

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Wednesday, 13 December 2023**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

**Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703**

**committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

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

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## AGENDA

### PART I

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

**2. MINUTES - 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

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

Pages 3 – 12

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

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

Community Select Committee – 19 October 2023

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 1 November 2023

Community Select Committee – 14 November 2023

Pages 13 – 32

**4. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 2023/24**

To consider the Corporate Performance report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24.

Pages 33 – 66

**5. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25**

To consider and approve the Council Tax Base for 2024/25.

Pages 67 – 72

**6. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2024/25**

To consider the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget and Rent Setting report for 2024/25.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

**7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider the following motions –

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

**9. PART II MINUTES - 15 NOVEMBER 2023**

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

Pages 73 - 78

**10. HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT AND SUNDRY DEBT WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000**

To consider and approve Sundry Debt and Housing Benefit Overpayment Debt write offs greater than £10,000.

Pages 79 - 84

**11. 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, 13 December 2023 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 15 November 2023**

**Time: 2.00pm**

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

**Present:** Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller.

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

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 MINUTES - 12 OCTOBER 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 October 2023 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

In respect of the Minutes of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 10 October 2023 relating to the scrutiny of Bus Services in the Borough, the Portfolio Holder for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhood Communities commented that a knock-on effect of the successful petition to improve bus services in Bedwell had resulted in a reduction of the existing services to north-eastern parts of the town (St. Nicholas, Martins Wood and Chells wards).

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance thanked Members of the Environment & Economy Select Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee, together with the Portfolio Holders for Co-operative Council & Neighbourhood Communities and Economy & Transport for their support in driving forward the Council's Climate Change agenda.

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

Community Select Committee – 19 September 2023

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 26 September 2023

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 10 October 2023

#### 4 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW 2023

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan review 2023.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development advised that the HRA 30 Year Business Plan outlined the Council's ambitions for the development of new social, affordable, good quality homes, maintenance of its existing social housing stock and provision of its tenancy management services, as funded through the ringfenced HRA income. The Council's HRA Business Plan was originally approved by the Executive in 2014 and had been reviewed frequently to ensure that any changes in approach to financial strategy, policy or direction of travel for the Council were reflected.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development stated that the report contained a review of key assumptions and material internal or external changes, revenue and capital investments for 2024/25, with the impact of proposed changes clearly identified. The proposals sought to ensure that the Council could maintain its assets, fulfil new regulatory and statutory requirements and provide 'More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes'.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development drew attention to the key headlines of the Business Plan which included:

- Significant growth proposals both capital (£423Million over the first 11 years, with the majority of this invested in existing and new housing stock) and revenue (£3.8Million in 2024/25);
- Increased borrowing to support capital spend in response to high inflation, a rent cap in the last year, increased regulatory requirements and lasting impacts from the Covid pandemic;
- Re-financing some existing debt (not paying off as in the previous Plan) and recognising that large savings would be needed to balance the plan, especially in years 1 to 11; and
- Acknowledgement of the higher risk in the first 10 years, due to increased borrowing and savings targets, but recognition that investment in assets and an increase in the number of Council homes was vital for tenants' wellbeing and a growing resident base.

The Executive noted that, due to uncertainty surrounding changes to Government legislative and regulation, such as the forthcoming revision of the Consumer Standards by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the Council would need to revisit the HRA Business Plan in the Autumn of 2024 to assess future plans and spending commitments.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2023 revision of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 year

Business Plan, as set out in the report and its appendices, be approved.

2. That the revised approach to borrowing principles, as set out in Paragraph 4.3 of the report, be approved.
3. That the level of balances for the HRA Business Plan, set as a minimum £10Million (uplifted for inflation for future years), and as set out in Paragraph 4.4.14 of the report, be noted.
4. That the assumptions used for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as set out in Paragraph 4.4.1 of the report) and the growth and saving proposals (as set out in Paragraph 4.4.3 of the report) be incorporated into the 2024/25 budget.
5. That the Capital Programme assumptions contained within the report be approved for the housing stock and new build properties and incorporated into the 2024/25 budget.
6. That prudential borrowing to fund capital projects in 2024/25 of £18.8Million be approved, and that future years be considered annually in line with future anticipated expenditure.
7. That additional HRA revenue budget of £176,000 in 2023/24 be approved to extend fixed term contracts for staff to the end of the 2023/24 financial year (as set out in Paragraph 4.4.5 of the report), and it be noted that this is within current Executive delegated limits.
8. That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the Medium-Term Financial Strategies and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **5 HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023 - 2028**

The Executive considered a report in respect of a proposed Housing Asset Management Strategy 2023 – 2028.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development advised the Asset Management Strategy detailed the framework under which the proposed investment in existing stock detailed in the HRA Business Plan (2023) would be achieved. The Housing Asset Management Strategy would direct the Council's investment priorities, but also served to demonstrate how the Council would deliver excellent services to its tenants, leaseholders and wider stakeholders. It identified how the Council would ensure that residents living in Council homes would remain safe, involved, informed and have good quality living standards. The strategy also detailed how the Council would meet the requirements of the new regulatory framework for social housing, along with other statutory legislation.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development explained that the strategy

outlined the approach and commitments the Council was making under the following key themes:

1. Ensure safety is our number one priority.
2. Deliver an excellent customer experience.
3. Improve performance and secure long term financial sustainability.
4. Tackle the climate change emergency to reduce our energy costs and overall carbon footprint.
5. Provide and maintain high quality homes.

In response to a question from the Leader regarding surveying of the Council's Housing Stock, it was confirmed that 94% of the actual stock had been surveyed. Access difficulties had prevented surveys of the remaining 6% thus far.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2023 - 2028, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP), after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development, to finalise the Strategy and related action plan.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **6 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Second Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development advised that the report highlighted a net increase for the General Fund of £1,850 and a net underspend of £1,229,920 for the Housing Revenue Account. She added that both the General Fund and HRA remained within their variation limits as delegated to the Executive by Council.

It was **RESOLVED**:

### **General Fund**

1. That the 2023/24 Second Quarter projected net increase in General Fund expenditure of £1,850 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 proposed movement on reserves, as detailed in Paragraph 4.2.1 of the report, be noted.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

4. That the 2023/24 Second Quarter projected net budget underspend in the HRA of £1,229,920 be approved.
5. That it be noted that the cumulative increases made to the HRA net budget remains within the £400,000 variation limit delegated to the Executive in the January 2023 budget report.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 FIRST AND SECOND QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24**

The Executive considered a report in respect of First and Second Quarter Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/24.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, the Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development advised that the Executive was asked to approve net changes of £447,000 in 2023/24, as detailed in Paragraph 4.4 of the report, and the reprofiling of £15.016 Million of 2023/24 budgets into 2024/25, as detailed in Section 4.5 of the report. The majority of the reprofiling was connected to Housing Development schemes, including Brent Court Garages, and Regeneration projects, such as the Stevenage Enterprise Centre and Innovation & Technology Centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing & Housing Development commented that there was also a new requirement that monitoring of treasury management indicators should be reported quarterly to the Executive. Appendix C to the report showed the First Quarter for 2023/24.

The Strategic Director (CF) confirmed that £447,000 of the increased budget costs for 2023/24 related to additional third party (including grants) funding received by the Council.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the net capital budget increases of £447,000 (2023/24 - £316,000, 2024/25 - £131,000), as set out in Paragraph 4.4 of the report, be approved.
2. That the reprofiling of £15.016 Million from 2023/24 to 2024/25, as set out in Paragraph 4.5 of the report, be approved.
3. That the contents of Appendix C to the report (Treasury Management Update Quarter Ended 30 June 2023) be noted, and it be further noted that the 2021 Prudential Code and TM Code had introduced a new requirement that

monitoring of the treasury management indicators should be reported quarterly (along with the other prudential indicators) as part of the authority's general revenue and capital monitoring, and that Quarter 2 will be reported in the 2023/24 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators report.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **8 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2023/24**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Mid-Year Treasury Management Review 2023/24.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, the Leader of the Council advised that there were no recommended changes to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24, approved by Council on 23 February 2023. The report showed that cash balances were projected to be £38Million by 31 March 2024, however all of these sums had been committed to be spent, were planned to be used/drawn down, or were being held on behalf of others. Unless it was determined that allocated reserves were no longer needed in the future, there was currently no cash resources available for new projects.

The Leader of the Council stated that, as outlined in the First and Second Quarter Capital Budget Monitoring 2023/24 (see Item 7 above), borrowing of £23.826Million was proposed in 2023/24 to support the financing of projects in year. As at 30 September 2023, total borrowing was £259Million, which included new HRA borrowing of £7.5Million (August 2023). This could rise to £283Million if all proposed borrowing was taken externally.

The Leader of the Council commented that the average yield on investments was 5.27% for April to September 2023. The average yield was not expected to rise significantly during the remainder of the year, although some current fixed term investments would mature and be replaced with new investments at current higher rates. There had been no breaches of the Treasury Management Strategy in 2023/24 to date.

The Assistant Director (Finance) confirmed that the report had been considered by the Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 8 November 2023. At that meeting, officers had responded to a number of Members' questions, and the Committee had recommended that the Review be agreed by the Executive for approval by Council on 20 December 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2023/24 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and prudential indicators, as set out in the report, be recommended to Council for approval.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*



## 9 BALANCING THE BUDGET OPTIONS 2024/25

The Executive considered a report in respect of a proposed range of General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget options to be incorporated into the 2024/25 Revenue Budget process.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, the Leader of the Council advised that the report outlined the Council's financial position and identified a funding gap for 2024/25 of £1.54Million, with a requirement to identify options totalling £1.23Million in order to balance the Council's budget for next year.

The Leader of the Council explained that the 2024/25 Balancing the Budget target had again been exacerbated by higher inflationary pressures and the persisting reduction in car parking income since COVID (with a £300,000 loss assumed in 2024/25), along with on-going pressures for issues such as the ICT review and licences, as set out in Section 4.5 of the report. This, after years of funding reduction, presented another difficult challenge noting that SBC had made savings of £12M since 2010. It was noted that despite the identification of options which would generate £1.2Million towards next year's budget target, a gap of £56,000 remained to be found. The options to achieve this further saving would be presented to Members for consideration at the January 2024 Executive Meeting.

The Leader of the Council stated that the options before Members could be summarised as:

- Efficiency (contract renewals) - £273,150
- Commercial (including fees and charges) - £613,606
- Transformation - £331,482
- Reductions - £5,614

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance was pleased to note that the growth proposals for 2024/25 included the creation of a new Graduate/Trainee Planner post and the establishment of a post dedicated to woodland and new tree management.

The Strategic Director (CF) commented that balancing the budget continued to be challenging, with circa £1Million to be found per year for the foreseeable future. The Council would proceed with its Transformation Programme in order to assist in identifying and realising future opportunities. She confirmed that the budget included the impact of the recently approved NJC Pay Award for staff.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Balancing the Budget options, as set out in the report, totalling £1,223,851 (saving) for the General Fund and £77,134 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) respectively for 2024/25, be approved and incorporated into the Council's budget setting processes.
2. That the Growth options included in Section 4.6.2 of the report be approved for inclusion (subject to the savings shortfall being identified) in the 2024/25 -

General Fund (£131,710) and HRA (£46,960) budgets.

3. That £40,000 be approved for the costs associated with implementation of the Balancing the Budget options within the 2023/24 budgets, as set out in Paragraph 4.9.4 of the report, with the General Fund and HRA sharing the costs 50:50.
4. That the revised General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy financial summary, as shown in Section 4.11 of the report, be noted.
5. That the completion of the Business Rates for 2024/25 (NDR 1) be delegated to the Strategic Director (Section 151 Officer), after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation, as set out in Paragraph 4.3.4 of the report.
6. That the increase in the two Planning fees, as detailed in Paragraph 4.9.3 of the report, and amounting to an additional £1,500 income, be agreed.
7. That the Council's recognised trade unions be consulted regarding the proposed budget package.
8. That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted and their views considered as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **10 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

## **11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 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.

## **12 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 12 OCTOBER 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 October 2023 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

**13 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (KENILWORTH CLOSE) UPDATE**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of an update on the Kenilworth Close development scheme, including a review of Phase 2 of the project.

