Safety in Specialised Housing – National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance
- Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats – Local Government Association
- Housing Act 2004, which introduced the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) 2002
- Furniture and Furnishing (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Equality Act 2010
- Building Regulations – Approved Document B
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 – As amended
- Management of Health & Safety at Works Regulations 2006
- Workplace (Health Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Health & Safety Executive INDG236 – “Maintaining Portable Electric Equipment”
- All relevant British Standards

## 05. Supporting Documents & Policies

- Stevenage Borough Council Fire Safety Policy.
- Stevenage Borough Council Tenancy Agreement.

## 06. Golden Thread

The Building Safety Act, creates a legal duty on duty holders and Accountable Persons to create, obtain, store and share documents and information about our buildings in a prescribed format, this includes the six main principles of:-

- Kept Digitally.
- Kept Securely.
- A Building’s Single Source of Truth.
- Available to people who need the information to do a job.
- Available when the person needs the information.
- Presented in a way that people can use.

A more detailed breakdown of information required for the Golden Thread is attached as Appendix B

## 07. Roles & Responsibilities

The Building Safety Act identifies new duty holders, who will be known as “Accountable Persons”.

In relation to this policy and the implementation of the Building Safety Act, the Accountable Person is the Body-Corporate, Stevenage Borough Council.

The Roles & Responsibilities for key stakeholders across SBC are detailed below:

- **Chief Executive:** Will need to ensure that adequate resources are made available to ensure we are able to comply with the requirements of legislation. For existing properties that fall within the BSA, the Chief Executive will delegate their responsibilities to the Assistant Director of Housing and Head of Resident Safety. For properties under construction and yet to be completed the Chief Executive will delegate their responsibilities to the Assistant Director of Development.
- **The Executive:** Will provide guidance on the development of policy for the Building Safety Act. A consolidated report on the day-to-day management, risk, issues will be reviewed by the executive and recorded. Future issues around mandatory reporting will be escalated to the executive.
- **Senior Leadership Team:** Will review reports that provide progress updates to ensure that SBC is meeting the requirements of the Building Safety Act, Fire Safety Act (England) 2021, this policy and the SBC Fire Safety Policy
- **Housing Service Leads:** Will work closely with the Head of Resident Safety and others to design and implement suitable projects within their respective service responsibilities to ensure SBC is compliant with legislation.
- **Head of Resident Safety:** Is responsible for the overall implementation of the policy and the development and delivery of the projects detailed within. The Head of Resident Safety will monitor and track performance to ensure SBC remains compliant with current legislative requirements and that projects are on track to ensure we are ready for the implementation of future legislation and guidance. The Head of Resident Safety will work closely with all departments across SBC to deliver the requirements of this policy and to ensure buildings within the scope of the BSA remain safe. The Head of Resident Safety will work closely with the Fire Safety Manager and Building Safety Inspector to ensure SBC meet these legislative requirements. The Head of Resident Safety will provide regular updates to Senior Leadership Team and Compliance Group.
- **Fire Safety Manager:** Is responsible for managing all compliance activities and informing the Head of Resident Safety of any compliance related issues which may affect the safety of buildings in scope.
- **Building Safety Inspector:** Will support the Fire Safety Manager with general administration, contract management and ensuring access is in place. They will record completed reports, ensuring that they are uploaded to central storage areas and shared with Fire Safety Manager and Head of Resident Safety.

## 08. Fire Risk Assessments

Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) will be conducted annually across all buildings in scope of the BSA. Future FRAs will see the Fire Safety Manager & Building Safety Inspector meet and escort assessors on each FRA to ensure suitable access is available, to share feedback and evidence on completed works. They will also ensure that any urgent issues identified are recorded and raised, with mitigation or remedial actions being implemented.

## 09. Management of Building Safety Risks

We will make an assessment of the building safety risks for each of our higher-risk buildings and will review that assessment at regular intervals, and at any time that we have reason to suspect that the current assessment is no longer valid, or at the direction of the regulator and within the specified time period.

We will take all reasonable steps to prevent a building safety risk materialising and all reasonable steps to reduce the severity of any incident resulting from such a risk materialising. Where necessary, we will carry

out such works to prevent a building safety risk from materialising and to reduce the severity of any incident resulting from such a risk materialising. We will take those necessary steps promptly, make and give effect to arrangements for the purpose of ensuring the planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review and record of the steps we take in regard to building safety risks.

## **10. Mandatory Reporting**

We acknowledge our responsibility under the BSA to give prescribed information that relates to building safety to the regulator by the prescribed time and in the way specified, and we will establish and operate an effective mandatory occurrence reporting system which complies with the prescribed requirements.

At the time of writing this policy, the Building Safety Regulator had not published the final details and format of their requirements for Mandatory Reporting. Once this information is published it will be adopted into the next version of this policy.

## **11. Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA)**

SBC will train all Housing Officers, Support Officers and those interacting directly with residents during such events as a tenancy audit and where we are informed that a resident may have difficulty in safely evacuating their home, will complete a PC-FRA.

PCFRAs help to identify residents who are at higher risk from fire in their own home, whether this is due to their behaviours or their ability to respond and escape from a fire, for an example a resident with disabilities.

