

# Public Document Pack



## CABINET

Date: Wednesday, 11 December 2024

Time: 2.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: Lisa Jerome 01438 242203

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

---

## AGENDA

### PART 1

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

2. **MINUTES - CABINET 13 NOVEMBER 2024**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 November 2024.

Pages 3 – 10

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

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

Community Select Committee – 4 November 2024

Environment and Economy Select Committee – 12 November 2024

Pages 11 – 22

4. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 2024/25**

To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 2 2024/25 and provide an update on progress against Cost-of-Living support for residents and current strategic risks.

Pages 23 – 54

5. **COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26**

To seek approval of the Council Tax Base for 2025/26.

Pages 55 - 62

**6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) - DRAFT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2025/26**

Report to follow.

**7. HOUSING INSPECTION OUTCOME**

To receive the findings of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) inspection and to confirm the actions required to support outcomes for tenants across all aspects of the Consumer Standards.

Pages 63 – 80

**8. REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY - APPROVAL**

To receive a final version of the Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy for approval following consultation with tenants and leaseholders.

Pages 81 – 128

**9. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY**

To consider the final version of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030 and associated action plan for approval, following consultation with residents and key stakeholders.

Pages 129 – 174

**10. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

**11. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

To consider the following motions –

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

**12. HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS AND SUNDRY DEBT WRITE OFF GREATER THAN £10,000**

That in accordance with Financial Regulations, the Cabinet is asked to consider writing off Sundry Debt and Housing Benefit overpayment debt deemed irrecoverable which is properly due to the Council and is more than £10,000.

Pages 177 – 182

**13. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

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

Agenda Published 3 December 2024

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 13 November 2024

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

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

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 2.45pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 2 MINUTES - CABINET 9 OCTOBER 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 October 2024 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

### 3 MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

The Cabinet thanked the Scrutiny Members for their work and agreed that the Committees were adding great value to the work of the Council in meeting residents and business needs. In particular Members were pleased to hear about the work of the Environment and Economy Select Committee and their focus on young people following the launch of the Stevenage Skills Framework earlier this year. The Committee had interviewed Theresa Kilworth from Barnados Children Services to look at barriers to learning and employment along with the Assistant Headteacher of Barnwell Secondary School who spoke of some of the challenges in supporting young people to think about STEM and other career routes. The Committee also heard from the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor who talked through their experiences of career and learning routes.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance referred to a recent meeting of the Select Committee which had received an update on the Council's Climate Change performance and delivery and was pleased to report the effective contributions and challenges from new Members which he had taken on board and would be following up.

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

Environment and Economy Select Committee 8 October 2024

4 **LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL REVIEW AND UPDATE: REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK AND REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION**

The Cabinet received a report highlighting the feedback from the first round of consultation on the Local Plan Partial Review and next steps in the planning process.

Members were pleased to note that over 40 comments had been received from interested groups, some supporting the approach and others seeking more details on the climate change policies. It was noted that HCC had requested further policies around Highways which were detailed in the report.

The Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) advised that the revised Plan would give the Planning and Development Committee and Officers significant weight in determining planning applications going forward.

It was also clarified for Members that the second round of consultation on the Local Plan would be slightly amended to run from 21 November 2024 until 29 January 2025, to allow full engagement with communities and key stakeholders.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update Regulation 18 Consultation Statement (the Consultation Statement) be noted.
2. That the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update for Regulation 19 public consultation in November 2024, for not less than 10 weeks be approved.
3. That should there only be minor comments arising from the Regulation 19 consultation, delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder: Environment and Performance to progress to Submission of the Local Plan – Partial Review and Update to the Secretary of State for Examination in Public.
4. That the revised Local Development Scheme be approved.
5. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee and the Environment & Economy Select Committee on the content of this Cabinet Report be noted.
6. That delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder: Environment and Performance, to make changes to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update, prior to going out to public consultation.
7. That it be noted that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, ahead of and during public consultation on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Partial Review and Update.

5 **SECOND QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (INCLUDING SECOND QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25)**

The Cabinet received a report setting out the second quarter monitoring for the 2024/25 General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, and Capital and seeking approval for changes to 2024/25 working budgets.

Members were advised that timing differences had resulted in some of the figures within the HRA appearing relatively high. These would be re-phased in the HRA Capital Programme with the funding allocated to be spent in later years.

It was **RESOLVED**:

### **General Fund**

1. That the 2024/25 second quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £292,080 be approved.
2. That the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.2.1 be approved
3. That a revenue contribution to capital for garages of £104,870 to fund works within the Capital Garage Improvement Programme (paragraph 4.1.2) be approved.

### **Housing Revenue Account**

4. That the 2024/25 second quarter net decrease in HRA expenditure of £4,129,020 be approved.

### **Capital Programme**

5. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £13Million from 2024/25 to future years be approved.
6. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £3.4Million from 2024/25 and £6Million from 2025/26 to future years be approved.
7. That the budget of £94.6K for remedial works, funded by developers' contributions and £599K for the new spur road as part of Swingate works, funded by One Public Estate be noted (paragraphs 4.8.1 and 4.8.2).
8. That the General Fund capital budget virements in paragraph 4.9 be approved.

## **6 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2024/25**

The Committee received a report updating Members on the mid-year position for Treasury Management as part of the statutory reporting requirement.

It was noted that there were no recommended changes to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 which had been approved by Council in February 2024. There had also been no breaches of the Strategy in this year to date.