Executive Members commented on the report and officers answered a number of Members' questions.

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 REVIEW OF SHARED ICT SERVICE RESOURCING (SOCITM REPORT)**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of recommended proposals and costs for an enhanced Shared ICT Service.

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.*

**15 GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW - PRIORITIES VERSUS FUNDING REQUIREMENT 2023/24 - 2029/30**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of an overview of the General Fund Capital Strategy for 2023/24 – 2029/30, including proposals to fund the Council's approved priorities during that period.

Executive Members commented on the report and officers answered a number of Members' questions.

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.*

**16 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 19 October 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Alex Farquharson (Vice-Chair), Forhad Chowdhury, Mason Humberstone, Wendy Kerby, Conor McGrath and Ellie Plater.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.31pm

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

Apologies for absence were received by Councillors Julie Ashley-Wren, John Duncan, and Carolina Veres.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 MINUTES - 19 SEPTEMBER 2023

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 19 September 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3 PRE-SCRUTINY POLICY DEVELOPMENT - HRA BUSINESS PLAN

The Strategic Director explained that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was a separate account that was primarily focused on the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) housing stock. The HRA Business Plan set out the strategic plan on how to maintain and manage the housing stock. The Government had ended the national council housing subsidy system and introduced a new self-financing regime under the Localism Act 2012. This gave local authorities more autonomy with their housing stocks. However there was a £200m debt settlement payment made to the treasury which meant SBC had to borrow this amount. Therefore SBC needed a clear business plan, which included longer term planning of managing the debt over a 30-year period.

The first HRA Business Plan was approved in 2012 and got reviewed when there was a significant change in circumstance. There was a fundamental review in 2019. Since the policy landscape for housing has significantly changed recently, it was appropriate to review it again. For example, there was new legislation after the Grenfell tragedy, as well as damp and mould, additional requirements through the Social Housing Regulation Act, Fire Safety Act, and the Building Safety Act. Additionally, the world was changing and the cost-of-living crisis and covid had a

knock-on effect on the plan. All these factors placed a lot of demand onto SBC as a housing provider.

Due to covid the investment programmes had to be extended and a lot of the original priorities would continue. Targets from the 2019/20 plan had been met, including:

- 287 new homes since 2019 – 486 homes had been delivered.
- Implemented the Decent Homes programme.
- Implemented the Major Refurbishment contract.
- Improved compliance position.
- Improved energy performance.
- Improved how stock was managed and allocated.

There had also been a focus on improvements from tenant suggestions, such as repairs which the Community Select Committee had been focusing on this year, and were also investing in energy performance measures.

The Finance Business Partner informed Members that the government set the national rent policy and had put 4 years of rent decreases into place between 2016 and 2020. This took £225m from the 30-year plan and affected the housing association sector as well as the Council. There was also a high level of rent arrears which had a knock-on effect as SBC had to provide for more bad debt. There was constant work in place to keep arrears as low as possible. The introduction of universal credit being paid in arrears created problems as people were getting into rent arrears while waiting for their universal credit to be paid.

SBC were seeking other sources of funding, such as £17.8m grant funding for new build houses and £5.4m for decarbonisation projects. The HRA only survived on the rental income and even funded the debt repayments.

There were many unknown risks which had to be taken into account when making the plan which included:

- The current rent setting policy ran out in 2024. Rent is currently set at inflation + 1%, but this could change.
- There were no new burdens funding specifically into the HRA which meant these had to be met from existing or other new funding streams.
- The Social Housing Regulator was now charging a £68,000 fee per annum in recognition of its expanded role in regulating the new Consumer Standards.
- The inflationary pressures with very high inflation on things such as employment and supplier costs.

The Strategic Director informed Members that the rent policy position was a key risk for SBC. The delivery of new homes underpinned the plan as there was an aspiration to increase the amount of stock SBC owned as a social housing provider. Over 30 years the aim was to deliver 2250 new Council homes and so far had provided 486 with more in the design phase. The net increase in social housing would be in excess of 1000 units and took into account the right to buy.

There were also new national standards around carbon emissions and energy performance, however this also led to an increased build cost. They needed to look at the viability of the schemes such as the split of affordable rent and social rent, and other options such as shared ownership schemes. The Strategic Director also highlighted some of the other grant opportunities including from Homes England.

The Head of Asset Management advised that they produced a revised housing asset management strategy which focused on the changes in the regulations, legislation, and policies. The key areas were:

- Safe environments for tenants
- Excellent customer experience
- Investment into climate change with the long-term net zero ambition and included objectives which didn't have funding yet.
- Compliance with new areas as well as future changes such as the Decent Homes Standard, Building Safety, and Fire Safety.
- A review around responsive repairs and voids and there was due to be a review of the caretaking service.
- A focus on clearing the backlog in terms of voids and the service review had made a number of recommendations in this regard. Once the backlog had been addressed, there needed to be a transition to a new way of working.
- Delivering the fencing repairs backlog which was a significant investment need of around £850,000 in 2024/25.
- Look at the viability and investment requirements of housing stock and the asset groups that weren't viable could be looked at as potential development opportunities.

The Head of Housing informed Members that in order to meet statutory obligations, they had to increase resource to progress the work coming out of the service reviews, consumer regulations, building safety, and fire safety. They were looking at a new tenant engagement framework which was from ground level up to Executive level. This would link into a communications plan to make sure tenants and leaseholders were kept up to date and informed. Housing Managers who did not have a housing qualification or equivalent would be put on a training programme in line with the regulators requirements.

The tenancy audit programme had started, and it was important that SBC knew their tenants and the condition of the properties. Also looking at neighbourhood management and transforming services to focus on local issues and support customers better. There were a lot of vulnerable customers that were highlighted during covid support had increased to help them. She noted that they needed to do more digital investment so staff time could be spent supporting more customers. There was also a review of the rent arrears action plan to maximise rent collection.

The Strategic Director noted that they were looking at where SBC needed to invest in terms of current and new properties. There was a tight timeline, and they were remodelling the finances and looking at priorities to create a balanced package. He noted they were interested to hear the views of the Committee before it went to the Executive. He then gave a brief overview of the timeline for the report which was:

- 15<sup>th</sup> November – HRA Review Report to the Executive
- 13<sup>th</sup> December – HRA Draft Budget and Rent Setting to the Executive
- 17<sup>th</sup> January – HRA Final Budget and Rent Setting 2024/25 to the Executive.
- 24<sup>th</sup> January – HRA Final Budget and Rent Setting 2024/25 to Full Council

Some Members asked a series of questions relating to repairs. In response to these questions, the Strategic Director advised that:

- It was positive that SBC had a greater control around the HRA.
- Certain repairs would be looked at in more detail in the future once the government came forward with and updated Decent Home Standards.
- They were looking to improve case management and deal with the backlog of certain types of repairs.
- The challenge was choosing where to prioritise the spend.
- Even though there was a borrowing requirement, it could only go to a certain level.
- The prioritisation around fencing repairs comes from a health and safety angle. Where repairs could be done, they would be, but the programme was about significant, if not full, replacements.
- Previously SBC didn't have the resources in the HRA to deal with everything that we do now, but there were more burdens placed on SBC with the new regulations.

The Head of Housing also advised that they were looking at how to improve flat block inspections to include tenants and leaseholders feedback. The Head of Housing Asset Management added that the next phase was to deal with the final stages of the fencing backlog. The programme had no expected delays, but reminded Members that while they were delivering the backlog, they were also getting more fencing repairs through.

A Member asked how we reached the net zero target if we didn't decarbonise older properties. The Strategic Director advised that the government were reviewing policies in relation to net zero. SBC were having to provide match funding and there was a provision in the report to meet the 2030 target of EPC rating C as a minimum. The actual cost of decarbonising the national housing stock was billions and HRAs couldn't afford to do this in their current positions. New burdens funding would be required, and they were lobbying to ensure other sources were coming forward. He added that technology wasn't keeping pace with government policies. Head of Asset Management advised that there were things they could improve such as insulation or windows, but these were bespoke to the property. He added that funding criteria under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund was strict as to what can be delivered and SBC had to match fund it at around 50%.

Another Member asked what SBC were doing to support local businesses and trade. The Strategic Director advised that they were looking at market engagement in particular. They used Hertfordshire and regional based builders and were using procurement power to ensure they were creating job opportunities to maximise social value. The Head of Asset Management advised that SBC were looking at the



social value commitments across the whole Council to maximise what they were getting. They were working with various organisations such as the North Herts College to maximise what they were getting training wise and to bring in a lot of apprentices. The Strategic Director added that currently 30 people secured jobs and 170 were going through training and SBC wanted to further grow this.

The Chair asked the Strategic Director to RAG the report and he indicated Green at the current time. He highlighted that the Council was still waiting for clarity from the Government on Decent Homes 2, Housing Consumer Standards, and Future Rent Policy and therefore it was likely that the plan would need to be reviewed in the next financial year once the guidance was made available. SBC were in a strong position with what was being put forward in the HRA Business Plan. The next review wouldn't be as in depth but would adjust to the regulation changes and the known unknowns. He added that the biggest area that couldn't be met right now was the decarbonisation ambitions, but this was the case across the entire housing sector.

A few Members asked questions in relation to rent arrears. The Strategic Director advised that they were uplifting the bad debt provision as they still had a number of tenants that needed to transfer onto universal credit. Tenants in arrears that are on universal credit account for 71% of the total arrears and they had seen higher levels of debt for people transferring onto universal credit. SBC was looking at additional resources and putting funding into debt and welfare benefit advice and support as they had seen an increase in demand. The Finance Business Partner advised that writing off debt was the last resort, and they try to avoid doing this as much as possible. When SBC provided for bad debt, they look at a certain percentage of the rent debit that they believe they won't get back and was based on past figures. If bad debts went down it freed up more money in the HRA that could be used, but if arrears went up then more money had to be put aside. The Strategic Director added that many registered providers were reducing the amount spent on new builds to offset the cost of maintaining their current stock. He was confident they would develop a balanced plan of new builds and maintaining the current stock.

A Member asked a question in relation to funding schemes and the Strategic Director advised that the position of funding may change due to priorities changing dependent on Government policies. SBC were bidding on funding available and were successful in getting some grants. The new Government policy set expectations on what they wanted which created new burdens, but the funding didn't align with this. They were reviewing their policy on how to fund commitments as the implications on SBC as a housing provider was significant as it was the most regulated service.

The Chair thanked all Officers for their contribution to the meeting.

#### 4 **REPAIRS REVIEW MAPPING DOCUMENT**

The Chair introduced the document and reminded Members that the scope had been agreed in the July Community Select Committee meeting and since then they had interviewed the Portfolio Holder and Officers, as well as Members completing a site visit. She noted that there wasn't a current policy or standards and suggested this should be picked up as part of policy development. She added that she was

impressed at how many repairs had taken place. The Assistant Director (Building Safety and Housing Property Services) advised that she could share the findings from the external Ridge review of the repairs service at the next Community Select Committee meeting.

The Chair made some comments on the review which included:

- There were instances where jobs had been referred incorrectly to the wrong teams.
- The site visit identified jobs that were booked in, but operatives were not present due to things such as being on holiday or off sick.
- The investment and the repairs teams needed to work in close collaboration and suggested a better triage system be put in place to streamline the process. She noted that it was positive that customers could upload images of repairs being reported and that better assessment should take place at this stage of the process. She noticed some barriers between the teams and suggested relationships should be improved.
- There needed to be more training for CSC Officers and checklists should be developed of what to ask the tenant to ensure they understood the original request.
- The communication they observed with tenants was excellent.
- There were some appointments arranged when tenants weren't there. The correct phone number needed to be provided with the original repair request. She suggested that if there were multiple failures to attend appointments then there should be a charge.
- She recommended that the repairs service should be a focus within community engagement, so tenants understood the implications of not being available when the operatives call/tenants missed appointments and the impact this had on the service.
- More concrete policies should be required.

Members thanked the team for their response to the review and the improved changes taking place already.

The Assistant Director (Building Safety and Housing Property Services) advised that they had already picked up on some of the key issues such as the need for clear policies and processes as well as better communications between teams. She highlighted the positive things happening within the repair services but acknowledged that there were areas of improvement needed and they were focusing on these.