The PCFRA focuses on three key areas;

- 1 An increased fire risk. Example might be of a resident with mobility issues who is a careless smoker.
- 2 Ability to react to a fire or fire alarm
- 3 Ability to respond and escape a fire

PCFRA's will be conducted across our Independent Living Schemes and in general needs properties as we are advised or learn of residents who may be of increased risk from the items list above.

Following the completion of a PCFRA, there may be a need to develop a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) and or implement mitigation measures to ensure additional safety for identified vulnerable residents.

## **12. Fire Door Survey & Management**

New legislation requires us to undertake regular inspections of all Fire Doors within our housing stock, this includes the following categories of Fire Door:-

Flat Entrance Doors – Including Leasehold Flats

Riser Cupboard Doors

Cross Corridor Doors

Electrical Intake Doors

Storage Cupboard Doors (If they open onto common parts)

To fulfil our duties in this area SBC will appoint an external specialist consultant. Who will conduct quarterly inspections on all Fire Doors in common parts and an annual inspection of Flat Entrance Doors.

This will also require us to build an additional “No Access” policy for the inspection of Flat Entrance Doors, the act provides legal measures to compel residents to provide access. This measure forms part of our no access process.

SBC will at the time of the initial survey of each door, install an RFID tag and define each door a UPRN, this will allow migration of data into our asset management system.

Where, if following the inspection of a door, it is found not to meet a “Notional” status, we will carry out repairs to the door, to bring it up to the required status and performance, if this is not possible, due to damage as an example, we will replace that door, with a new door set.

### **13. Premises Information Boxes / Secure Information Boxes**

It is a requirement that all of the buildings that are in scope of the act, have a Secure Information Box fitted, that can easily be located by the Fire & Rescue Service upon attendance.

These boxes must contain:-

Current Floor Plans for each floor, with key information clearly identified

A list of vulnerable residents, with additional information about flats that may contain medical gases.

Keys / Fob to all doors on all floors, other than Flat Entrance Doors

We will regularly review and update the information stored within the boxes.

### **14. Fire & Rescue Service Liaison**

The act mandates that we have a relationship with the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) and that we co-operate with all requests for information.

This may also include supporting site visits from various staff (Watches) to facilitate a clear understanding of the building layout and how FRS would manage any emergency.

There is now a requirement to notify FRS if a fire safety asset, including any Fire Fighting or Fire Fighters Lifts are or will be out of service for more than 24 hours. This is to ensure that FRS can make alternative arrangements in the provision of equipment or for SBC of HFR to carry out additional mitigation measures, until the equipment is back in service.

We will develop a reporting mechanism with FRS to advise of any asset issues, along with a clear timeline to bring that asset back into operational performance.

### **15. Fire Signage / Wayfinding Signage**

To support the implementation of this act Approved Document “B” of Building Regulations has been updated to clearly define what type of Fire and Waypoint Signage is required in buildings in scope of the act.

In addition to existing Fire Action Notices, we must install clear Wayfinding Signage, pointing residents in the direction of Fire Exits. We must also install floor number signage at low level in stairwells, to assist FRS in identifying which floor they are on, if the stairwell is engulfed in smoke.

### **16. Contractor Management**

The act specifies that only “Competent Contractors” can work in or on buildings within the scope of the BSA.

The compliance team and SBC contract managers will ensure that all contractors and operatives are competent to carry out specified works on our buildings.

We will by October 2023, implement a “Permit to Work” scheme on all of the in-scope buildings, which will ensure that Method Statements for each piece of work have been reviewed and approved, prior to commencement of any works.

In the event that works are required to pass through or compromise existing compartmentation, then an appropriate Fire Risk Assessment must be carried out and an inspection by a suitably qualified person, check that the compartmentation has been suitably completed.

No “Hot Works” will be allowed in any in scope buildings, without prior approval. A detailed Method Statement will be required, which must include how a small initial fire in the local area will be extinguished.

## 17. Resident Communication

We must display in a conspicuous part of the building a notice board containing all of the information prescribed in the act. In addition, this includes information about dates of servicing of all compliance and fire safety assets. This is to provide assurance to residents that all of the fire safety equipment and assets are working as they should.

The BSA also provides a requirement for SBC to communicate with all residents to ensure that they are aware of what to do in the event of a fire, aware of what Fire Safety Assets / Equipment is in place and the part that it plays in providing fire safety to residents, visitors and the Fire & Rescue Service in the event of their attendance.

SBC will deliver its responsibilities in this area by ensuring:

At the time of onboarding a new resident / family, we provide a site-specific document that highlights all of this information, along with providing detailed information of how to report any concerns to SBC if a Fire Safety Asset is not working.

Once a year, SBC will write to all residents in blocks that are in scope of the BSA and provide the above information again. The aim of this is to regularly remind residents about Fire Safety information.

## 18. Resident Engagement Strategy

The BSA requires SBC to develop a resident engagement strategy specifically for all residents and any person who owns a residential unit in a building in scope of the BSA.

The BSA places a legal obligation on the Accountable Person "Stevenage Borough Council" to ensure residents are involved in all "Building Safety Decisions". A building safety decision is a decision made by us about the management of the building in connection with the performance of our duties as the accountable person or under regulations contained in the BSA.