Cabinet were advised that at its recent meeting, the Audit Committee had approved the report with no comments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2024/25 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential indicators report be recommended to Council for approval.

## 7 **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW 2025/26**

Cabinet received a report on the Council Tax Support Scheme.

In moving the report, the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation advised that for next year it was proposed that the scheme remained the same except for any benefit uprating.

For 2026/27, however, it was proposed to change the scheme to a banded one so that when small changes to claimant's income occurred it would not impact on the amount of claimable council tax support. Consultation would be undertaken with the Police, County Council and Council Tax payers and the proposals would be considered thoroughly to make sure there were no unintended consequences. The cost of the scheme would be approximately £33thousand and it was intended that other preceptors, the County Council and the Police would be asked to contribute.

Members welcomed the planned revision of the Scheme which would make it easier for residents to pay their Council tax and for the Council to collect it. Members also thanked the Strategic Director (CF) and the Finance Team for their due diligence and work on considering changes to the scheme.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the current Council Tax Support scheme for 2025/26 be retained;
2. That a policy Overview and Scrutiny meeting be held to consider a revised discount scheme as a result of the number of Housing Benefit caseload transitioning to Universal Credit in line with the timetable set out in Para 4.5.1.
3. That the use of the directive contained in the Social Security Administration Act 1992 to disregard, in full, awards of War Widows, War Disablement and Armed Forces Compensation when determining entitlement for housing benefit and/or council tax support be re-approved.
4. That the £33,250 for inclusion in the General Fund budget as set out in paragraph 4.3.2 be approved.

## 8 **HRA MTFs REVIEW**

The Cabinet received a report setting out the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy up to 2028/29. The report took account of the growth that was built into the HRA earlier in the year which was approved by Council in July



2024 related to repairs and voids and compliance.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing reminded members of the Council's commitment to deliver many new Council homes with over 590 delivered so far and more on the way. She also advised that significant investment was being made into existing housing stock to make sure it was safe, warm and fit for purpose.

Members were pleased to see detail in the report setting out what the Council was doing in regards to resident engagement and improvements to how the Council was meeting and linking with residents and tenants.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance requested the support of the Member of Parliament and the Leader of the Council to follow up the Government's reported ambitions to develop a green economy and provide match funding to help Councils deliver on a full de-carbonisation programme.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2024/25 revision of the HRA MTFs be approved.
2. that the level of balances for the HRA MTFs be set as a minimum £7Million.
3. That the Immediate Capital Options proposal to reduce the funding gap, as reported in paragraph 4.15 be approved.
4. That the Immediate Revenue Option proposals to reduce the funding gap, as reported in paragraph 4.25 be approved.
5. That the service areas to be reviewed as part of mechanism to identify the remaining savings gap as reported at paragraphs 4.32 to **Error! Reference source not found.** be noted.

## 9 **BALANCING THE BUDGET OPTIONS 2025/26**

The Cabinet received a report setting out proposals to balance the budget for 2025/26 and updating projections on funding for next year following the Autumn budget.

Members noted that although the Council was close to meeting its funding gap for next year it would continue to focus on this over the next few weeks and that over the medium term the Council would be looking at reviews for Independent Living, Service Charges, Housing Management Service and Temporary Accommodation.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation reported a correction within the report in that the higher business rate multiplier applicable from 2026/27 announced in the Autumn budget affected 35 businesses and not 15 as outlined. She also thanked the Finance Team and officers from across the Council's Business Units for their hard work in getting to this point of the budget setting process.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that a further report would be brought back with further savings options, to Cabinet in January 2025 which will also take account of

the prescribed levels in the increase in Council Tax.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Balancing the Budget options as set out in the report and Appendix A, totalling £184,749 (saving) for the General Fund and £13,951 HRA respectively for 2025/26 be approved and incorporated into the Council's budget setting processes.
2. That the remaining savings target to find set out in paragraph 4.8.11 be noted and reported back to the Cabinet in December 2024.
3. That the revised GF MTFs financial summary, as shown in section 4.11 to this report be noted.
4. That the completion of the Business rates for 2024/25 (NDR 1) be delegated to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Resources and Transformation Portfolio holder (paragraph 4.3.5 refers).
5. That the Council's recognised unions be consulted regarding the proposed budget package.
6. That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted, and their views considered as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.

## 10 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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

## 11 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 October 2024 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

## 12 **APPROVAL OF PROCUREMENT**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the Approval of Procurement.

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

## 13 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part II business.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 4 November 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Stephen Booth, Leanne Brady, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Mason Humberstone and Jade Woods

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 7.30pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Julie Ashley-Wren, Kamal Choudhury and Akin Elekolusi.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 9 SEPTEMBER 2024

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 9 September 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 3 PERFORMANCE OF THE NEW LEISURE CONTRACT

The Chair welcomed the guest speakers to the meeting. Cllr Lorraine Rossati (Portfolio Holder - Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing), Ryan Ansell (Health and Sport Strategy Manager), Geoff Caine (Culture, Wellbeing and Leisure Services Manager), Alan Prescott (Everyone Active – Contract Manager) and Chris Williams (Everyone Active – Area Contract Manager).

The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) introduced the discussion, expressing their appreciation for the progress achieved in the first year of Everyone Active's contract. The Committee heard that the contractor had exceeded initial expectations, particularly in terms of performance, adaptability, and collaborative spirit, which aligned with the Council's vision for a dynamic and transformative leisure partner.