The Chair asked whether there were different processes for repairs compared to replacements. The Assistant Director (Building Safety and Housing Property Services) advised that the repairs team determined what was a repair or a replacement in consultation with the investment team, but the customer shouldn't have a difference experience.

5 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 1 November 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Graham Snell and Forhad Chowdhury.

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

**Time:** End Time: 8.07pm

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

Apologies for absence were received by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage and Councillor Ellie Plater.

Councillor Forhad Chowdhury substituted for Baroness Taylor.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - 10 OCTOBER 2023**

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 10 October 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE**

The Chair introduced the Chief Executive Matt Partridge, the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) Zayd Al-Jawad, the Assistant Director (Direct Services) Steve Dupoy, and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance Councillor Simon Speller.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee he was the Lead Hertfordshire and East of England CEO for climate change. He co-authored the report which led to the launch of the Hertfordshire Climate Change Partnership. He referenced both the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the Regional Climate Change Forum (RCCF).

Previously there was very limited joined up working across the districts, boroughs, and county council on climate change. Accordingly, the HCCSP was set up in 2020 to maximise the opportunities across the 11 local authorities and the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership.

There was a funding agreement set out and the HCCSP was being resourced by two part time officers. An officer group fed into the Members board. There were now over 100 Officers contributing to the broader objectives to achieve climate change targets. They were also ensuring that the partnership was connected to the right groups in Hertfordshire such as the Herts Infrastructure and Planning Partnership and the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership. The HCCSP was also working with Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Councils as well to further collaboration.

The Chief Executive added that the HCCSP was shortlisted at the LGC awards for a local government award. Unfortunately, they didn't win but the Partnership was recognised as doing good things for the County in terms of climate change and the CE was invited to present at the national Local Government Chronicle conference.

The RCCF represented 50 Councils in the Eastern region and HCCSP represented Hertfordshire at a regional level. A baseline assessment had been undertaken on what was being done in the East of England region and this led to the development of 8 priorities such as developing a regional switchboard to share information more effectively and lobbying in government circles. By collaborating together, Councils could increase resources, have a good strategy, and develop a clear plan. All Councils had agreed to put more money in to get more things done.

The Chief Executive updated the HCCSP on what was being done at a regional level. They had developed 6 action plans which included:

- Carbon reduction such as solar together which was a scheme offering solar panels at a discounted rate.
- Biodiversity such as the green spaces audit.
- Transport such as the clean air day which featured anti-idling activities.
- Water such as sustainable drainage systems.
- Behaviour changes such as focusing on communications and training.

HCCSP were looking at how they engaged with sectors and wanted to move into a coordinating role recognising that there were other organisations who could support some of the delivery. They were briefing leaders and top teams on what they were focusing on and further resourcing communication into the wider public. He noted that there was always more to be done in this area but there was a lot of positive work being done at a local level in Stevenage as well as in the County and regional levels. They were also lobbying into government circles and doing work to get things done.

A Member asked whether government lobbying had brought any projects to Stevenage. The Chief Executive advised that there was a lot to do as there were so many funding pots available. They were campaigning for the government to simplify the funding model. He also advised that match funding was challenging in some areas. For example, SBC had been successful twice on the Housing Decarbonisation Fund, however the Council had to put a lot of money in to get it match funded. Decarbonising the entire SBC housing stock to an EPC rating of C would cost £250m which SBC cannot afford. He added that the LGA had picked up climate change as one of their key priorities and were working at regional level on

how to effectively promote this to political parties and part conferences ahead of the next general election.

Members asked questions in relation to biodiversity net gain and offsetting. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that the 2030 target was highly ambitious. If managed correctly, offsetting was highly beneficial especially in terms of housing. Decarbonising new houses was more effective than retrofitting older houses. In terms of biodiversity net gain within planning, it was important to be accountable to where the money from that was spent.

A Member suggested that active transport was only a component of sustainable travel and there were other areas as well. The Chief Executive agreed and advised that the HCCSP Transport plan went into more detail on sustainable travel.

Another Member asked whether the HCCSP had long term ambitions for coordination. The Chief Executive advised that the HCCSP had been delivering a range of projects and would continue to do so. They were trying to work with professionals in certain areas to support broader programme delivery.

A Member suggested that changing behaviour was difficult and asked how this would be tackled. The Chief Executive advised that they were looking at ways and means to encourage people to change. The anti-idling campaign was a good example of practical action to encourage change. He also agreed that this change wouldn't happen overnight, but advertisement and communication needed to be resourced.

Another Member asked whether the partnership was strengthening SBC or whether it was taking independence away from the Council. The Chief Executive advised that there was a lot of work being done at County level that SBC was benefitting from. The partnership was about contributing and furthering what was being done at a local level not replacing or duplicating effort. Cllr Speller added that the HCCSP was a knowledge exchange and that it was reporting on topics that SBC couldn't do by itself. This was shared equally across all the districts and was focused on the research.

A Member asked whether the meetings were public. The Chief Executive advised that they weren't public meetings, but the minutes were publicly accessible as were the action plans.

Another Member asked whether there was more SBC could do to support the changing behaviours in small and local businesses. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that big businesses were trying to help by sharing experiences of what they had done to other businesses in Stevenage. They had also offered 100 spaces for SMEs to get net zero training and advice. 100 businesses had signed up and completed this last year and they were looking at more funding to do this again.

The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) then gave a presentation on the climate change annual update of where the global and national trends were as well as SBC work programmes. There were three pathways around most of the SBC

emissions and they had developed a potential roadmap to net zero on these.

An example of one of these pathways to decarbonise Stevenage was 'fuel and fleet' and looked at the transport sector. This pathway focused on the SBC vehicles and equipment as well as the grey fleet and what were the heaviest users in emissions. It had been proposed to develop a business case to introduce HVO as a fuel type to decarbonise the fuel for the existing fleet as a transitional stage. This would decarbonise up to 80% of the emissions of the existing fleet quickly.

On a street and neighbourhood level they were working with groups with an interest in sustainable travel as well as technical people to work more cohesively and get ideas on what could be done. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) referred to the Dragons Den (Climate Change Community Fund) scheme as an example of community cooperation as local groups took charge of what climate change activities they wanted in their communities with the help of their local Councillors and SBC.

A Member asked whether Members could get clear figures and metrics that could be shared around emissions. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that the metrics for the geographical area for Stevenage were nationally set. There was also a challenge on what to measure them against. It was difficult to record and measure how much carbon was being saved by each intervention and a lot of smaller things wouldn't be captured. The baseline that was used were the largest emitters within the Council and they were tracked.

Another Member asked whether it be a slow gradual process to reduce fuel emissions and get a better suited fleet. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that there wasn't currently an economically viable EV heavy duty fleet. There would be an individual assessment when the fleet was ready to replace regarding what would be the best economically. Although, this wasn't attainable for 2030, they were looking at other alternatives to progress this. Funding for the HVO fuel was subject to agreement from the Executive and Council. There would be a 20% difference overall in emissions from vehicles across the fleet (and over 80% saving in carbon for each heavy-duty fleet vehicle that uses the biodiesel fuel) and would possibly be the best option until the technology for alternative fuelled heavy fleet was developed.

A Member suggested that people needed visual aids to help them understand and encourage changes in behaviours. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that they were proposing three pathways which were being presented in a visual way to make them easier to digest. He suggested the online platform was potentially a more user-friendly way at looking at what SBC had been doing. The Chair suggested a future piece of work for the Committee to look at behavioural change.

The Assistant Director (Direct Services) advised that it was important to have clarity around the fleet and heavy goods vehicle type of fleet, such as refuse vehicles, and the smaller fleet, such as vans. The smaller fleet was easier to provide electric vehicles for as costs were coming down and it was becoming more viable. The larger fleet was more difficult in terms of EV vehicles, and the sector was still



developing alternatives that might be more suitable than electric in the longer term. An example was hydrogen vehicles, however these were very costly and the infrastructure wasn't yet in place to support it.

In response to a question regarding recycling, the Assistant Director (Direct Services) advised that the Council was limited in terms of enforcement activity when recyclable materials were not placed in the relevant kerbside containers. In light of the recent Government announcements concerning 'Simpler Recycling', they were reviewing their current arrangements.

A Member asked how the largest emitting buildings, such as the leisure and swimming centres, will be used to form how planning applications were assessed, as well as the towns regeneration. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that the second pathway looked at building and assets and would target those with the highest emissions. They were working with the regeneration team for the lowest carbon emissions in the replacement of the leisure facilities and hub, as well as the other regeneration projects. For example, the wet and dry leisure facilities would be on a combined smaller floor plate and would have better usage such as heat power from the swimming pool which would contribute to a significant reduction of emissions overall. The civic hub would also have less floor space and the newer design would reduce overall emissions.

Another Member asked where the proposed trees and lakes/ponds would be located. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that he didn't have a specific number but around 4,000 were planted in Fairlands and 2500 would be planted in the new country park in the North of Stevenage development as well as three lakes. Many local authorities use ponds and lakes as a flooding measure. Cllr Speller added that they were looking at green and climate change friendly schemes such as additional wildflower meadows, but trees were really important, and they should aim to plant even more.

A Member suggested that car charging ports shouldn't be placed near cycleways for safety reasons. They also added that they needed to review cycle and walkways and regen needed to make it easier for people to walk and cycle around the town. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) noted these points.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, Councillor Simon Speller, the gave a presentation on his portfolio area and some of the local projects taking place which included:

- Strategic partnerships were in a good place, including local businesses.
- Climate change strategy was more specific and clearer, and they were looking at ways to make it simpler and more visual so people can understand.
- They were focusing on 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' strategies as community engagement was important.
- SBC staffing and budgets now show the Councils commitment to climate change and was the only growth in the budget.
- Senior Officers and Members were doing their part.
- He believed the 2023 net zero target was achievable for SBC operations, but

not the Borough as a whole.

- There was a long way to go with Ward Members and he encouraged them to use their budgets for the Dragons Den (Climate Change Community Fund) schemes.
- There was also a long way to go with community groups, but they were making headway with local businesses and schools.
- Digital communications were crucial, and these needed to be improved.
- There was only so much that could be done at a local level without government support.
- It was easier for some people to be 'green' than others, so everyone needed to be inclusive and supportive.
- SBC progress was tangible and led in many areas within County and the region.
- His focus was on a 'bottom up' approach and community engagement and all Members were key in this.

A Member raised concerns that there weren't many wards so far that had taken part in the Dragons Den scheme. They also suggested that there should be a blueprint document giving suggestions and inspiration on what could be done to give people ideas. Cllr Speller agreed and advised that community capacity wasn't dwindling, but volunteering took up a lot of space and time people didn't have, especially in the current climate. He hoped that once people saw schemes, it would inspire others to do the same. The focus was on Officer to promote the scheme and make it known, as well as community leaders and Ward Members.

Another Member asked what interventions would contribute to the reductions of CO2 emissions and highlighted the importance of cost effectiveness. Cllr Speller advised that the cost effectiveness of the scheme will happen when it takes off, but it was a scheme of community engagement, so the community was the outcome. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) added that it would become clear what the costs and carbon savings were. The pathways detailed why they were targeting certain areas and looking into them in more detail, including the cost effectiveness.

The Chair thanked Officers for their contribution to the meeting.

He then introduced the Head of Climate Action, Fabian Oyarzun, and the Climate Change Programme Lead, Jennifer Bratchell, to give a demonstration of the new climate change portal.

The Head of Climate Action introduced the Kausal Watch Platform which would plan, track and measure climate actions in a more comprehensive way and was easy to use. This was in collaboration with Officers across SBC and showed who was responsible for certain actions and engaged with stakeholders to keep everyone informed.

They presented what the portal looked like and informed Members that the platform was on the website but wasn't publicly available yet, but they aimed to put it online by the end of the year. There was an indicator linked to every action and a tracker of carbon reduction.

A Member asked whether they could see figures to assess their progress towards net zero and climate change targets. The Head of Climate Action advised that the baseline was the 2018 data of SBC fuel fleet and properties. They were working to update the information but had issues doing this. They had some figures, but it couldn't include scope 3 emissions such as the supply chain, water supply, or waste management as they were not systematically produced. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) added that the baseline was established when the climate emergency was declared, and progress can be compared to this. The scope was constantly increasing therefore data couldn't be obtained for some areas. Cllr Speller suggested the Committee should spend a session on this topic as they can explore it in detail.