To meet our requirements under this part of the act, SBC will:-

- Develop and implement a resident engagement strategy that promotes residents' engagement and involvement in decision making about safety issues.
- Establish a complaints system that ensures residents' safety concerns are heard and dealt with.
- Residents will also have the ability to escalate complaints to the Building Safety Regulator.

Once developed we will provide a copy of our resident engagement strategy to all residents in the building that are over 16 years of age.

To support a focused complaints system, for complaints that relate to building safety, we will establish and operate a system for investigating relevant complaints regarding a building safety risk, or the performance of an accountable person for the building or any duty under the BSA or a duty under any regulations made under the Act.



## 19. Resident Obligations

The BSA not only introduces duties on SBC as the landlord / building owner, but for the first time introduces obligations on residents, to:

- Not act in a way that creates a significant risk of fire or structural failure.
- Not interfere with any relevant safety item.
- Comply with a request by the Accountable Person for information or access to reasonably perform their duties to assess and manage building safety risks.

Where a resident or owner of a residential unit contravenes their duty not to interfere with a relevant safety item, we will give them a contravention notice that specifies how we believe they have interfered, tells them what they should do to remedy their contravention giving them a reasonable time to do so, tells them what they must not do in the future to avoid repeating the interference, and tells them what we may do further if they do not comply with the notice.

We may include in the notice a requirement for the relevant person to pay us the necessary cost to repair or replace the relevant safety item to rectify their interference. The cost we charge will not exceed the reasonable cost of repairing or replacing the relevant safety item. When necessary, we may make an application to the county court to make an order in respect of the sum we have charged in relation to the relevant building safety item.

Where we require access to some part of the building to assess or manage a building safety risk or to determine whether the duty on residents and owners of residential units in the building not to interfere with relevant safety items has been breached, we will request access in writing setting out the purpose for which we are requesting access, we will explain why it is necessary for us to enter the premises for that purpose, we will make request to access at a reasonable time, and will give at least 48 hours' notice. If we are denied access, the act provides us powers to make an application to the county court for an order to grant us access.

## 20. External Wall Assessment

It is a requirement of the BSA that we undertake an intrusive External Wall Assessment, to establish the entire make up of the external wall system. SBC have appointed specialist external consultants to carry these out. The outputs from these surveys, will be used to support our Building Safety Case for each of our HRRBs.

## 21. Building Safety Case

Under the Building Safety Act, Stevenage Borough Council, will have to provide a Building Safety Case for each of our HRRBs every five years. The Safety Case will evidence how SBC have ensured that the building is safe and is required before the Regulator issues a licence. Whilst this licence is needed to occupy the building, SBC can continue tenancies within a block, whilst the licence is pending.

We will prepare a building safety case report containing our assessment of the building safety risks and a brief description of any steps we take to manage or mitigate those risks. We will update that building safety case where we make further assessment of building safety risks and when we add further steps to our management of building safety risks.

We will notify the regulator as soon as is reasonably practicable after we prepare or revise a safety case report, and if the regulator asks us to, we will provide a copy of it to the regulator as soon as reasonably practicable.

It is estimated by the BSR that it will take around three years (from October 2023) for them to be at a point to evaluate safety cases for our two tallest blocks (Brent & Harrow Court) and a further year to review the remaining three buildings.

## 22. New Build Development of over 18m Buildings

The golden thread will hold the information that those responsible for the building require to identify, understand, manage, and mitigate building safety risks in order to prevent or reduce the severity of the consequences of fire spread or structural collapse throughout the lifecycle of the building. The information stored in the golden thread will be reviewed and managed so that the information developed and retained, clearly identifies all elements of safety to achieve the purpose of providing clear evidence of materials and workmanship.

The golden thread covers both the information and documents, and the information management processes (or steps) used to support building safety. The government (DHULC) has defined the information as including all the information necessary to understand and manage risks to prevent or reduce the severity of the consequences of fire spread or structural collapse in a building.

The golden thread information should be stored as structured digital information. It will be stored, managed, maintained and retained in line with the golden thread principles.

We will apply for a completion certificate before we occupy a newly constructed higher risk building, we create additional residential units in such a building, or we carry out works that cause a building to become a higher-risk building.

## 23. Emergency Evacuation Alarms

It is a requirement of the BSA that in all new build residential properties over 18 metres, that a full emergency evacuation alert system is installed.

This will allow HFRS in the event of an emergency to manage an evacuation of a property, in phases according to floors and or call a full evacuation.

SBC will ensure that all new build properties in scope of the BSA will have such an alert system installed during the build phase and will be handed over to the Compliance Team to ensure that regular servicing, maintenance, and testing is carried out.

At the point of developing this policy, it is not a requirement to retrospectively install an emergency evacuation alert system to existing buildings. We will continue to monitor any changes to legislation in this area and will update this policy should requirements change.

## 24. Review Frequency

The BSA is intended to be enabling legislation and as such is subject to update and change, following guidance or regulation changes from DHULC or the Building Safety Regulator.

To support this and ensure that this policy is kept up to date with any changes in guidance or legislation, SBC will review this policy on a six monthly basis.