The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) highlighted Everyone Active's expanded influence as a national entity managing various facilities in the region, including theatres such as Gordon Craig. This broader network enhanced their sustainability and booking capacity, bringing high-profile acts to the area. They

praised the inclusive atmosphere of the Everyone Active gym, where people of all backgrounds and abilities felt welcomed.

The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) spoke of the increasing popularity of pickleball, a sport growing in the UK and accessible to all ages, and acknowledged the considerable investments made by Everyone Active and the Council in upgrading local leisure facilities. They concluded by reinforcing the Council's commitment to supporting leisure and wellbeing, emphasising the importance of promoting both physical and mental health in the community.

The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager presented a comprehensive overview of the transformation in leisure services since the transition to the Everyone Active contract. They began by outlining the structure and scope of their department within the Council, highlighting that Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure operated alongside various essential services. The Committee heard of the origins of the prior leisure contract, which was established to address Council spending thresholds but offered limited contractual rigor and flexibility.

The Committee were advised that the renewal process for the contract involved extensive public consultations, a sports summit, and an in-depth appraisal to define the desired standards and expectations. The Council also instituted a Programme Board to oversee this process, which evaluated bids based on a balanced scorecard of finance, quality, and social value. This new focus on social value allowed the Council to assess the economic and community benefits provided by bidders, an aspect that was independently verified.

The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager confirmed that after a thorough two-stage procurement process, Everyone Active emerged as the top bidder, while the previous contractor, SLL, was unsuccessful, ultimately going into liquidation after losing multiple contracts. The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager highlighted that Everyone Active's contract had significantly reduced Council expenditure, with savings driven by reductions in management fees and utilities costs. Furthermore, they praised the seamless transfer of services, including the addition of the Ridling's Athletic Stadium and the "Active Communities" initiative, which aimed to engage residents outside of traditional leisure centres.

The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) added that Everyone Active's branding and marketing efforts had noticeably revitalised the facilities, attracting new members and creating an energetic and inclusive environment. The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager concurred, noting a £1 million investment in facility upgrades, particularly in media displays, signage, and building repairs. They commended Everyone Active's proactive approach to managing staff and facilities, as well as their expertise in building and maintaining leisure infrastructure.

In closing, the Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager described the working relationship with Everyone Active as "a breath of fresh air," with shared goals, collaborative problem-solving, and active community sponsorship. However, The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) reassured the committee that the Council maintained oversight and accountability measures, with issues being addressed promptly by Everyone Active.

At this juncture, the Chair invited Members to ask questions.

Members asked questions related to the booking system.

The Area Contract Manager, Everyone Active, clarified that bookings could be made up to five days in advance for non-members and up to 14 days for members, via phone, app, or online, with real-time availability visible on the app. The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager added that high demand, especially for popular sessions like Aquasize, often exceeded capacity, and that a planned new leisure facility would increase capacity. He also advised the Committee that the booking system, despite occasional limitations, was an improvement over the former first-come-first-served approach.

The Chair invited Everyone Active to present to the Committee.

The Contract Manager (Everyone Active), provided a comprehensive presentation that highlighted the accomplishments and challenges encountered during the initial phase of their contract with Stevenage.

The Committee heard that the contract with Everyone Active began on 1st April 2023 and required extensive mobilisation. This period involved significant staff adjustments, including new uniforms, revised HR processes, and re-certifications.

The transition included the implementation of new booking and purchasing systems, which, despite providing benefits, initially presented challenges for both staff and members. However, Everyone Active received robust support from staff across other sites, smoothing this complex transition.

Addressing staff development and recognition the Contract Manager (Everyone Active) underscored the value placed on Stevenage's local staff noting that talents had been recognised and deployed across broader roles within the company. The Committee heard of Everyone Active's commitment to recognising and nurturing talent had translated into broader opportunities and enhanced roles for Stevenage employees. Examples included, the theatre manager initially managing only the Gordon Craig Theatre, who now oversaw additional sites, while the former Stevenage site golf manager, was now working at multiple centres in a regional management capacity.

The Contract Manager (Everyone Active) advised the Committee of investment into various facilities has been substantial. This included:

- Trackman Technology at the golf centre, enhancing visitor experience and boosting activity.
- Upgraded Fitness Studios and Gym Equipment: £45,000 invested in new kit for studios, alongside a £400,000 upgrade of gym facilities, restoring membership numbers to pre-Covid levels.
- Community Focus Initiatives: Programmes like the Health Action Day had engaged local groups and partners, promoting wellness through activities that reached beyond traditional fitness.

- Growth in Pickleball Popularity: This new sport had surged in interest, creating a high demand for courts.

The Contract Manager (Everyone Active) informed the Committee of renovations in the café bar area of the Gordon Craig that had led to a revenue boost, and that the theatre team had expanded production capabilities, such as building sets, thereby creating a new revenue stream. The theatre's increased ticket sales also indicated a rise in community engagement.

Discussing challenges faced with ageing infrastructure, the Contract Manager (Everyone Active) informed the Committee that despite partial refurbishments, the age of buildings like the swimming centre and the theatre posed challenges. Essential maintenance of outdated equipment continued, with Everyone Active relying on the Council's support for boiler and lighting replacements. They emphasised that additional future investment was needed to maintain those ageing assets although the swimming centre had been refreshed with updates to the health suite and energy-efficient improvements, like pool covers and boiler upgrades. Swim school enrolment had increased, with over 1,500 children participating alongside regular school-based programs.

The Committee heard that the Active Community Programme had exceeded expectations by successfully integrating health and wellness initiatives aimed at underserved populations. Collaborations with the Integrated Care Board and local GPs had further strengthened referrals and engagement with residents needing specialised fitness programmes.