A Member suggested that there needed to be an updated communications strategy to get residents to go onto the site. The Chair agreed that both Officers and Members should appeal to as many people as possible to signpost and share the portal with the community.

Another Member suggested it would be helpful to compare data to other new towns. They also suggested that the font size needed to be reviewed to ensure it was accessible to all.

Members suggested that as well as the Kausal Watch Platform, Officers considered a very simple infographic display for the website which could relay simple messages that would be easy to understand and simple actions for the public to take.

#### 4 **UPDATED E&E SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2023-24**

The Chair informed Members that the next meeting was looking at policy development and pre-scrutiny of the Cycle Hire scheme. The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) advised that there were some cycle groups involved in the development of the scheme and may want to attend the meeting.

A Member suggested that the Committee should look at affordability and the cost of a low-income household trying to keep a car running versus reinstating a working and reliable bus system.

Another Member suggested that the Committee should keep track of the town centre regeneration. The Chair agreed but believed it was too big to look at in the 2023/24 year and suggested it should be looked at in the next civic year. The Chief Executive added that there was another all-Member briefing on the regeneration at the end of November. They were looking at doing more of these briefings and there was a chance to ask questions over the year.

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Members noted the updated E&E Select Committee Work Programme for 2023/24.

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

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 14 November 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Alex Farquharson (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Forhad Chowdhury, John Duncan, Wendy Kerby, Conor McGrath, Ellie Plater and Carolina Veres.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.00pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mason Humberstone.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES - THURSDAY 19 OCTOBER 2023

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 19 October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 3 PRESENTATION ON THE FINDINGS OF THE RIDGE REVIEW

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Building Safety and Housing Property Services on the recently published Ridge Independent Housing Speciality Review of Stevenage Housing Services, focussing on the repairs element of the Council.

The Assistant Director outlined the approach of the Review which included 25 consultation meetings with stakeholders and frontline teams, observation of frontline service on-site – repairs, Planning and Customer Service Centre teams, alongside a review of processes, data and information.

The Committee was advised that the key findings of the review were that:

- significant improvements had been made to systems and working practices since the pandemic but that there was a lack of transparency in the data quality;
- a lack of documented processes; and
- policy and procedures and improvements were urgently needed to communication and customer engagement which was currently the root cause of customer complaints

The Assistant Director outlined the strengths and achievements of the service highlighted in the review including the reduction in service backlog, the new scheduling system providing real-time insights, the new booking hub and enhanced collaboration and aligning work with repair planners and supervisors to give clear accountabilities of the service

The Committee noted a number of opportunities from the review including engaging with customers to shape the new service model and the use of technology to become a digital business.

The key recommendations from the review in relation to the Service; people; systems and technology and data and information were outlined to Members. The existing data and information currently held would be used in a more intelligent fashion.

Members raised a number of concerns and questions which were responded to by the Assistant Director and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development:

- The stakeholders involved in the consultation included all front line teams who had an interface with the repairs service;
- In relation to the booking hub, Members were advised that this was currently under development but that it was envisaged that a customer could report a repair and make an appointment at the same time. Members were concerned that this was likely to cause issues with customers mis-diagnosing an issue and the wrong operatives being sent out to a property. Officers assured Members that a team of planners and schedulers that would review the report to consider the most appropriate operative to be sent out. It was agreed that this issue should be re-considered by the Committee once the booking hub was operational;
- Several Members of the Committee had been on site visits with the Repairs team and concern was expressed that both jobs attended had failed due to the inadequacy of communication between departments;
- A Member advised that in order for the system to be successful, it was essential that the Schedule of Rates for the works be accurate and reflect the different tasks/repairs regarding the time allocated to the Direct Labour organisation's trades person;
- Members were concerned that the reference to upskilling operatives to take on additional tasks would result in less expertise in one trade. The Assistant Director gave assurances that operatives would still be skilled in a primary trade but would be able to take associated simple/lower level jobs if they were needed. She advised that this was a common practice within the repairs sector.

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that following the review, an all-encompassing improvement plan would be established and involve all stakeholders including customers. There would hopefully be some quick wins as well as realistic milestones and target dates for those improvements to ensure they were deliverable within available resources.

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

4 **INTERVIEW WITH THE EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jeannette Thomas, Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development to the meeting.

Councillor Thomas advised that she was aware that the majority of Councillor contact with tenants was housing repair related. She advised the Committee that the Repairs and the Investment Teams were now working together and that the situation with repairs had improved. Any new reports would be dealt with in good time and historical repairs were being worked through by the Team.

Councillor Thomas agreed with Members and the Assistant Director that communication with tenants was key to making the new way of working a success. Even if there was no progress, tenants must be kept informed with the situation in regard to their repair.

In response to a question, Councillor Thomas advised that the detail of the issue in the majority of reports from tenants was identified correctly but the diagnosis of the work required to an issue was undertaken by the repair's operatives.

In response to a further question from the Chair regarding what happened to the cases which were initially being dealt with by the repair team but were deemed not to be a repair, when these cases appeared to close, Councillor Thomas responded by saying that she did not know what the referral route to the investment team is in those cases. The Chair asked the Portfolio holder to clarify.

The Chair stated that the review had established that there was a difference between what constituted a repair and what was a replace.

The Chair thanked Councillor Thomas for her contribution to the meeting.

5 **RESPONSE TO QUESTION MEMBERS RAISED REGARDING RE-CHARGING TENANTS FOR DAMAGED PROPERTIES**

The Committee received a report from the Scrutiny Officer outlining the response to information requested by Members regarding re-chargable costs to tenants for damage to properties.

Members agreed that early inspections of properties were important to ensure there were no delays for any potential re-charges. Members were pleased to hear that it was planned to increase regular tenancy audits which were key to avoid any issues.

The Assistant Director gave reassurances to the Committee that the procedure was due for a review early in the new Year.

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

6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**



**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 13 December 2023



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2023/24

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Chloe Pullen  
Sally Norman  
Suzanne Brightwell

**Contributor** Strategic Leadership Team

**Lead Officers** Matt Partridge | 2456  
Richard Protheroe | 2938

**Contact Officer** Richard Protheroe | 2938

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 2 2023/24 and provide an update on progress against the suite of Community Measures, the Cost-of-Living Action Plan and current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Members information, a presentation will be provided at the Executive meeting which will cover updates in relation to delivery against Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the Quarter 2 performance data.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the service performance against 35 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 2 2023/24 through the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A) be noted.

- 2.2 That the Council’s performance as demonstrated through the 13 Community Measures (Appendix B) be noted.
- 2.3 That the performance challenges in relation to voids (section 4.4.2) be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
- 2.4 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In July 2023, the Executive agreed to the continuation of the strategic priorities of the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) Corporate Plan for another year. To ensure that the Council’s approach to performance management in 2023/24 remains representative of existing and future programmes of work, the corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect resident priorities and new regulatory and legislative housing requirements.
- 3.2 The Council’s approach to performance management indicates a clear link between performance and the strategic objectives in the FTFC Corporate Plan. By aligning performance measures and milestones under the 5 strategic priorities a ‘golden thread’ linking what the Council delivers, to the fulfilment of its strategic outcomes can be clearly seen. By taking this approach, the Council is seeking to simplify and streamline how performance monitoring and progress is communicated to Members and residents.
- 3.3 In addition, to ensure that the Council’s continued significant investment (£24.6 million) in its social housing stock in 2023/24 is appropriately highlighted, in July 2023 the Executive agreed to amend the FTFC priority of ‘More Social and Affordable Housing’ to include a focus on the provision of good quality homes. Therefore, the strategic priority of ‘More Social and Affordable Housing’ has been amended to include ‘Good Quality’ (see Figure 1).

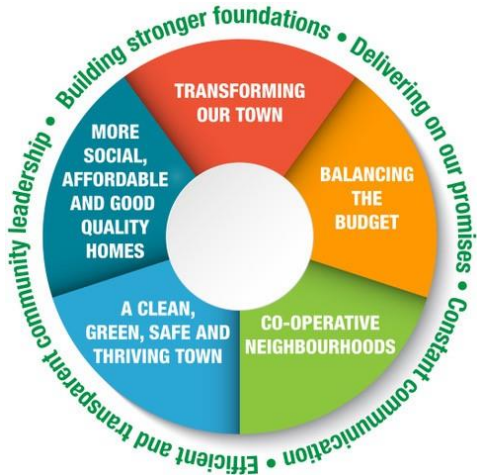


Fig 1.

- 3.4 The new Corporate Performance Suite for 2023/24 contains 35 measures which are aligned with the 5 FTFC strategic priorities. The 35 measures are complemented by 64 statutory and local measures which will be managed internally and overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.5 The Council’s streamlined approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to proactively adapt service delivery

models, where necessary, and support and drive forward additional improvements in services when required.

- 3.6 There are 17 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance in 2023/24. These measures will provide a starting point from which to assess and compare performance in future. The remaining 18 measures are relevant to the Council's focus on what matters to residents and progress against the FTFC objectives.
- 3.7 Within the suite of measures, there are 13 'Community Measures', which focus specifically on 4 themes: climate change; anti-social behaviour; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. The 4 themes have been identified in response to analysis of resident engagement and tenants' surveys between 2021 and 2023 and seek to highlight what really matters to residents. The survey analysis is presented alongside the Quarter 2 performance in Appendix B. Progress against the Community Measure themes will be shared with residents through the delivery of engaging social media campaigns throughout the year.
- 3.8 In-line with the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy update presented to the Executive in September, the 'Making Your Money Count' strategic priority has been amended to 'Balancing the Budget' from Quarter 2. All supporting performance documents and the corporate performance system have been updated accordingly.
- 3.9 All local authorities continue to operate in a challenging financial, economic and social environment. A recent report by the Institute for Government estimated that the core spending powers of councils had fallen by 35% since 2010. In relation to General Fund services, the Council has reduced expenditure by c£12m since 2010. This is alongside ongoing workforce pressures, inflation challenges and areas of substantial and increasing service demand (such as homelessness support).

## **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS**

### **4.1 QUARTER TWO CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1.1 As outlined in section 3, the corporate performance suite has been aligned with the five FTFC priorities set out in Figure 1. In addition, during 2023/24 progress against performance measures will be presented alongside key programme milestones. By taking this mixed-method approach, the Council will be able to present a holistic overview of performance activity. This will help demonstrate to residents that the Council is on track to deliver key projects, programmes and service improvements associated with FTFC, as well as highlighting performance against key service delivery targets.
- 4.1.2 Key highlights from the FTFC programmes are summarised in section 4.2. For further information on the aims and objectives of the FTFC programme in 2023/24 please refer to FTFC Plan on a Page, which was presented to the Executive in July 2023 as Appendix B of the Quarter Four Corporate Performance Executive report: [Future Town Future Council Summary \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk).
- 4.1.3 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 2 below. For the purposes of this report only commentary for Red

Status measures is provided. The full set of current corporate performance measures results and FTFC milestones are attached at Appendix A.

FTFC Programme	Baseline measure for 2023-24	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data	Milestones Reported Qtr. 2
More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (19 measures)	8	8	2	1	0	4
Transforming Our Town (0 measures)	The primary focus of this strategic priority is FTFC programme delivery. Performance is monitored through delivery of project milestones. Please see section 4.2.					11
Co-operative Neighbourhoods (3 measures)	3	-	-	-	0	3
A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town (7 measures)	5	1	0	0	1	12
Making Your Money Count (6 measures)	1	4	1	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL (35)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>31</b>

Fig 2.

4.1.2 At the time of writing, there is one indicator for household waste that cannot be reported in Quarter 2. This is because this measure is calculated via an external source and can only be reported once the outturn figures are received. The data for Quarter 1 is now available and was green.

## 4.2 FTFC PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at the Executive in July 2023, with highlights including:

- Consultation for Ellis Avenue took place in October 2023 and the planning application will be submitted by the end of the year. This scheme will deliver approximately 14 units.
- The Brent Court garages scheme was successful in achieving planning committee approval. This will deliver a 96-unit Independent Living Scheme and provide an opportunity for older residents within the local area of

Stevenage, to downsize to high-quality supported housing. This, in turn, will free up much-needed 2, 3 and 4-bed council properties for families in housing need.