## Appendix A – List of In Scope Buildings

Name of Building	Address	Type
Harrow Court	Silam Road, Stevenage, SG1 1JN	HRRB
Brent Court	Silam Road, Stevenage, SG1 1JS	HRRB
High Plash	Cuttys Lane, Stevenage, SG1 1JG	HRRB
High Croft	The Chace, Stevenage, SG2 8QU	HRRB
The Towers	Southgate, Stevenage, SG1 1HE	HRRB
Fred Millard Court	Cuttys Lane, Stevenage, SG1 1UQ	ILS
Gladstone Court	Spring Drive, Stevenage, SG2 8AY	ILS
Highfield Court	Grace Way, Stevenage, SG1 5EH	ILS
Norman Court	York Road, Stevenage, SG1 4HP	ILS
Pinewoods	Broadwater Crescent, SG2 8EN	ILS
Pitt Court	Park View, Stevenage, SG2 8PR	ILS
Shaftesbury Court	Buckthorn Avenue, SG1 1TX	ILS
Silkin Court	Cotney Croft, Stevenage, SG2 9PU	ILS
Truro Court	Canterbury Way, Stevenage, SG1 4LF	ILS
Grosvenor Court	Filey Close, Stevenage, SG1 2JN	ILS

This list of blocks is correct as of 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023. It will be further reviewed in November 2023, to establish if the scope of the Building Safety Act has increased, bringing building below 18 metres into scope.

SBC will continue to review building to establish if they are in scope of the act, on a six monthly basis

## Appendix B – Principles of the Golden Thread

The below information is extracted from DHLUC publication “Golden Thread Definition”

### Full Definition

- 1 The golden thread will hold the information that those responsible for the building require to identify, understand, manage and mitigate building safety risks in order to prevent or reduce the severity of the consequences of fire spread or structural collapse throughout the lifecycle of the building. The information stored in the golden thread will be reviewed and managed so that the information retained at all times achieves this purpose.
- 2 The golden thread covers both the information and documents, and the information management processes (or steps) used to support building safety. The government has defined the information as including all the information necessary to understand and manage risks to prevent or reduce the severity of the consequences of fire spread or structural collapse in a building.
- 3 The golden thread information should be stored as structured digital information. It will be stored, managed, maintained and retained in line with the golden thread principles (see annex below). The Government will specify digital standards which will provide guidance on how the principles can be met.
- 4 The golden thread information management approach will apply through design, construction, occupation, refurbishment and ongoing management of buildings. It supports the wider changes in the regime to promote a culture of building safety.
- 5 Building safety should be taken to include the fire and structural safety of a building and the safety of all the people in or in the vicinity of a building (including emergency responders).

### Annex: Golden Thread Principles

- 1 **Accurate and Trusted:** the dutyholder/Accountable Person/Building Safety Managers (BSM) and other relevant persons (e.g. contractors) must be able to use the golden thread to maintain and manage building safety. The Regulator should also be able to use this information as part of their work to assess the safety of the building and the operator’s safety case report, including supportive evidence, and to hold people to account. The golden thread will be a source of evidence to show how building safety risks are understood and how they are being managed on an ongoing basis. The golden thread must be accurate and trusted – it will not be used unless people trust that the information in the golden thread is accurate and up to date . The information produced will therefore have to be accurate, structured and verified, requiring a clear change control process that sets out how and when information is updated and who should update and check the information.
- 2 **Residents feeling secure in their homes:** residents will be provided information from the golden thread – so that they have accurate and trusted information about their home. This will also support residents in holding Accountable Persons and Building Safety Managers to account for building safety. A properly maintained golden thread should support accountable persons in providing residents the assurance that their building is being managed safely.
- 3 **Culture change:** the golden thread will support culture change within the industry as it will require increased competence and capability, different working practices, updated processes and a focus on information management and control. The golden thread should be considered an enabler for better and more collaborative working.
- 4 **Single point of truth:** the golden thread will bring all information together in a single place (potentially a Common Data Environment) meaning there is always a ‘single point of truth’. It will record changes (i.e. updates to information/plans), including the reason for change, evaluation of change, date of change, and the decision-making process. This will reduce the duplication of information (email updates and multiple documents) and help drive improved accountability, responsibility and a new working culture.