The Committee were informed that Everyone Active now managed the Fairland's Valley Splash Park and Ridlings Athletics Stadium and had actively promoted community programs such as the NHS Rainbow Run. A dedicated community team focused on enhancing health and sports initiatives for residents, while partnerships with the council and other agencies had enabled the creation of targeted programs in areas like atrial fibrillation and blood pressure monitoring.

The Committee were advised that Everyone Active sponsored Stevenage's men's and women's football teams and valued community feedback through a robust system for complaints and compliments, with an average 17-hour response time. The organisation's priorities were fitness memberships, swim lessons, golf participation, and casual sports usage, with a core commitment to commercial growth, colleague development, community wellness, and environmental goals (carbon net zero).

The Contract Manager (Everyone Active) concluded their presentation by providing information regarding targeted health initiatives that focused on reducing obesity, mental health support, dementia, and healthy lifestyle promotion, Everyone Active had recently secured funding for a 300-space weight management programme, which integrated physical activity and GP referrals. Future ambitions included encouraging healthier children's programmes and fostering local partnerships through various community spaces and resources.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions.



Responding to questions related to improving communication with the public, Everyone Active acknowledged that their app was fitness-centric, not ideally tailored for local event listings. Everyone Active advised the Committee that they used a Facebook page for events in Stevenage. Members suggested that Everyone Active could increase visibility and accessibility of events by including a broader social media use beyond Facebook, targeting younger audiences through Tik-Tok and Instagram.

In response to a question regarding the provision of more detailed year-on-year participation data to monitor improvements and assess service impact, Everyone Active cited challenges in direct comparison due to different reporting methods from the previous operator but assured Members that they would provide year-end data to establish a baseline for future reporting.

Members also made comments related to:

- Gym Anxiety - particularly in weightlifting areas that can be dominated by male participants. A Member proposed women-only or introductory classes to make the gym more accessible to women interested in strength training. Everyone Active already offered small introductory sessions in different gym areas, but these were not exclusively women-only. There was agreement that a female-focused class could be beneficial, and the Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) suggested following up on this idea with Everyone Active.
- The Affordability of Swimming Lessons - concerns about the high cost of swim lessons, particularly for families with multiple children. Currently, Everyone Active did not have a discount system for families with multiple children enrolled. They did, however, offer alternatives such as crash courses and top-up swimming lessons through schools. Everyone Active noted that capacity issues in the swimming programme also limited the feasibility of such discounts.
- Health and Socio-Economic Barriers - linking the town's socio-economic factors to poor health outcomes, highlighting the importance of accessible exercise options, such as outdoor gyms. Whether the council could use existing benefit data to target support toward families who might struggle to afford facilities. The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) discussed collaborative efforts with public health services and noted that Stevenage was securing funding for a new multi-use games facility in King George V Park, aimed to improve accessibility, especially in underserved areas. Everyone Active advised that they did conduct some low-cost community sessions, although they were limited in scale.
- Community and Seasonal Initiatives – The Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager mentioned the community allotment and mobile Healthy Hub as innovative health and social initiatives. They emphasised the dynamic development of community-focused projects and mentioned that outdoor activities would continue to evolve, depending on seasonal suitability.

- Venue Access for Local Theatre Groups – Members highlighted that while Stevenage benefited from a vibrant amateur theatre scene, groups like the Lytton Players faced prohibitive costs for using the Gordon Craig Theatre, which seated 500. Historically, there was a discounted rate for community groups, but this option was no longer available, making it difficult for groups to afford the space, especially when they typically played to smaller audiences. Everyone Active acknowledged the concern, indicating they could investigate options with the theatre’s programme manager, as the schedule was often full. Meanwhile, the Culture, Wellbeing, and Leisure Services Manager clarified that there were some free community lets under the theatre’s contract, used by events like the Stevenage Festival, which included the Lytton Players. They also noted that the Gordon Craig Theatre’s large capacity made it challenging for groups like the Lytton Players to sell enough tickets to make their productions financially viable in such a large venue. As an alternative, the group had been offered Event Island for outdoor productions and had been given access to equipment, such as a donated lighting desk.

The Chair voiced concerns about a lack of public knowledge about diabetes and pre-diabetes and appealed for Everyone Active to launch an initiative focussed on diabetes education and prevention to address the significant prevalence of diabetes in Stevenage. The Portfolio Holder (Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing) pointed out the importance of tailored communication for high-risk groups, including ethnic minorities and women. She suggested integrating these efforts with the ICB, local GPs, and community health initiatives to address Stevenage’s lower health outcomes.

At this juncture, the Chair highlighted the council’s achievements in health and well-being, congratulating the team for winning the “Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative” award. Special recognition was given to the Health & Sport Strategy Manager, who had grown from a Community Development Officer into a key figure in the Council’s health and well-being initiatives. The Chair praised Health & Sport Strategy Manager for his consistent commitment, presence, and positive impact on the community, noting that his efforts had been instrumental to the programme’s success.

#### 4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was none.

At this juncture the Chair addressed a longstanding issue of damp and mould in Council properties, emphasising the council’s commitment to the issue and outlining plans for intensified action.

The Chair highlighted that the Committee has prioritised addressing damp and mould concerns for over a decade, preceding recent national interest. The committee has historically pressured the council to improve services and successfully secured a significant investment for the department handling these

issues. She expressed satisfaction with prior progress reports on the matter.