- Funding secured and the order raised for Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging facilities in Neighbourhood Centre car parks.
- A Stevenage Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) summit was held to launch the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme, bringing together key partners, employers and 60 young people. Work is now underway to build on the success of this event, with an ambition to hold a second event in Spring 2024.
- Improvements have been made to the cycle network in Stevenage with artwork installed in underpasses near the football ground in the following themes: STEM, active travel/nature and Stevenage FC.
- New online services have been developed for Trade Waste and Cemeteries. The development of further online services continues.

4.2.2 Service performance highlights for Quarter 2 include:

- Over 81% of Council services non-housing complaints were responded to within deadline (target 75%)
- 88.2% of customers accessing the Customer Service Centre (CSC) were satisfied with the service.

4.2.3 Further details on the projects included in the FTFC programmes and corporate highlights can be found in Appendix A.

### 4.3 COMMUNITY MEASURE HIGHLIGHTS

4.3.1 As mentioned in section 3.7, in July 2023 the Executive agreed to a focus on resident priorities as expressed through 13 'Community Measures', specifically: anti-social behaviour; climate change; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. The Novoville/Proptech (2022/23), Resident Survey (2021) and Tenants Survey (2021) analysis has been provided alongside the Quarter 2 data to help provide context (see Appendix B).

4.3.2 The 'Key Facts' section of Appendix B will be updated each quarter to provide Members and Residents with a clear oversight of performance in the areas that matter to them most. The intention is that these short statements will inform discussion and help drive improvement. Progress in these areas will then be shared more widely through engaging social media campaigns and promotion through the Council website and the Chronicle magazine.

4.3.3 Community Measure performance highlights for Quarter 2 include:

#### Anti-Social Behaviour

- **There has been a 15.7% decrease in ASB cases** when comparing Quarter 2 in 2023/24 with the same period last year. This decrease is in response to the strong joint working between the Council and partners as part of the SoSafe Partnership. This includes proactive policing evidenced through initiatives such as 'Clear, Hold, Build', which are tactics used by the Police to pursue gang members, to maintain a grip on an area to prevent other groups from taking control and helping communities to become less susceptible to the draw of organised crime groups. Further work with

residents and Members to build on the success of this campaign and design and implement strong locally led plans to tackle ASB is currently being discussed.

## Climate Change

- A key priority within the Council's Climate Change Strategy action plan is the planning policy for zero carbon homes, exploring opportunities for renewable technologies across council buildings, and provision of energy efficient housing (including retrofitting of current council housing stock). In Quarter 2, **55% of Housing Stock had an EPC rating of C or above**. Delivery of the EPC rating C programme will cost on average £5,000 per property to fund and these costs have been included in the recent Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Business Plan review.

## Provision and Maintenance of Homes

- The Council has provided **394 new homes since 2014 with an accumulative target of 397 in place for Quarter 3**. This proactive approach to building new homes is underpinned by the Council's ability to turnaround planning applications within statutory targets. In Qtr 2 the Council continues to demonstrate good performance in this area:
  - **100% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks**
  - **80% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks**
  - **81.1% of other applications determined within 8 weeks.**
- The Council seeks to maintain a high percentage of homes that meet the national minimum Decent Homes standard. In Quarter 2 **84.39% of Council homes fulfilled the national DH standard**. Government consultation on the proposed changes to the Decent Homes Standard is due to commence in 2024 and will form part of the Regulator of Social Housing proposed Safety and Quality Consumer Standard. Early indications suggest that the review will consider a range of changes and there will be financial implications for the Council. These will be addressed in the Council's Consultation response and considered as part of planned work for 2024/25.

## Good Local Services

- Under its new leisure arrangement with Everyone Active, the Council is keen to see young people participating in outreach programmes. In Quarter 2, **19,804 children used Everyone Active facilities and participated in programmes**. Everyone Active delivered a range of projects and activities aimed at under 16 year olds between April and September. These include:
  - Home Education Programme at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (44 children aged 5-16 and 13 SEN children aged 5-13)
  - Holiday Activities in August including Multisport sessions, Junior golf and netball camp
  - After school activities including Tennis, Dodgeball and Table Tennis
- In 2022/23, 21.4% of residents indicated that access to Services (e.g., Council house maintenance, customer services, waste collection etc) was of importance. In Quarter 2 **99.65% of waste bins were emptied**.

**4.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

4.4.1 As highlighted in Figure 2, there is one area identified for improvement. Figure 3 below outlines the actual performance and the target that was set for the performance measure. The paragraphs that follow set out the reasons why performance has been below expectation and the activities in place to reach target for Quarter 3.

<u>MEASURE NAME</u>	<u>BUSINESS UNIT</u>	Actual – Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual – Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target – Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target – Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD
<b>More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes</b>						
<b>RV3: Number of Voids returned by contractor</b>	Housing Property Services	104	150	110	150	195

**Fig.3**

**RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor**

- 4.4.2 To provide insight into voids backlog performance, it has been necessary to introduce a new approach to monitoring the number of voids given to the Council’s Contractor and compares this to the number of voids returned.
- 4.4.3 The Contractor started work on the voids programme at the end of January 2023. In June 2023, the decision was taken to pause the voids programme for a period of time, to allow the Council and its Contractor to review arrangements. The voids programme was remobilised in Q2.
- 4.4.4 The Contractor has now scaled up the programme by bringing in additional resources through its existing and new supply chains. They plan on clearing the current backlog over Quarters 3 and 4.
- 4.4.5 In Quarter 2 there were 142 new voids properties, 109 properties were given to the contractor and 33 properties to the internal voids team. In this same period 92 properties were handed back completed by the contractor and 18 by the internal team, some of these properties handed back were still in progress from Quarter 1. All the voids dealt with by the internal team were Temporary Accommodation voids requiring visual electrical checks only. These types of voids are now being managed within the Temporary Accommodation team.
- 4.4.6 Ongoing dialogue is taking place with the Contractor to explore further options to expedite the voids programme. Current forecasts from the contractor suggest that the backlog of voids will not be cleared until the end of the financial year.
- 4.4.7 At the time of writing there were 99 void properties being worked on, 92 of these are with the Contractor.

**4.5 COST OF LIVING**

4.5.1 The Cost-of-Living (CoL) Action Plan for Stevenage was approved by the Executive in October 2022. The plan sets out how the Council and its partners would respond to the cost-of-living crisis, and seek to mitigate the potential

impacts on residents, businesses, Council employees and Council finances. The activities delivered through the Action Plan have been mainstreamed into service delivery across the Council and with partners. This recognises there is a significant amount of “business as usual” activity for the Council and partners that is specifically targeted at supporting people facing financial, housing and other difficulties. This approach also recognises that the crisis will continue for some time, impacting people in different ways at different times.

- 4.5.2 One of the key mechanisms for monitoring the impact of the Cost of Living is through measuring rent arrears. In Quarter 2 rent arrears are stable although 2.5% higher than last year. Case management is provided by the Income Officers, with each one being triaged and the tenant signposted to support provided by the Welfare Benefit and Debt Advice Team, and partners such as Citizens Advice. The team is also proactively supporting tenants to access the Alternative Payment Arrangement mechanism when required. To further enhance these services, the Council have recruited an Income Officer to support households in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation. The dedicated support for tenants from this role will help ensure that more intense support and case management can be provided. The Council continues to promote its Council Tax Support Scheme to residents. Data shows that 4% less residents are accessing the service compared to the same period last year. This is thought to relate to the change in the process as to how to apply, which used to be through a claim for Housing Benefit. To get a better understanding of issues and provide support for residents a Welfare Benefit and Debt Advisor will sit in the Job Centre one day a week from Quarter 3.
- 4.5.3 A key outcome of the Action Plan has been the co-ordination of Council and community services. Vineyard Foodshed run by the Vineyard Church, is the main foodbank for residents and the Council provide regular grants from the Household Support Fund and have previously provided them with emergency storage and help moving food around. Several initiatives have been set-up using Local Community Budgets (LCB) this includes with the Grace Community Church in Shephall and support for their partnership with Barnardo’s children’s centres.
- 4.5.4 The Council are also providing funding to Holy Trinity, St Hugh and St John Churches and the Salvation Army for their warm space cafés and craft clubs. Community Support initiatives are widely promoted on the Council’s website with dedicated pages covering the Stevenage Warm Spaces Network (launched in November 2022). The information is also promoted via community noticeboards, direct mail, the Chronicle magazine and through Community Associations, recognising that not all residents have digital means to access information.

## **4.6 TENANCY SATISFACTION MEASURES**

- 4.6.1 In addition to the 10 housing compliance measures introduced in response to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requirements, the Council are also required to report against 12 Tenancy Satisfaction Measure (TSM). The purpose of the TSM’s is to understand tenants’ satisfaction with the provision of Council services in relation to tenant engagement, home maintenance, repairs, ASB, complaint handling and communal spaces. An independent research company have been commissioned to undertake the survey and the findings will be presented to the Executive in Q1 2024/25.



## 4.7 STRATEGIC RISK

- 4.7.1 The strategic risks set out in section 4.6.5 were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 10 October 2023, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 17 October 2023 and considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.
- 4.7.2 The Audit Committee receives a detailed Strategic Risk Report each quarter. The report to Audit Committee considers the actions which have been identified to mitigate each of the identified risks and the progress of those actions identifying whether actions are on track. Changes to the way risk is managed at the Council are also highlighted and considered by the Audit Committee. Where the Committee raises specific concerns about the risks or the process for managing them, these are highlighted to Executive within this quarterly report.
- 4.7.3 A risk is a future incident or event which has the potential to impact on the Council's ability to deliver services, projects and achieve its ambitions. By being alert to and putting in place mechanisms to manage both the risks and opportunities effectively, the Council is in a better position to continue to deliver services, remain viable, continue to innovate and use resources more efficiently. Some risks will always exist and will never be eliminated.
- 4.7.4 Each risk is measured in terms of a combination of the likelihood of a perceived threat or the opportunity occurring and the magnitude of its impact on the Council's objectives. The Council reports both inherent and residual risk scores. Inherent risk is the risk present in any scenario where no attempts at mitigation have been made and no controls or other measures have been applied to reduce the risk from initial levels to levels more acceptable to the Council. Residual risk is the risk remaining after efforts have been made to reduce the inherent risk.
- 4.7.5 The strategic risks which are monitored and updated through Audit Committee include:
- General Fund Asset Management
  - Building Management
  - Building Safety/Fire Safety Act
  - Climate Change
  - Staff Capacity to deliver services
  - Commercialisation
  - Contract Management
  - Council Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme
  - Covid-19/Flu/Pandemic
  - Fraud
  - IT Resilience and Cyber Security
  - Health & Safety
  - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
  - Information Governance
  - Leisure Provision
  - Balancing the Budget (Medium & Long Term)
  - Regeneration/Capital Funding
  - Regeneration Delay
  - Repairs and Maintenance
  - Resilience
  - Social Housing Regulation Bill
  - Socio Economic Impacts
  - Transformation

## **HIGHLIGHTED RISKS**

- 4.7.6 There were no changes to any risk scores this quarter. Work continues to progress the actions to mitigate high and very high risks. For further information on the mitigations in place please contact the Policy & Performance Team at [policy@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:policy@stevenage.gov.uk).

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

### **5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

### **5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report. Where required, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects, service changes and improvement activity identified.

### **5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.
- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and provides good governance assurance.

### **5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report, except for those activities that seek to have a positive impact in this area, and the officers responsible for delivering the improvements will need to identify and address any climate change considerations in the implementation of activities.