- 5     **Secure:** the golden thread must be secure, with sufficient protocols in place to protect personal information and control access to maintain the security of the building or residents. It should also comply with current GDPR legislation where required.
- 6     **Accountable:** the golden thread will record changes (i.e. updates to information), when these changes were made and by who. This will help drive improved accountability. The new regime is setting out clear duties for the duty holders and the Accountable Person for maintaining the golden thread information to meet the required standards. Therefore, there is accountability at every level – from the Client/Accountable Person to those designing, building or maintaining a building. This will mean that changes can more easily be tracked, and this will support better building safety.
- 7     **Understandable/ Simple to access (accessible)/Consistent:** the golden thread needs to support the user in their task of managing building safety. The information in the golden thread must be clear, understandable and focused on the needs of the user. It should be presented in a way that can be understood and used by users. This also should consider that users have different needs. The information should be accessible so that people can easily find the right information at the right time. This means that the information needs to be stored in a structured way (i.e. like a library) so people can easily find, update and extract the right information. The Government will set out the digital standards which will apply to the golden thread. Storing information to digital standards would mean the information is stored in a structured way. To support this dutyholders/Accountable person should where possible make sure the golden thread uses standard methods, processes and consistent terminology so that those working with multiple buildings can more easily access, understand and use the information consistently and effectively.
- 8     **Longevity/ Durability of information:** the golden thread information needs to be formatted in a way that can be easily handed over and maintained over the entire life time of a building. In practical terms this is likely to mean that it needs to align with the rules around open source data – so that information can be handed over in the future and still be accessed. Information should be able to be shared and accessed by contractors who use different software and if the building is sold the golden thread information must be accessible to the new owner. This does not mean everything about a building and its history needs to be kept, the golden thread must be reviewed to ensure that the information within it is still relevant and useful.
- 9     **Relevant / Proportionate:** preserving the golden thread does not mean everything about a building and its history needs to be kept and updated from inception to disposal. The objective of the golden thread is building safety and therefore if information is no longer relevant to building safety it does not need to be kept. The golden thread, the changes to it and processes related to it must be reviewed periodically to ensure that the information comprising it remains relevant and useful.

## Appendix C – Clarification of Roles & Responsibilities

## Building Safety Act – Implementation Update

No	Workstream Description	Deadline	Status	Current Position	Next Action
1	<b>Council wide briefing</b>	April-23	Ongoing	Various Briefings have now been held across the Housing & Investment Team	Discuss with Mo Omikorede how to engage with new starters in the housing officer team.
2	<b>Duty Holders – Define Duty Holders under the BSA</b>	April-23	Completed	All roles defined, including all of the Fire Safety Team roles. Included in Building Safety Policy	Building Safety Policy to be approved
3	<b>Building Safety Signage</b>	Oct-23	Ongoing	Trial of new digital noticeboard now installed at The Towers. Trial to also be installed at Silkin Court on screens in communal areas.	Roll out Digital Noticeboards to remaining 4 HRRBs. Engage with Housing Officers and Resident Engagement to add additional content.
4	<b>Building Safety Case(s)</b>	Oct-23	Ongoing		
Page 63	Register all HRRBs with Building Safety Regulator		Completed	All sites now registered	
	Develop Building Safety Case for each HRRB		Ongoing	All information now collated, apart from remedial plan for External Wall System	Fire Engineer to finalise specification, to include in wider refurbishment programme, including windows programme.
5	<b>Develop Building Safety Policy</b>	June-23	Ongoing	Final Draft of Policy now completed and reviewed	On agenda for Exec 14 <sup>th</sup> June for approval.
6	<b>Update Fire Safety Policy to include new legislation and best practice</b>	June-23	Ongoing	Final Draft of Policy now completed and reviewed	Agree with RP approval dates
7	<b>External Wall Surveys</b>	July-23	Completed	All surveys completed of external wall systems	Incorporate information into Building Safety Case(s)
8	<b>Implement Fire Risk Assessment Prioritisation Tool</b>	April-23	Completed	FRA Programme uploaded into Prioritisation Tool, confirmed that all FRA frequencies and types are correct	

No	Workstream Description	Deadline	Status	Current Position	Next Action
9	<b>Install New Secure Information Boxes</b>	April-23	Completed	New SIBs installed in all HRRBs	
10	<b>Information Refresh for Info Boxes</b>	April-23	Completed	Produce new information including floors plans, vulnerability list and all keys to communal / service cupboard doors	Fire & Rescue Service confirmed that they are happy with all information.
11	<b>Update Servicing Intervals for all Fire Safety Assets in HRRBs</b>	April-23	Completed	Increase servicing for AOV,s Fire Alarms, Dry Risers in all HRRBs to a monthly frequency	
12	<b>Update Signage and Wayfinding Signs</b>	Oct-23	Ongoing	Surveys now completed.	Signs ordered, to be installed by end of June
13	<b>Develop Resident Engagement Strategy</b> Develop a way of engaging with residents to seek their view on planned improvements to fire safety	Oct-23	Ongoing	Regular meetings to develop resident comms and engagement strategy ongoing on fortnightly basis.	Resident Engagement days (evenings) to be booked for each HRRB
Page 64	<b>Resident Communications</b>	Oct-23	Ongoing		
	Develop Site Specific comms for resident onboarding.			Now completed and at Final Draft stage	
	Re-Use Site Specific comms for annual update			Now completed and at Final Draft stage	
	Develop process with Lettings Team to ensure all new residents			Outline process agreed with Lettings Team	Finalise and document process, ensure evidence of issue and store signed receipt from residents.
15	<b>Fire Door Inspection Programme</b> Quarterly inspection of all communal fire doors and annual inspection of Flat Entrance Doors.	April-23	Completed	Fire Door Inspection Programme started in October 22. RFID chips installed on all doors are part of initial inspection	Import data into Asset Management System.
16	<b>PCFRA / PEEP Training</b>	Oct-23	Completed	Training and Templates delivered to all housing officers, in general needs and independent living schemes.	Service Delivery Managers to develop programme for PCFRAs on all ILS Residents and existing residents with known vulnerabilities.
17	<b>Repairs – Competent Contractor</b>	Oct-23	Ongoing	Book workshop with Repairs Team to identify and develop skills matrix.	Identify which Fire Safety workstreams should be outsourced whilst training needs analysis and skills gap is identified.