The Chair informed Members that a recent case brought to their attention suggested potential ongoing issues, raising concerns that contradicted the reported improvements. This had prompted the Chair to initiate an item for discussion at an upcoming committee meeting. The Chair encouraged members to investigate further cases of damp and mould within their wards to gather information that could support an impactful discussion at the next meeting.

The Chair emphasised the importance of members acting as advocates for residents, particularly when it came to uncovering any issues that may have been overlooked or concealed and stressed that the Committee's role was to represent the community and act as a crucial channel for residents' concerns.

The Chair expressed frustration about changes in personnel within the Council, noting that this could hinder continuity in addressing long-term issues. The Chair concluded by highlighting the importance of consistency and accountability in the council's response to damp and mould cases.

**5 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

**6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 12 November 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Leanne Brady, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater CC, Graham Snell and Jade Woods

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

**Time:** End Time: 7.30pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy McGuinness and Nigel Williams.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 MINUTES - 8 OCTOBER 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee, held on 8 October 2024, be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**3 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE**

The Chair introduced the Climate Change Update, a biannual review typically taken in November and March of each year, and highlighted the Committee's long-standing commitment to monitoring progress in this area due to its critical importance.

The Chair welcomed the guest speakers to the Committee. Matt Partridge (Chief Executive), Simon Speller (Portfolio Holder, Environment and Performance), Zayd al Jawad (Assistant Director, Planning and Regulation) and Fabian Oyarzun (Head of Climate Action).

The Chair opened the discussion with a reflection on the global urgency surrounding climate change. Recent events such as flooding in Central Europe and Spain, and high temperatures across the Mediterranean, were noted as stark reminders of the ongoing crisis. While these events were not directly attributable to local action or inaction, they underscored the importance of the Council's efforts in reducing carbon emissions, enhancing biodiversity, and encouraging behavioural change.

The Cabinet was presented with a report and received a presentation from the Head of Climate Action which provided an overview of the measures the Council was implementing to address climate change. Specifically, the report detailed the most significant climate action efforts undertaken across the themes identified in the 2020 Climate Change Strategy.

The Committee were informed about a Climate Action Framework that considered 9 levels of climate action ranging from a macro global and national levels, through to a micro community, family and individual levels.

The Head of Climate Action advised the Committee of ongoing participation in regional initiatives including the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP).

The Committee heard that Stevenage's 2022 emissions had decreased by 18% against 2018 levels, while the Council's organisational emissions had dropped by 39%. A switch to hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO) for fleet fuel was projected to yield further reductions.

The Head of Climate Action informed the Committee that an online portal had been launched, detailing over 50 climate actions and offering citizens opportunities to provide feedback.

Addressing the ongoing efforts of local businesses, the Head of Climate Action advised members that large local companies were actively pursuing net-zero targets, while small and medium-sized businesses were supported through schemes such as the Green Business Grant and the WENTA Zero Action Plan.

The Committee heard that The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund had enabled retrofitting of 446 homes, with ongoing projects supporting improved energy efficiency in social and private housing. While transport initiatives included the Council's fleet decarbonisation, deployment of electric vehicles, and public schemes like a cycle hire programme and enhanced EV charging infrastructure.

Addressing waste and recycling, the Head of Climate Action advised Members that targets included transitioning entirely to energy-from-waste facilities by 2030 and increasing recycling rates from the current 39.1% to 60% by 2035.

The Committee were informed that a Biodiversity Action Plan had been adopted, focusing on habitat conservation and enhancement, with 63 actions identified. Plans included increasing Stevenage's tree canopy cover to 19% and planting 4,000 trees by 2030.

The Committee heard that eight community-led initiatives had been funded under the Climate Change Community Fund, addressing waste reduction, biodiversity, water conservation, and climate adaptation. Examples included a rainwater collection pilot and community garden projects.

The presentation concluded with details of ongoing projects and a reaffirmation of

the Council's commitment to its climate strategy goals.

Responding to a question related to the increase in reported electricity and gas consumption, the Head of Climate Action advised that the initial 2020 baseline only included 12 primary sites, selected due to their significant energy usage. By 2023, the scope had expanded to in excess of 500 sites, offering a far more comprehensive understanding of energy consumption across the Council's portfolio. The Head of Climate Action also noted the inclusion of non-corporate contract sites in an ongoing review, further enhancing the comprehensiveness of the data. This proactive approach aimed to eliminate residual gaps in reporting, but it may initially cause reported figures to rise.

The Chair asked a number of questions regarding Daneshill House and the proposed Civic Hub, raising concerns regarding inefficiencies in managing one of the Council's highest-emitting buildings. The Chair spoke of the importance of interim measures, given the time before the new hub is operational. In response, Officers explained that the building's heating and energy systems were outdated, making it impossible to implement a modern Building Management Plan or zoning system. They advised that they were exploring interim measures such as mothballing underused floors to reduce energy consumption. Behavioural change among staff, while promoted, had limitations.

The Chair expressed concern that the new hub could require retrofitting within a few years if sustainability measures were not prioritised during the design phase. They stressed the need for it to align with Stevenage Borough Council's climate leadership ambitions. The Chief Executive reassured the committee that sustainability was central to the hub's design, with efforts to make it as close to net-zero as possible. The Chief Executive offered to arrange a presentation by architects to share details of the hub's sustainable systems and overall plans.

Members asked questions related to waste management and the scope of carbon emissions accounting. The Head of Climate Action responded that 70% of residential waste was processed at energy-from-waste (EfW) facilities that likely used incineration. The Head of Climate Action explained that EfW contributed to carbon emissions but offset some fossil fuel energy generation. Currently, those emissions were not included in Stevenage's territorial emissions, as the facilities were outside the area. The Head of Climate Action assured that waste-related emissions would be considered under the developing Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System methodology for Scope 3 emissions.