### **5.6 OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.6.1 Implementing the priorities and improvement activity outlined in this report may impact on the development of future policy or procedure, which will be monitored through the formal policy/procedure sign-off process via the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

## **6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- [Strategic Risk Register \(Part II Audit Committee Report\)](#)
- [FTFC Plan on a Page](#)
- [Corporate Performance for Quarter 4 22/23](#)

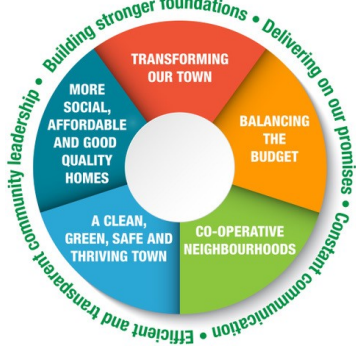
## **7 APPENDICES**

- Appendix A: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Two 23/24
- Appendix B: Community Measures Quarter Two 23/24

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# Corporate Performance Report 2023/24

## Quarter 2 (July, August, September)



### Key to Performance Status Symbols

- Red** - Focus of Improvement
- Amber** - Initial Improvement Activity Identified
- Green** - Achieving Target
- Pink** - Baseline Measure

### APPENDIX A

#### Key to Milestone Status Symbols

- Will slip more than 1 quarter
- Slipped but to be completed within next quarter
- Completed within the quarter
- Completed previously

More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes								
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2023/4 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Comments
Page 45 BV213: Homelessness preventions	120.00	191.00	242.00	27.00	97.00	100.00	150.00	30/09/2023 The Housing Options Team have continued to face poor availability of private rented sector units, and affordability issues due to the cost of living crisis, which has made preventative work challenging. We have again experienced further staff issues, in particular long term sickness for multiple team members; subsequently impacting the workload of the team. Demand remains high and we continue to experience the complexity of the issues faced by presenting clients to be challenging, with an increase in those fleeing Domestic Abuse and those with complex mental health issues.
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	330.00	335.00	336.00	339.00	394.00	394.00	397.00	
HDD1e: Number of affordable homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)	37.00	5.00	1.00	3.00	55.00	28.00	3.00	
HDD1f: Number of private homes provided				0.00	33.00	33.00	33.00	

## More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes

	More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes							Comments
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2023/4 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	
Let1: Number of days to let a General Needs property from ready to let				24.00	22.00			
Let2: Number of days to let an Independent Living property from ready to let				56.50	147.00			<p>30/09/2023</p> <p>The Council have a number of IL properties that are very difficult to let and this has a significant impact on average performance. This includes a really small property that cannot be converted (475 days to let), a Studio (664 days to let), a property with a very small bedroom (306 days to let).</p> <p>As the properties have been empty for some time there is an inevitable increase in the time reported to let void sheltered properties. The team have a good awareness of these 'historical' sheltered properties and a number have been identified for conversion, for example using communal cupboard space or communal bathrooms to convert studios into 1 bed properties.</p> <p>As part of the bi-annual review of corporate measures, work is underway to address the impact that the inclusion of 'historical' voids has on understanding overall performance and any changes to how performance is monitored will be reported to the Executive in Qtr 3.</p> <p>In addition to the anomalies within the reporting methodology, it is also important to mention that those IL properties that are desirable will usually take longer to let compared to a general needs property due to the support 'handholding' and arranging of removals, that said where the team are able to identify prospective residents early in the void process they will and this helps speed up the turnaround.</p>
RP01a: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	80.18%	80.07%	78.74%	82.44%	84.39%	88.16%	90.34%	
RSH BS01: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS02: Percentage of dwellings with a valid Fire Risk Assessment	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS03: Percentage of properties that require an annual asbestos inspection / survey	n/r	n/r	n/r	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS04: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspections certificate	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS05: Percentage of domestic passenger lifts with an in date LOLER inspection	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

## More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes





	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2023/4 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Comments
RSH CH01 (part 2): Number of stage two complaints made by tenants				25	49			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE Stage 2 complaints are spread differently across Housing services. This quarter 16.6% of Managing Homes complaints progressed to stage 2, 14.2% in Investment and 9.09% in Repairs and none at all within Providing Homes.
RSH CH01 (part1): Number of stage one complaints made by tenants				300	550			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE The total number of stage 1 complaints received has reduced considerably compared to the previous quarter (250 vs 300). This is mostly due to the number of Investment complaints dropping by around half.
RSH CH02 (part1): Number of stage one complaints made by tenants and responded to within the timescale				203	381			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE 71% of stage 1 complaints being resolved on time, which is similar to the Q2 position in 2022/23. Social landlords sector wide are generally seeing a trend of increasing complaints volumes resulting from adopting a more standardised approach to complaints handling, and due to the efforts made to promote tenant complaints to ensure high standards are provided by landlords
RSH CH02 (part2): Number of stage two complaints made by tenants and responded to within the CH time				11	18			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE In nearly half of the Q2 stage 2 complaints (11) were received later in September meaning that at time of reporting (6th October) a large proportion are still open but still well-within response deadline. Because of this unusual pattern it's difficult to draw conclusions on the speed of response to stage 2 complaints this quarter
RSH Rep1: Percentage of emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale				95%	96%			30/09/2023 In Quarter 2 492 out of 510 emergency responsive repairs were completed within the target timescale

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More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes







	More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes							
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2023/4 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Comments
RSH Rep2: Percentage of non-emergency (Routine and Urgent) responsive repairs completed within target				75%	92%			30/09/2023 In Quarter 2 4592 out of 4994 non-emergency responsive repairs were completed within target
RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor				104	110	150	195	30/09/2023 In June 2023, the decision was taken to freeze the voids programme for emergency works to allow the Council to renegotiate a more competitive contract. This has now been completed. In addition, the Contractor is in the process of increasing the number of operatives working on voids and the impact of this is anticipated to see an uplift in properties returned in Qtr 3.






	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brent Court Garages - Planning Decision		30 Sep 2023 The scheme was successful in achieving Planning at Committee.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Burwell Road Phase 2 - Start on site		30 Sep 2023 Start on site has occurred.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cartref - Consultation and Planning Application		30 Sep 2023 Consultation is scheduled to take place this coming month - with a view to submitting a Planning Application by the end of the year.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ellis Avenue - Consultation and Planning Application		30 Sep 2023 Consultation is scheduled to take place this coming month - with a view to submitting a Planning Application by the end of the year.

## Transforming Our Town

	Performance	Comments
 Arts & Heritage Trail - Finalise scope		30 Sep 2023 The team are continuing to review the full audit undertaken and working with partners to progress the final trail from an options appraisal.
 Leisure Box & Theatre - Options appraisal draft		30 Sep 2023 The team continue to work on the options appraisal report.
 Marshgate Biotech - Construction complete		
 Museum Audience Development Plan - Scope		30 Sep 2023 The scope for the audience development plan has been achieved, in conjunction with the Museum team. Further update to be found under milestone 'Museum Audience Development Plan - Consultation'.
 Museum Construction - Agree programme		
 Queensway LLP - Queensway North Business Plan updated		
 SG1- The Hub design team appointed		30 Sep 2023 The core professional design team has been appointed and are working closely with the project team and stakeholders/occupiers of The Hub.
 SITEC - Options appraisal		30 Sep 2023 Options appraisal is ongoing with partners.








	Performance	Comments
 Sport & Leisure Hub Design - Design begins		30 Sep 2023 Work is continuing with Morgan Sindall and partners, a feasibility study has been reviewed. A paper was taken to the Executive in October to progress design works.
 Stevenage Development Board - Agree workplan and governance format for 22/23 onwards		30 Sep 2023 Workplan is ongoing.
 Towns Fund - October 22 - March 23 - June Submission to Central Government		






	Co-operative Neighbourhoods							Comments
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 ytd	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023-24 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	
CD1 Number of people engaged in Cooperative Neighbourhood 'Community & Place' initiatives				1,700	3,400			<p>CUMULATIVE MEASURE</p> <p>Physical engagement totals are still being analysed. Digital engagement will take place over the autumn and winter ahead of the Pre-Election period. Ahead of schedule to hit the target of 4,000 by March 2025.</p> <p>Measure is benchmarked against the target figure included in the UKSPF investment plan. This number is 4,000 by March 2025. By the end of March 2022 we had secured 1,700 and expect to be in a similar position by the end of this financial year (March 2024), which would put us on track to exceed this target.</p> <p>A further tranche of digital engagement is planned, to supplement physical engagement activities carried out at events over the spring and summer.</p>
CWLS1: Everyone Active - Number of children (under 16) participating in facilities and outreach prog				22,139	19,804			<p>Everyone Active delivered a range of projects and activities aimed at under 16's between April and September. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Education Programme at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (44 children aged 5-16 and 13 SEN children aged 5-13)</li> <li>• Holiday Activities in August including; Multisport sessions, Junior golf and netball camp</li> <li>• After school activities including; Tennis, Dodgeball and Table Tennis</li> </ul>
CWLS2: Everyone Active - Number of BAME adults (aged 16+) participating in facilities and outreach				0	17,765			<p>Everyone Active have been working with the Integrated Care Board as part of the Innovation for Healthier Equalities Programme (InHiP) project to detect atrial fibrillation and hypertension in predominantly the BAME community. The tests have been offered through the mobile healthy hub to residents at community events. Since May they have performed 353 tests, 145 of these to BAME groups. Everyone Active have detected and referred five potential AF cases and 30 hypertensive cases which were referred via my NHS email to an NHS colleague who refers the patients details to their GP surgery.</p> <p>EA have provided 65 people with lifestyle advice who presented with moderate hypertension and 26 7-day diaries to those to record twice a day readings and advised them to contact their GP if the reading were continually high.</p>

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation & Engagement Topic - GovDelivery topic creation		<p>Training to produce this element is now complete, but this has taken longer than anticipated, which has delayed the implementation of the actual topic.</p> <p>It is expected that this will be live in time for integration with a new tranche of digital engagement activities throughout the autumn and winter ahead of the pre-election period.</p> <p>This has been marked orange because it is now delayed beyond the original completion window. However, despite delays to digital engagement elements, this delay should be unblocked by the next reporting cycle.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward plan of meetings, walkabouts, workshops and events created for all six CN areas		<p>Completed ahead of first set of member meetings.</p> <p>Final dates for Ward Walkabouts/Visioning workshops being finalised in neighbourhood teams, but suggested times/dates highlighted for each group.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PropTech Digital Engagement - Analysis of 22/23 CN engagement activities		<p>Complete. This analysis has formed the discussion topic of the first set of Neighbourhood meetings.</p> <p>Over 3,500 responses were analysed, highlighting 5,807 prioritised themes down to a ward level. This will form some of the baseline information to inform Co-operative Neighbourhood Plans</p>

A Clean, Green, Safe & Thriving Town

	A Clean, Green, Safe & Thriving Town							Comments
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022-23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/23 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	
ASB6: Percentage of ASB cases resulting in successful enforcement action				16.00%	26.00%			30/09/2023 <b>In Quarter 2, 26% of ASB cases resulted in successful enforcement.</b> In Quarter 1, 16% of ASB cases resulted in successful enforcement. This indicates that more cases are resulting in successful enforcement. As a baseline measure this figure will be used as a starting point from which to monitor progress and compare outcomes with stock holding authorities of a similar size.
CC1: Percentage of homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C or above				55.00%	55.00%			30/09/2023 Similarly to last quarter, data is still being reviewed to improve and validate the energy data for SBC's housing stock
CS2: Number of fly-tipping cases reported in Stevenage				82.00	220.00			30/09/2023 <b>Cumulative Measure</b> <b>138 cases of fly tipping were reported in Stevenage in Quarter 2, a small increase from the same period last year</b> (117 cases reported). <b>82 cases of fly tipping were reported in Stevenage in Qtr 1, a small decrease from the same period last year</b> (84 cases reported). Activities to deter fly-tipping range from installing mobile CCTV cameras at known fly-tipping hotspots, and putting up signage that warns potential offenders of the fines related to fly-tipping around town. The Council continues to work with partners to enforce against perpetrators, and in 2022/23 there were 196 cases where the perpetrator was identified and removed the waste themselves.
ES1: Percentage of residential bins collected				99.45%	99.65%	99.00%	99.00%	
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	39.00%	36.60%	32.00%	42.00%		41.00%	37.00%	30/09/2023 This measure gets reported in arrears and the Q2 actual figure will not be available until the end of December. The actual figure for Q1 is now reported and achieved target. It is consistent with the figure reported in the same period in 2022/23. Officers are currently working with WRAP and their partners to consider solutions to increasing our household recycling rate and complying with governments "Simpler Recycling" initiative.
RSH NM01(part1): ASB cases associated with the Council's landlord function				22.00	54.00			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE 54 is the cumulative figure. 32 cases were reported in Qtr 2. In Quarter 2, there has been a 15.7% decrease in ASB cases when comparing Quarter 2 with the same period last year.
RSH NM01(part2) ASB hate incidents associated with the Council's landlord function				0.00	0.00			