No	Workstream Description	Deadline	Status	Current Position	Next Action
18	Emergency Evacuation Alarms	Oct-23	Completed	Reviewed requirements with HFRS for existing HRRBs. Confirmed no requirement to retrofit.	Will be required for new 18m+ ILS Scheme at Brent Court.

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**Meeting** Executive

**Portfolio Area** Resources & Transformation; Culture, Leisure & IT

**Date** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2023



## DLUHC FUTURE COUNCILS GRANT AWARD

### KEY DECISION

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## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report summarises the Council's proposals to utilise the £750k Governments Future Councils grant funding, following its successful bid, and requests delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director (CF) to make any subsequent changes to the programme after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive note the Council's success in bidding for and being awarded one of the eight pilot grants that supports the Council in delivering its Transformation programme by enabling more reliable, digital and flexible services for customers.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (CF), after consulting with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation and Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Information Technology, to make changes to the proposals for the Future Councils grant if further work identifies an alternative use for the grant which provides a greater customer and financial benefit.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Future Councils is a new pilot scheme launched by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in Autumn 2022 to work with a group of eight Councils to test and iterate a new approach to help local authorities become more modern and resilient. The Future Councils programme aims to create replicable pathways to becoming modern and resilient that other local authorities might follow. The scheme is being operated through DLUHC's Local Digital team, which already works with Councils on cyber security and digital projects, and has in turn established a specific Future Councils team to deliver this scheme.
- 3.2 Rather than a traditional application approach asking local authorities to outline specific project proposals, council applications to the scheme were assessed across three broad categories of: strategic fit, organisational support, and ability to deliver (see Future Councils pilot application guidance in background documents). Councils had to provide a written submission and were also interviewed.
- 3.3 The Council's application highlighted the current development of the Transformation programme and the willingness to continually adapt and change to meet challenges, and the desire to migrate key systems to the cloud (in line with its ICT Strategy), promote modern skills and working practices, develop digital services, and acknowledged the need to achieve work on cyber security.
- 3.4 Assistance to each Council includes:
- £750k of Section 31 grant funding to invest in making services modern and resilient
  - Collaborative support to migrate from legacy technology and overcome significant organisational and cultural barriers
  - Training on Agile methodology and assessment of digital maturity
  - Assistance to participate in the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) that is being developed for local authorities
- 3.5 DLUHC were originally intending to announce the successful bids in January 2023, although this was delayed until March 2023. The seven other successful authorities are: Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council, Cornwall Council, Dorset Council, Leicester City Council, London Borough of Lewisham, Reading Borough Council, and South Tyneside Council.
- 3.6 The delay to award notification has meant the Council's proposed delivery plan contained within this report is still in outline form.

#### **Collaborative support for modernisation**

- 3.7 DLUHC's Future Councils team will support Councils in identifying key opportunities to transform through migrating from legacy technology, and overcoming organisational and cultural barriers to reforming services. There will also be opportunities to work jointly with the other participant authorities on areas of common interest.

- 3.8 Technology becomes legacy for a range of reasons including:
- Considered to be above acceptable risk threshold, for example due to reliability and resilience concerns
  - Considered end-of-life or no longer supported by the supplier
  - No longer meeting organisational requirements
- 3.9 Problems with legacy technology can be resolved by upgrading, migrating to the cloud, or use of alternative solutions. Technology is typically managed through a lifecycle of rolling change to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
- 3.10 DLUHC anticipates that Councils will spend most of their grant award supporting these initiatives.

### **Agile skills and digital maturity**

- 3.11 The eight pilot Councils will receive training on Agile project management for a small number of staff. The Agile methodology is increasingly commonly used in digital projects. It breaks projects down into short delivery cycles (“sprints”) with the aim of keeping the project team very focussed on small but achievable goals and stresses the importance of launching with a simple software version and then incrementally developing it on the basis of customer and staff feedback (minimum viable product or “MVP”). The Agile approach is recognised for reducing risk and increasing project flexibility.
- 3.12 Local Digital will also undertake a baseline assessment of the Council’s current digital maturity and agree a plan to make and evidence improvements. The Council undertook a maturity assessment as part of the initial Transformation work programme.

### **Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)**

- 3.13 The CAF was created by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to provide a common cyber assurance framework that could be used across a wide range of government and other public organisations in the UK. The NCSC sets out plans to adopt the CAF as the assurance framework for government, providing a systematic and comprehensive approach to assessing the extent to which cyber risks to essential functions are being managed. Unlike some security assessments, the CAF considers governance and management approaches as well as technical compliance.
- 3.14 DLUHC and NCSC conducted a four month pilot with 10 English Councils to explore how the CAF could be used with local authorities, using a version specifically developed for the sector. The pilot found that while challenging, the CAF “has the potential to act as a benchmark and tool to improve cybersecurity in local government”, but also that more work with local authorities was required for its adoption.
- 3.15 Based upon the learning from the pilot DLUHC is assisting Future Councils participants, including Stevenage, to undertake the CAF through a self-assessment process. This therefore represents a useful opportunity for the Council to take as much advantage as possible of available technical support from DLUHC, while continuing to navigate a complex and changing cyber security journey. This very much supports the Council’s current cyber security plans adding financial and expertise to that programme.