Members raised concerns about passing the carbon burden to other areas due to Stevenage's zero-landfill policy.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of availability of recycling bins in high streets, parks, and commercial areas.

Members queried the accuracy of data, including emissions from leisure centres and displaced emissions caused by staff working from home. The Head of Climate Action confirmed emissions data for specific sites like leisure centres was available and acknowledged that a comprehensive organisational emissions baseline was

needed for accurate accounting. The Committee were informed that surveys had been issued to assess home energy use by staff, recognising the displacement of emissions from office space closures to private homes. The Portfolio Holder (Environment & Performance) added that better modelling and tracking methods were necessary to improve data accuracy and ensure comprehensive measurement of emissions and supported the ongoing expansion of data gathering.

Responding to a question related to housing decarbonisation target, the Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) advised the Committee that the Council's decarbonisation programme depended on external funding.

Members asked questions related to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The Head of Climate Action responded that the entire SBC fleet, previously running on diesel, had transitioned to HVO as of October 2024. The Head of Climate Action acknowledged that HVO was an interim solution until electric vehicle infrastructure and technologies became more viable.

Members raised concerns related to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and recommended the introduction of quarterly or annual reports on BNG contributions, spending and achievements, ensuring public access to reports to enhance transparency and accountability.

Members highlighted recent decisions to replace shrub beds with grass which appeared to undermine biodiversity efforts. The Portfolio Holder (Environment and Performance) emphasised the need for joined-up thinking regarding greenspaces and proposed that community maintenance agreements could be considered for residents who wished to retain those features.

**4 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was none.

**5 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

**6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**



**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 11 December 2024



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2024/25

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Chloe Pullen  
**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 2024/25 and provide an update on progress against Cost-of-Living support for residents and current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Member's information, a presentation will be provided at the Cabinet 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 52 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 2 2024/25 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.
- 2.2 That the performance improvements in relation to rent collection (section 4.3.2) be noted.
- 2.3 That the introduction of three new measures in relation to Fire Remedial Actions be noted (section 3.5).

2.4 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.

**3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 In January 2024, the Cabinet agreed the new Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan until 2027. This includes five strategic priorities:

- Transforming Our Town
- More Social, Affordable & Good Quality Homes
- Thriving Neighbourhoods
- Tackling Climate Change
- Balancing the Budget

The plan also includes three Cross-cutting themes:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Health & Wellbeing
- Technology & Innovation

The plan was subsequently approved at Full Council in February 2024. The corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect existing and future programmes of work, resident priorities and regulatory and legislative housing requirements.

3.2 The Council’s approach to performance management demonstrates a clear link between service delivery and the strategic objectives in the MSEB 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 can simplify and streamline how performance monitoring and progress is communicated to Members and residents.

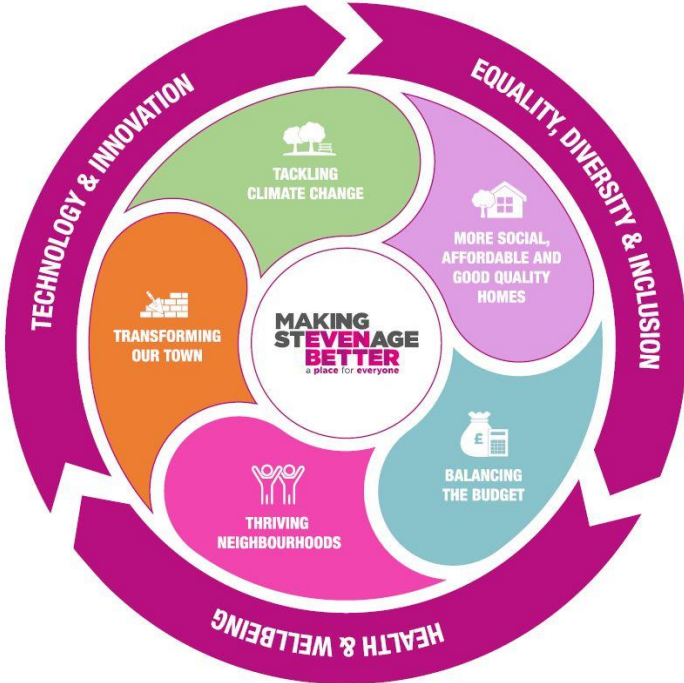


Fig 1.

3.3 The Council is committed to the delivery of its priorities and its local services, to the benefit of local residents and businesses. This is challenging in a very competitive, employee-driven market and there is a risk that not being able to retain, attract and recruit the right people and skills at all levels could continue

to impact the Council's capacity to deliver all of its priorities as well as provide core services and implement new government legislation. The main challenge is when the Council has to compete with roles against the private sector (e.g surveying roles), sometimes this can be compensated by using Market Forces supplements and work flexibility. The Council is continually reviewing its recruitment and retention approaches to strive to ensure it maintains the right capacity, skills, values and experience amongst staff at all levels.