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity Action Plan - develop new plan		30 Sep 2023 Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) delivered the draft document in September. Officers are liaising with HMWT to review and finalise the plan.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delivery of Place Based Health Inequalities Project with Healthy Hubs, Stevenage North & South PCNs.		30 Sep 2023 Due to low uptake on the Place Based Health Inequalities Young People Workshop, we have delay delivery to ensure that we are able to deliver the best provision for all involved. Delivery is now scheduled to start in mid-January, with the time in between utilised to build the number of participants through referrals. We are also working in the meantime to strengthen our current networks and build new connections with those within the different faith groups in the town. As an off-shot of the main workstream, we have our supplementary workstream that involves series of short films on the 5 ways to wellbeing that will be delivered to all schools in Stevenage over the course of Feel Good Week. This supplementary is being delivered in partnership with the Stevenage School Parliament.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development of a Heritage Trail for all (pedestrians/cyclists/disabled users)		30 Sep 2023 The Towns Fund project will focus on cycling and pedestrian connectivity. The connectivity project will focus on a few projects including a heritage trail for both cyclists and pedestrians. A section of the project relates to cycleway improvements, to create a nicer experience for cyclists. These improvements, working with HCC, could include wayfinding, better lighting, resurfacing, underpass artwork, etc. Work is ongoing with Stevenage Cycle UK to include a trail suitable for all.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Electric Vehicle Charging / Service Station		30 Sep 2023 The Council bid for 12 new EV charging points within our Neighbourhood centres in early 2022. Bidding was successful, and funding received. Installation will start in Q2 23/24. Gridserve EV Charging Service Station approved December 2021; construction yet to commence. New MSCP includes 25% EV charging stations and the potential to increase to 50% in the future.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flat Block Recycling Pilot - infrastructure and communications		30 Sep 2023 31.10.2023: New recycling infrastructure and signage were installed at six pilot flat blocks across Stevenage, and new communications materials were issued. The project delivered 185% increase in the amount of recycling collected across the six sites. Monitoring of the existing six sites will continue and additional sites are being considered for delivery within this project.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shephalbury Park Tennis Courts-launch		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shrub bed conversion - sites identified		30 Sep 2023 Poplars and Symonds Green sites to be confirmed. Potential for not all sites to have works completed due to staffing issues.

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan – (Preferred Options) Next steps		30 Sep 2023 Following the report on the Preferred Options AAP at Executive in July 2023, the work will be incorporated into a Local Plan Review. The results of the consultation will help inform policy changes to Policy TC4 and the wider Local Plan and work will be ongoing into 2024. AAP second round of consultation completed in July 2023. Results to be incorporated in a Local Plan review scheduled for 2024/25.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stevenage Walking Festival		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan		30 Sep 2023 A working group with Herts County Council has been established and work is ongoing. Behaviour change is the key element and surveys to residents and workers in Stevenage being developed. Work is ongoing to compile a list of events to encourage active travel in the next 6 months. More events to promote active travel in the Summer 2023 are being organised. Potential dates include cycling festivals and the station's 50th birthday celebration, as an avenue to promote more behaviour change.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Young People's Healthy Hub (YPHH) - Progress digital engagement, social media content and promotion		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Youth Evolve - Pilot		30 Sep 2023 Funding streams have only been agreed for Youth No More August/September. The course material will be written over the next few months for a launch April 2024



	Balancing the Budget							
	Actual - Quarter 2 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2022/23 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Comments
CompGF1: % of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	84.92%	83.33%	94.00%	85.50%	81.10%	75.00%	75.00%	30/09/2023 Performance overall is broadly within expectation, and there is relatively similar performance across individual services. At time of data input (6th Oct) a further 4.5% of cases raised in Q2 are still open and within response deadline, so final performance is likely slightly higher than reported.
CSC Sat: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	88.40	86.21	84.60	88.00	88.20	90.00	90.00	
Dig2: Number of online transactions through self-service portal				28,973.00	58,347.00			30/09/2023 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
Finance BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	62.90%	89.98%	98.75%	39.70%	64.11%	60.00%	98.00%	
Finance BV66a: Rent collection rate	94.45	96.83	97.15	92.40	95.14	93.44	96.39	
Finance BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	59.30%	85.70%	94.00%	32.80%	59.00%	60.00%	86.00%	30/09/2023 The Council tax team continued to provide support for the Governments Energy Scheme £400 & £200 payments, diverting staff resources up to the end of April 2023. There have been vacancies and sickness in the team reducing staff resources, however 2 new staff have been trained. In addition, as at the 1/10/2023 the number of reminders now sent out is 69% higher than the 1/10/2022 as the team catch's up and summons have also increased by 16% compared to the same time last year. The council tax team have also seen an increase in Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA's) and Debt Relief Orders (DRO's).

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	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transformation ProgProposals to create specialist activity based team for Community Advice & Support	✔	

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## APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY MEASURES

1. In July 2023, the Executive agreed to a focus on resident priorities as expressed through 13 ‘Community Measures’, specifically: climate change; anti-social behaviour; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. These themes were informed by the analysis of the Novoville/Proptech (2022/23), Resident Survey (2021) and Tenants Survey (2021) data, which indicated what mattered to residents the most.

2. The ‘Key Facts’ section will be updated each quarter to provide Members and Residents with a clear oversight of performance in the areas that matter to them most. The intention is that these short statements will inform discussion and help drive improvement in these areas. Progress in these areas will then be shared more widely through engaging social media campaigns and promotion through the website and the Chronicle magazine.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR			
Business Unit	Service Area	Measure	Key Facts
C&N	Community Safety	ASB cases overall and ASB associated with the Council’s landlord function	<p><b>In Quarter 2, there has been a 15.7% decrease in ASB cases when comparing with the same period last year.</b> This follows a reduction in cases in Quarter 1 of 18.6% of ASB cases compared with the same period last year.</p> <p>This decrease is in response to strong partnership working through proactive partner initiatives such as ‘Clear, Hold, Build’ where Safer Neighbourhood Officers work with the Council and residents to establish a picture of life in the area and improve understanding of residents’ concerns.</p> <p>Further work with residents and Members to build on the success of this campaign and design and implement strong locally led plans to tackle ASB is currently under discussion with plans to roll-out the campaign more widely.</p>

C&N	Community Safety	Percentage of ASB cases resulting in successful enforcement action	<b>In Quarter 2, 26% of ASB cases resulted in successful enforcement.</b> In Quarter 1, 16% of ASB cases resulted in successful enforcement. This indicates that more cases are resulting in successful enforcement. As a baseline measure this figure will be used as a starting point from which to monitor progress and compare outcomes with stock holding authorities of a similar size.
C&N	Community Safety	Number of fly-tipping cases reported in Stevenage	<b>138 cases of fly tipping were reported in Stevenage in Quarter 2, a small increase from the same period last year</b> (117 cases reported). <b>82 cases of fly tipping were reported in Stevenage in Qtr 1, a small decrease from the same period last year</b> (84 cases reported).  Activities to deter fly-tipping range from installing mobile CCTV cameras at known fly-tipping hotspots, and putting up signage that warns potential offenders of the fines related to fly-tipping around town. The Council continues to work with partners to enforce against perpetrators, and in 2022/23 there were 196 cases where the perpetrator was identified and removed the waste themselves.
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>			
H&I	Investing in Homes/Climate Change	Percentage of Housing stock with an EPC measure rating above C	In 2022/23, 21.4% of residents indicated that climate change investments were of priority.  <b>In Quarter 2, 55% of Housing Stock had an EPC rating of C or above.</b>  A key priority within the Council's Climate Change Strategy action plan is the planning policy for zero carbon homes, exploring opportunities for renewable technologies across council buildings, and provision of energy efficient housing (including retrofitting of

			<p>current council housing stock). Delivery of the EPC rating C programme will cost on average £5,000 per property to fund and these costs have been included in the recent Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 year Business Plan review</p> <p>Ongoing fulfilment of climate change ambitions is reliant on grant or central government funding, and it is unclear what the impact of the Government's decision to revise its position on climate change will be on the Council's ability to finance future work. However, the Council continues to explore other options (such as its work with SAVVA (Software Development Company) to help explore additional stock improvements to improve the fabric of housing assets.</p>
Stevenage Direct Services	Environmental Services	Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	<p>In 2021, 84% of respondents indicated that 'Council and town-wide efforts to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2030 to contribute to the fight against climate change' is of importance. Over three quarters (77%) of residents were concerned about climate change with over one third very concerned.</p> <p>In Quarter 1 (this measure is via an external source and can only be provided in arrears) <b>42% of household waste was sent to for reuse and recycling</b>. It is consistent with the figure reported in the same period in 2022/23 (40%). Officers are currently working with WRAP and their partners to consider solutions to increase our household recycling rate and complying with the government's "Simpler Recycling" initiative.</p>

**PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF HOMES**

Housing Development	Housing Development	Number of homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	<p>The Council has continued the delivery of its ambitious new council housing development programme with 394 new homes provided since 2014. The programme is predicted to deliver a total of 2,237 new council homes over the next 30 years.</p> <p>This proactive approach to building new homes is underpinned by the Council's ability to turnaround planning applications within timescale targets. The Council continues to demonstrate good performance in this area.</p> <p><b>100% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks</b></p> <p><b>80% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks</b></p> <p><b>81.1% of other applications determined within 8 weeks</b></p>
Housing Development	Housing Development	Number of affordable homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)	<p><b>55 new homes</b> were delivered by the Council in Quarter 2. The scheme at Helston House in Symonds Green delivered a total of <b>29 new homes</b> and the Chilham House scheme at Kenilworth Close delivered <b>26 new homes</b>.</p>
H&I	Investment	Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	<p><b>In Quarter 2, 84.39% of Council homes have fulfilled the national DH standard.</b> This figure is taken from Housing quality assessments which are built within the Keystone system. This is a slight increase on Quarter 1 (82.44%) and represents the Council's commitment to improving the quality of homes for its tenants.</p>

			The Council also welcomes the Regulator of Social Housing forthcoming review of the Decent Homes standard, which is due to be shared for consultation in the coming months.
<b>GOOD LOCAL SERVICES</b>			
Communities & Neighbourhoods	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services	Everyone Active - Number of children (under 16) participating in facilities and outreach programmes once per week	<p>Under its new leisure arrangement with Everyone Active, the Council are keen to see young people participating in outreach programmes. <b>In Quarter 2, 19,804 children used Everyone Active facilities and participated in programmes.</b></p> <p>Everyone Active (EA) delivered a range of projects and activities aimed at under 16's between April and September. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home Education Programme at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (44 children aged 5-16 and 13 SEN children aged 5-13)</li> <li>- Holiday Activities in August including; Multisport sessions, Junior golf and netball camp</li> <li>- After school activities including; Tennis, Dodgeball and Table Tennis</li> </ul>
Communities & Neighbourhoods	Culture, Wellbeing & Leisure Services	Everyone Active - Number of BAME adults (aged 16+) participating in facilities and outreach programmes once per week	<p>As part of its EDI Action Plan and Healthy Stevenage Partnership programme the Council is key to encourage BAME adults to utilise Everyone Active facilities and outreach programmes.</p> <p><b>In Quarter 2, 17,765 BAME adults used Everyone Active facilities and participated in programmes.</b></p> <p>Everyone Active (EA) have been working with the Integrated Care Board as part of the Innovation for Healthier Equalities Programme (InHiP) project to detect atrial fibrillation and hypertension in predominantly the BAME community. The tests</p>