- 3.16 The Council is still expected to continue to progress the Cyber Security Action Plan, which fits alongside the CAF approach. It is not yet clear whether in the longer term DHLUC will mandate CAF for all authorities, and/or if it will be appropriate to also pursue a security accreditation like Cyber Essentials.

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

- 4.1 This report proposes to focus the funding around three core projects that meet the goals of the Future Councils scheme as outlined in section three above. This also enables opportunities to deliver digital change to identified high volume customer contact areas such as housing and repairs already identified in the ICT Strategy and Transformation programme.

##### **Alignment: ICT Strategy**

- 4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan relies on the efficient and effective operation of some 120 services of a diverse nature. One factor that unites them all is a reliance on information technology. Technology continues to evolve at pace, and that means that user expectations are constantly changing, requiring continual investment to modernise, this has been a challenge for Councils experiencing significant government funding cuts over the last decade or so. This grant funding allows the Council to implement some of those changes.
- 4.3 The ICT Strategy recognises the increased reliance and dependency on systems to support the redesign of Council services, enable the delivery of efficiency savings and meet the needs of customers. It also recognises that these systems therefore have to be protected from cyber-attacks.
- 4.4 The rapid use of cloud computing, commissioning and managed services shows that many things that were on-premise are now provided by external cloud based service providers such as Microsoft Azure, Amazon and Google. The ICT Strategy recognises that by utilising cloud computing it is anticipated that cost will reduce in the long term, and that cloud solutions should be considered when they bring additional benefits. This funding allows the council to accelerate that 'move' to cloud technology in line with ICT Strategy.
- 4.5 In addition to cloud versus on-premise technology, the changing nature of cyber-attacks means that the ICT service must manage the risk exposure of both partner Councils and ensure that appropriate controls are in place to protect the information and data that is held. The shared nature of the technology infrastructure means that some cyber security improvements benefit the whole partnership.
- 4.6 The Future Councils scheme is therefore an opportunity to migrate to cloud based technology to improve security, reliability and resilience of key systems in alignment with the ICT Strategy.

##### **Alignment: Transformation programme**

- 4.7 In August 2021 Executive approved the development of a Transformation programme to improve customer experience, increase workforce productivity and organisational resilience, while supporting Making Your Money Count

(MYMC) savings as required by the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Executive were given an update on the Transformation programme in October 2022.

- 4.8 The ability to continue to run a diverse number of services while having to meet the financial challenge of funding those services as a result of over a decade of funding cuts, cost of living inflationary pressures, and funding of the impact of COVID has become ever more challenging. The Transformation programme is one of the key activity work streams in delivering the MYMC priority and combines changes to processes, organisation structure, culture and technology. All four of these aspects need to be reviewed and redesigned, with changes implemented to each, to ensure improvements are sustainable and maintain delivery of priority services within a lower overall budget, while still delivering fit for purpose services for residents and businesses.
- 4.9 Through delivering sustainable transformation, the programme aims to enable resources to continue to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the Council's corporate plan.
- 4.10 The Future Councils scheme pump primes the Transformation programme in making digital improvements which in turn delivers the outcome of the programme, this is in addition to the £500K per annum the Council has committed in its own resources (from the General Fund and HRA).
- 4.11 The transformation of Housing related services is a critical aspect of the Council's programme. Stevenage operates an extensive landlord service to support its tenants and manage and improve the housing stock. Investigation work by the transformation team has shown that more than half of the work of Customer Services activity relates to Housing. Modernisation of Housing systems to enable more mobile and community-based working will unlock the potential benefits of transformation by enabling new ways of working.
- 4.12 The Council's transformation goals can be supported by utilising the Future Councils scheme to enhance modernisation of systems for improved resilience and reliability, and to enable new ways of working to support customers.

#### **Recommended outline project proposals**

- 4.13 Because of the complex and technical nature of the projects full costings have yet to be completed and estimates are based on the most recent information. The table below gives an overview of the current proposals and benefits, and it is recommended (as summarised in para. 2.2) that delegated authority is given to the relevant Director to make any subsequent changes should the indicative costs and benefits change of the project and any on-going revenue costs or benefits.