- 3.4 The Corporate Performance Suite for 2024/25 contains 49 measures which are aligned with the 5 MSEB strategic priorities. There are also 13 measures relating to the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) which will be reported annually. The 49 measures are complemented by statutory and local measures which are managed internally with performance overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.5 Following the Regulator of Social Housing Inspection in September 2024 (which is referenced within a separate report on this agenda) three additional measures have been added in Quarter 2 'RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Actions (High, Medium and Low)' and one to be added from Quarter 3 'RSH Number of Overdue Water Remedial Actions'. The new measures will give the Cabinet oversight of the number of remedial actions stemming from Fire Risk Assessment that have been completed as a percentage of the total that have been identified split into high, medium and low categories. Performance against the complete suite of compliance measures along with the associated mitigating actions is regularly monitored with oversight provided by the the Council's Corporate Risk Group.
- 3.6 There are 22 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance for 2024/25. Baseline measures provide a starting point from which to assess and compare performance in future. The remaining 30 measures are relevant to the Council's focus on what matters to residents and progress made against the MSEB objectives.

## **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 MSEB priorities set out in Figure 1. In addition, during 2024/25 progress against performance measures has been presented alongside key programme milestones. By taking this mixed-method approach, the Council is able to present a holistic overview of its performance activity. This helps demonstrate to residents that the Council is on track to deliver key projects, programmes and service improvements associated with MSEB, as well as highlighting performance against key service delivery targets.
- 4.1.2 Key highlights from the MSEB programmes are summarised in section 4.2. For further information on the aims and objectives of the MSEB programme in 2024/25 please refer to MSEB Plan on a Page, which was presented to the Cabinet in July 2024 as Appendix C of the Corporate Performance Suite 2024/25 report: [MSEB Plan on a Page 2024/25 \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/mseb-plan-on-a-page-2024-25)
- 4.1.3 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 2 below. The full set of current corporate performance measures results and MSEB milestones are attached at Appendix A.

<b>Q2 2024/25 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW</b>						
<b>MSEB Programme</b>	<b>Baseline measure for 2024-25</b>	<b>Meeting or exceeding target</b>	<b>Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)</b>	<b>Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)</b>	<b>Unavailable Data</b>	<b>Milestones Reported Qtr. 2</b>
<b>More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (25 measures)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Transforming Our Town (3 measures)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Thriving Neighbourhoods (11 measures)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5*</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	*The data for 'NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)' and 'NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting' comes from an external source and is only available a quarter in arrears, therefore will be reported this way					
<b>Tackling Climate Change (1 measures)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Balancing the Budget (13 measures)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL (52)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>

Fig 2.

4.1.4 There were several strong areas of performance this quarter which are highlighted below:

- The number of homes maintained as decent against the national minimum standard is 95.97% which represents a significant increase since Quarter 2 of 2023/24 (84.77%).
- Compliance certification and documentation for Gas Safety, Fire Safety, Asbestos, Legionella and Lifts are at 100%.
- Satisfaction with the CSC customer service remains high at 92.1%. however as always it is recognised that there is still room for further improvement to be made in this area
- All Planning measures have achieved their targets, with 100% of major and minor applications being determined within target timescales.

## 4.2 MSEB PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 Alongside performance, the council also captures quarterly updates on the milestones associated with the strategic priorities set out in the MSEB Corporate Plan and subsequent service planning and priority setting activities. All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at Cabinet in July 2024, with Quarter 2 highlights including:

- Residents have moved into the new independent living scheme, Brodie Court which consists of 88 one and two bedroom flats.
- Planning permission was granted for a mixed use scheme at The Oval which includes 250 homes and 91 independent living homes.
- Construction works including foundation works at Burwell Road Phase 2 have begun. This work was able to begin following the approval of a detailed drainage strategy from Herts County Council.
- Planning permission was granted for 11 flats at a site in Ellis Avenue (7 two bedroom and 4 one bedroom).
- The demolition works at Hobbs Court have now been completed.
- The S106 Agreement has been signed between the Council and developer Reef for Gunnelswood Road infrastructure. The Council is currently supporting conversations between the developer and Hertfordshire County Council in regards to their start on site for the new gyratory, in terms of the necessary utility and highway enabling works needed to be carried out.
- The delivery phase of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures pilot projects: Access to All, Life Science Academy Challenge & Inspiring Science for the Next Generation have been completed along with the subsequent evaluation activities. Conversations around the future development of the council's future partnership with Mission44 and other key strategic partners are continuing.
- The play area refurbishment programme completed in time for the summer holidays with a total of £455,000 being spent across 7 play areas. Over 250 children helped determine the investment in the play areas.
- Work is underway on the 5 year local plan Partial Review. This was presented to Cabinet in November with wider consultation to run until the end of January 2025.
- Mid-Year reporting for UK Shared Prosperity Fund is now completed for 2024/25, the final delivery year of the programme. Many areas are on track to exceed targets set out in our Local Investment Plan. In the budget, the Government announced a further £900m to support the programme for a further year with individual funding allocations to be confirmed at a later date.
- Work continues on improving business processes and commercialising services. This quarter the team launched Commercial Health and Safety Courses with the ability to book courses online.
- The Caretaking improvement plan has been received from Consultants Ridge and a scrutiny panel of tenants and leaseholders has been set up to conduct a review of the report. The first meeting was held on 16th October where the Terms of Reference and approach to the review was discussed.

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

**4.3 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

4.3.1 As highlighted in Figure 2, there are no measures that are red this quarter. Last quarter one measure did not meet its target, 'BV66a: Rent Collection Rate. The table below outlines the actual performance and the target that was set for the performance measure. The paragraphs that follow set out the reasons for improvement in Quarter 2.