			<p>have been offered through the mobile healthy hub to residents at community events. Since May they have performed 353 tests, 145 of these to BAME groups.</p> <p>EA have detected and referred five potential atrial fibrillation cases and 30 hypertensive cases which were referred via my NHS email to an NHS colleague who refers the patients details to their GP surgery.</p> <p>EA have provided 65 people with lifestyle advice who presented with moderate hypertension and 7-day diaries to 26 residents to record twice a day readings, and advised them to contact their GP if the reading were continually high.</p>
D&T	CSC	Percentage of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	<p>Complaints response is a good indicator of how well the Council is able to listen and respond to residents. <b>In Quarter 2, 81.1% of complaints were responded to within deadline.</b></p> <p>Further work is ongoing within the Council to review its approach to corporate complaint handling, with a number of workshops currently taking place. The Council will also be providing a response to the recent joint Complaint Handling consultation which is being proposed by the Local Government &amp; Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman, and which seeks to streamline the 2 approaches when handling either tenants or resident complaints.</p>
D&T	CSC	Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	<p><b>In Quarter 2 88.2% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with CSC</b> via a GovMetric Survey.</p> <p>Long wait times are the most common theme from customers rating their experience as poor or average. The Council's push to introduce self-service through online web-based solutions is a key</p>



			area of work. This is supported by the timely update of the Customer Services Knowledge Base, and which means that CSC staff can quickly find a solution to issues without escalating to manager's dealing with complex cases.
SDS	Environmental Services	Percentage of residential bins collected	<p>In 2022/23, 21.4% of residents indicated that access to Services (e.g., council house maintenance, customer services, waste collection etc) was of importance.</p> <p><b>In Quarter 2, 99.65% of bins were collected, this is a slight improvement on Quarter 1 where 99.45% of bins were collected.</b></p>

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Meeting: EXECUTIVE



Portfolio Area: Resources and Transformation

Date: 13 December 2023

## **COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25**

### **KEY DECISION**

Author – Graeme Reid Ext EHC 2127

Contributors- Clare Fletcher

Lead Officer – Clare Fletcher

Contact Officer – Graeme Reid Ext EHC 2127

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek members approval of the Council Tax Base for 2024/25

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2024/25 will be 29,088.5 equivalent “Band D” properties, reduced to 28,579.4 equivalent “Band D” properties after making allowances for a 98.25% collection rate.
- 2.2 The 2024/25 Council Tax Base is approved subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2024/25. Members approved the CTS scheme at the Executive meeting on 20 September 2023 for recommendation to Council.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

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

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

##### 4.1 Taxbase

4.1.1 The actual number of domestic dwellings in the Borough, shown in the Valuation Officers list on 11 September 2023 was 38,213, compared to 38,051 as at 12 September 2022, an increase of 162 properties.

4.1.2 For each of the Council Tax bands, the tax base figure is the sum of actual dwellings on the valuation list, adjusted for estimated, newly constructed dwellings, exemptions, disabled reductions and discounts, (including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme discounts), to arrive at the net number of chargeable dwellings for each band. The projections for 2024/25 include known construction numbers, giving a total of 270 (pro rata) new homes for 2024/25 with the majority being band B and C properties.

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

4.1.4 The relevant proportion for each band are:

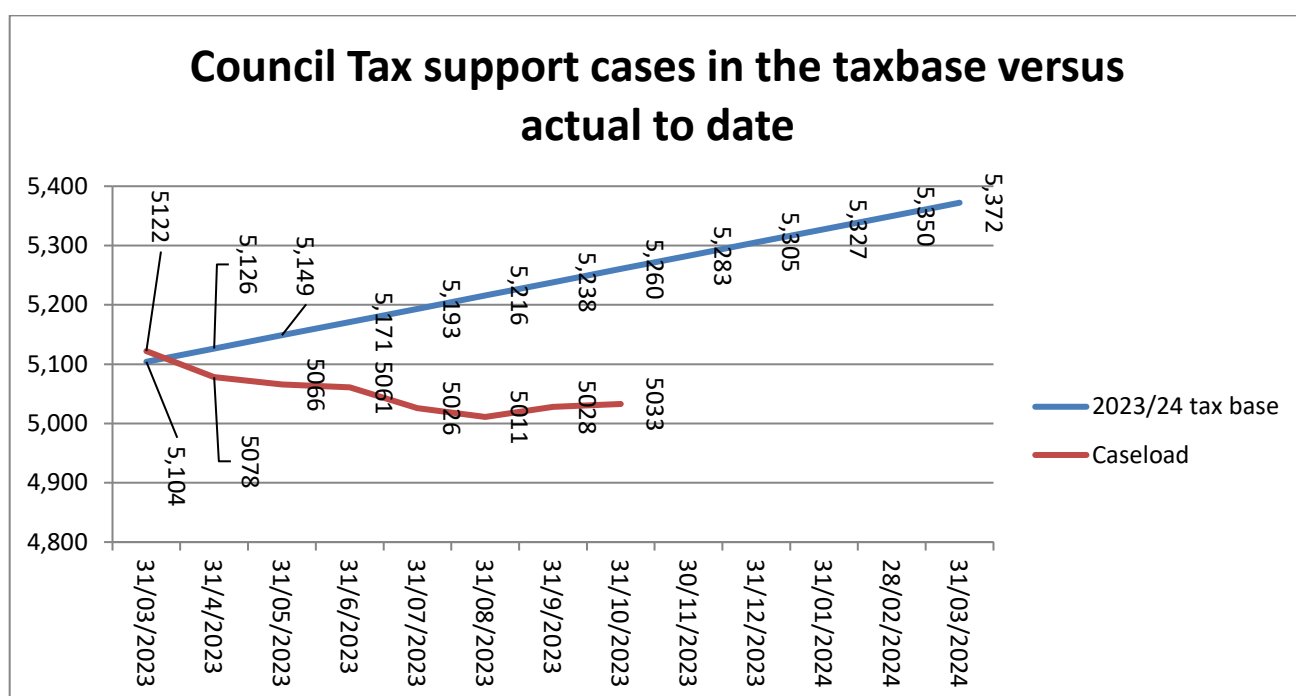
Band	Charge ratio	Valuation (at 1/1/91 prices)
A	6/9	Up to £40,000
B	7/9	Over £40,000 and up to £52,000
C	8/9	Over £52,000 and up to £68,000
D	9/9	Over £68,000 and up to £88,000
E	11/9	Over £88,000 and up to £120,000
F	13/9	Over £120,000 and up to £160,000
G	15/9	Over £160,000 and up to £320,000
H	18/9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

4.1.5 These “Band D” equivalents are aggregated to give the total number of the equivalent “Band D” dwellings for the authority as a whole. For Stevenage this is 29,088.5, which is less than the actual number of dwellings because the majority of dwellings in Stevenage are in Band C.

4.1.6 Stevenage Borough Council is the billing authority for all council tax in the Borough but does not keep the majority of council tax raised. The 2022/23 and 2023/24 amounts and percentage shares for the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Stevenage Council are shown in the chart below (based on Band D).

Authority	2022/23	2023/24	Charge Per day	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,529.31	£1,605.63	£4.40	4.99%	77.35%
Stevenage Borough Council	£225.57	£232.31	£0.64	2.99%	11.19%
Police Crime Commissioner	£223.00	£238.00	£0.65	6.73%	11.46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,977.88</b>	<b>£2,075.94</b>	<b>£5.69</b>	<b>4.96%</b>	<b>100%</b>

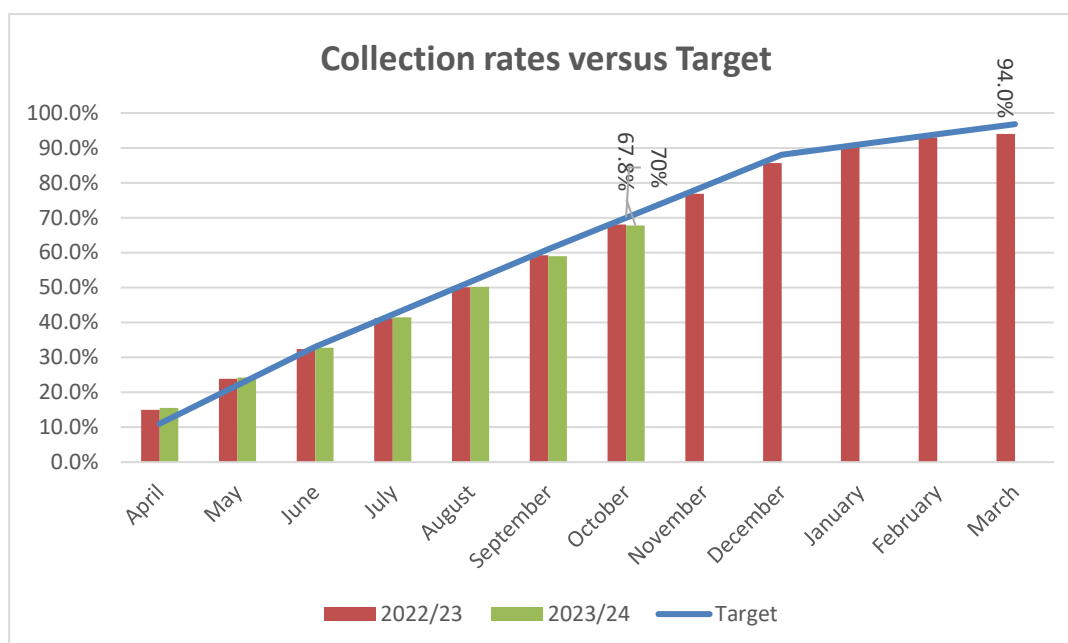
4.1.7 The 2024/25 council tax base proposed is based on the current Council Tax Support Scheme liability of 8.5% and as agreed at the September 2023 Executive. The 2023/24 taxbase had assumed a projected increase in council tax support (CTS) numbers as a result of changes in the local economy (5%). The chart below shows the 2023/24 tax base assumed CTS claimants versus the actual to date. This shows that the increase projected has not materialized and the claimants has continued to reduce.



4.1.8 The cost of CTS in the taxbase for those working and pensionable age is estimated to cost £6,197,146 for 2024/25, (2023/24 £6,350,490), however the County Council has the biggest cost burden for this, as they account for 77.35% (2023/24) of the tax base with SBC at 11.19%. The average level of CTS in the 2024/25 taxbase is modelled as 5,001 (1 April 2024 4,949 increasing to 5,053 by 31 March 2025 based on a 2% increase), versus 5,033 for working and pensionable age claimants as at the 1 October 2023.

4.1.9 The proposed 2024/25 collection rate percentage remains unchanged at 98.25% as in 2023/24, reflecting sustainable long term recovery rates. The amount collected to 31 October was 67.8% (2022/23 68.1%, target 70.0%). Although the current in year collection rate is slightly lower than the target, a 1.2% under-recovery of council tax would equate to £689,058 for a full year, (SBC's share would be £77,111). There are other factors which influence the level of cash

collected, such as the actual level of properties in the taxbase and the level of discounts or CTS numbers.



4.1.10 The Council Tax Base for 2024/25 after making allowances for a collection rate of 98.25% is 28,579.4 equivalent “Band D” properties. (The comparative figure for 2023/24 was 28,153.1).

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 The increase in the taxbase (1.51% compared to 2023/24) is included in the General Fund assumptions in the Executive report and will be included in the Draft 2024/25 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Report to the January 2024 Executive. The November 2023 Executive Balancing the budget report had assumed a 1.21% increase in the net tax base.

5.1.2 The increase in assumed property numbers and the discount assumptions including Council Tax Support is the equivalent to a total additional 426.36 equivalent Band D properties or £ 99,048 before any council tax increase is considered for 2024/25. The reason for the increased council tax income is shown in the table below.

Increased income from 2024/25 taxbase compared to 2023/24 before any council tax increase			
	2023/24 Estimate £	2024/25 Estimate £	Increase /(decrease) £
Properties numbers	8,063,777	8,102,016	38,239
Council Tax Support Scheme	(735,430)	(693,497)	41,932
Changes to other discounts & Premium	(671,614)	(650,973)	20,641
Increase in bad debt 1.75%	(116,493)	(118,257)	(1,764)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 6,540,241</b>	<b>£ 6,639,289</b>	<b>£ 99,048</b>

## **5.2 Legal Implications**

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

## **5.3 Risk Implications**

5.3.1 The assumptions made are reasonable at the current time but, if the level of anticipated growth in the 2024/25 Tax Base is not realised and/or the council tax support caseload increases, there could be an in year deficit on the Collection Fund which would have to be repaid in the following financial years.

## **5.4 Policy Implications**

5.4.1 None

## **5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

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

## **5.6 Other Implications.**

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

## **6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 – Council Tax Support Scheme

## **7. APPENDICES**

Appendix A 2024/25 Council Tax Base





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

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

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