Potential project	Key Benefits	£
<b>Theme: Migrating from legacy technology</b>		
<p>NEC Housing (Northgate) and document management migration to cloud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This key system underpins housing and garages services</li> <li>• Scoping is at a very early stage and the large budget allocation is made on the basis of the current worst-case forecast</li> <li>• The NEC Housing application itself and the linked electronic documents would move to the cloud and be maintained by NEC on the Council's behalf, while maintaining links and integrations with other Council systems</li> <li>• IT, the Housing IT Systems Team and service managers will be key parties to the project, as well as additional resources to assist with managing the project and mapping out the integrations with other systems</li> <li>• Initial scoping and planning indicates that preparation work to map and document the relevant systems could start shortly and enable the formal migration phase to start in early Q3. The supplier typically allows six months for migration to the cloud, meaning go-live is estimated in Q1 2024/25</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved system performance for staff, and more flexible access to electronic documents</li> <li>• Enables new functionality such as built-in data warehousing with enhanced dashboard and analytics capability, and enhanced mobile working functionality that will support the emerging transformation vision for Housing services</li> <li>• Reduces current reliance on small number of specialist staff for system maintenance and support</li> <li>• 24/7 systems availability for staff and customers (uptime typically 99.5%)</li> </ul>	£500K
<p>Resourcelink HR &amp; Payroll migration to cloud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost is based on the supplier's migration estimates, project management support and resource to maximise use of new functionality</li> <li>• An early stage in the project will be to work with EHC to understand if they would also like to migrate to the cloud or continue using the existing software</li> <li>• Based on information gathered so far it appears some preparatory work to the current system is required before it can migrate to the cloud. A suitable time is being identified when both the ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved reliability; HR and Payroll would be unaffected by IT outages</li> <li>• Increased Payroll resilience as supplier support could be used should it become necessary</li> <li>• Enables additional functionality such as integrated on-line recruitment module, set up access for pre-starter staff, and improved access to</li> </ul>	£100K



service and the supplier and able to support the required work	HR self-service for mobile and community working staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduces reliance on internal resources for IT system support</li> </ul>	
<b>Theme: Cyber Security</b>		
CAF assessment process and remediations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the current IT security position through the CAF approach, and engage constructively with the DLUHC Future Councils team and other participant authorities. Plan and commence work on any critical issues discovered.</li> <li>As the IT networks and security resource is currently limited this funding will allow additional temporary resource, and train existing team members, to boost capacity</li> <li>Budget will also enable work to commence on any critical cyber security issues identified through the assessment</li> <li>Based on the information provided so far it appears the CAF information gathering will take place over the period approximately June-September 2023. The assessment will be finalised in Q3, following which any identified cyber remediations will then be programmed in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory element of the Future Councils scheme</li> <li>Enables utilisation of the Future Councils team's own skills and resources to support cyber improvements</li> <li>Opportunity for the Council to influence development of a likely future security standard for local government</li> </ul>	£150K
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£750K</b>

- 4.14 The access to the DLUHC expertise in addition to the grant funding will also support the Transformation programme in delivering on its stated aims.
- 4.15 Providing training for existing employees embeds skills within the organisation and can improve organisational resilience and ways of working. As part of the Future Councils pilot the Council will have access to funded training on Agile project management, and potentially other transformative subjects. DLUHC's Future Councils team is keen to understand what training local authorities benefit from and to understand how it supports the work of local government.
- 4.16 Officers will share lessons learnt with other local authorities as a condition of the funding. Where other local authorities in the scheme are working on similar projects the Council will share learning to help achieve common goals.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The grant can support the one-off implementation costs of the modernisation projects proposed, however it is recognised that cloud-based technology can have higher revenue costs than on-premise software, although it often alleviates staff time spent on support and the need to purchase and maintain IT infrastructure through capital spend. This will need to be considered as part of the process set out in paragraph 4.13.
- 5.2 MYMC savings for the Council and any revenue implications will need to be considered as part of the business cases and identify any mitigations.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.3 Expenditure from the Future Councils grant would need to be compliant with internal and external procurement rules and be within scope of the purposes for which the grant has been awarded.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.4 Future Councils is an opportunity to reduce identified strategic risks around Cyber Security and IT Resilience, by utilising the additional resources to accelerate work and undertake mitigations that enhance the current cyber programme being undertaken.
- 5.5 All proposed work will use project management methods to monitor and controls risks throughout delivery.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.6 The ICT Strategy recognises that the progressive move to smarter technology and cloud-based solutions will reduce energy costs for the Council and will be a more environmentally appropriate way of delivering technology.

### **Human Resources Implications**

- 5.7 Moving the HR and Payroll system to the cloud will improve resilience and functionality which currently relies on one Council employee supported by a partner Council. It will also enable the supplier to undertake administrative processing work of payroll function should it become necessary (at additional cost).
- 5.8 Cloud migration will lessen in-house technology support requirements and consequently reduce pressure on the ICT Systems team, as well as improving resilience by limiting the reliance on key individuals. Recent SOCITM benchmarking identified that the service was insufficiently resourced to meet current needs and that this has been compounded by a difficulty in recruiting to vacancies for these highly skilled roles. Adoption of cloud services helps to alleviate demand on this priority area.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.9 Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken to assess the specific impact of planned projects, although it is anticipated that the impacts will be neutral or positive.

### **Service Delivery Implications**

- 5.10 The proposed migration of the NEC Housing system to the cloud boosts IT resilience by removing reliance on on-premise infrastructure, and also enables functionality that's more suited to mobile and community based working. This will facilitate changes to working practices that are being developed through the transformation programme.

### **Information Technology Implications**

- 5.11 Included in the body of the report.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 [Future Councils pilot application guidance | Local Digital](#)

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