<u>MEASURE NAME</u>	<u>BUSINESS UNIT</u>	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual – Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD
<b>Balancing the Budget</b>								
<b>BV66a: Rent Collection Rate</b>	Housing Management	95.14%	95.96%	97.46%	89.44%	97%	95.14%	95.96%

Fig.3

**BV66a: Rent Collection Rate**

4.3.2 Income collection for Q2 end of June 2024 is 97% which is above the set target of 95.14%.

4.3.3 The Income team continue to implement steps from the Income Recovery Action Plan including:

- Support for customers - ensuring that all tenants have access to money advice and systems are in place to identify vulnerable households/tenants at risk of being unable to pay for rent, fuel, or food
- Working to mitigate the anticipated challenges such as tenant welfare, increased level of arrears and demand on services, tenant engagement and affordability.
- Continuing with a direct debit take up campaign.
- Carry out a tenant's wellbeing day whereby officers will visit targeted groups of tenants.
- Visit all tenants on housing benefits that are affected by the benefit cap.
- Continuing collaborative work with external agencies to tap into financial support for our tenants' e.g., Stevenage Community Trust and CA to support those tenants experiencing financial challenges.

Seeking ways to support tenants such as working with partners CA who can issue energy bill vouchers and in partnership with local food banks.

**4.4 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (TSM)**

4.4.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced in 2023/24 as a regulatory requirement for all landlords in England. There are 22 TSMs – of which 12 are sourced from a tenant perception survey. The Council has commissioned Housemark and Service Insight to conduct the tenant perception surveys quarterly during 2024/25. The Council are required to complete at least 570 surveys for its stock size; however, for 2024/25, 1000 responses will be

collated over the year to ensure further statistical accuracy. The aim is for 90% of surveys to be completed over the phone with the remaining 10% online.

4.4.2 In Quarter 2 for 2024/25, 245 surveys were completed, 186 over the phone and 59 online. The Q2 satisfaction results can be seen in the table below:

Ref	Question	Previous year (2023/24)	Q1 & Q2 cumulative(2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP01	Overall satisfaction	56.0%	63.3%	+7.3%
TP02	Repairs service overall	62.7%	66.3%	+ 3.6%
TP03	Speed of repairs	52.4%	65.1%	+12.7%
TP04	Home is well-maintained	59.2%	64.4%	+ 5.2%
TP05	Home is safe	69.9%	74.8%	+ 4.9%
TP06	Listens to views and acts	44.9%	51.9%	+ 7.0%
TP07	Keeps tenants informed	50.9%	58.8%	+7.9%
TP08	Treats tenants fairly and with respect	70.2%	71.0%	+ 0.8%
TP09	Complaint handling	22.8%	28.8%	+ 6.0%
TP10	Communal areas are clean and well-maintained	53.3%	58.9%	+ 5.6%
TP11	Contribution to neighbourhood	47.7%	58.8%	+11.1%
TP12	ASB handling	49.5%	55.9%	+6.4%

Fig 4

4.4.3 The Council has seen an improvement across all twelve measures compared to the 2023/24 year end data, with the cumulative overall satisfaction at 63.3% representing an increase of 7.3%. The highest increase relates to satisfaction with speed of repairs which is now 65.1% an increase of 12.7%. Whilst treating tenants fairly and with respect has recorded the lowest increase of 0.8%, it continues to remain the highest overall score at 71%.

4.4.4 It should be noted that the Quarter 2 scores were achieved through a combination of online and phone call surveys. Housemark has generally seen lower satisfaction results for online surveys compared to telephone surveys for the social housing providers it is supporting. Overall satisfaction by method of data collection for Quarter 2 stands at 40.7% for Tenants who completed the online survey and 67.2% for telephone responses.

4.4.5 In addition to the twelve standard questions, the team have opted to ask two additional questions which will vary each quarter. For Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, tenants were asked to set out the reason for their initial overall satisfaction score. For Quarter 2 a question was also asked about whether they have access to the internet and if so, how easy or difficult they find it to use.



4.4.6 As part of the survey tenants are able to use free text to provide additional detail. This is currently being analysed and any matters reported by tenants who have given permission for their responses to be shared have been reported to individual teams for further contact to be made where necessary. Feedback from the surveys is being used to help inform and implement a new Resident Engagement Strategy along with specific development and improvement work.

## **4.5 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT HANDLING**

- 4.5.1 As set out within the Councils Complaints Policy residents are able to contact either the Housing Ombudsman Service, mainly for issues which relate to the Council as a landlord or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for areas such as Homelessness, the Housing Register and associated advice.
- 4.5.2 Both Ombudsmen services will independently consider cases where they have been approached by residents and will then come to a determination concerning the matters which have been raised. In line with the Housing Ombudsmen's new Statutory Code of Complaint Handling, the Council is required to report the outcome of such cases, and this will be provided to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- 4.5.3 The previous quarters Corporate Performance Report committed to providing an update from the Monitoring Officer to report decisions upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as part of the Q2 Performance Suite. From then on, judgements and findings of both the Housing and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will be reported quarterly alongside the council's performance information as part of this report.
- 4.5.4 In the first two quarters of the year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has reached determinations in respect of three complaints. In all three cases, the Ombudsman decided not to investigate.
- 4.5.5 With regards to the Housing Ombudsman, 3 cases were considered in quarter 2, the details of which are set out in Appendix B. No formal determinations have been made in respect of these cases. Two of the cases were resolved following intervention and advice and in one case the Ombudsmen wanted the Council to consider the case first through its internal process before they would consider getting involved.
- 4.5.6 The Council has reviewed its Complaints Policy in line with the latest regulatory and legal requirements. Details of this along with the Annual Self-Assessment of Complaint Handling against the Housing Ombudsmen's Code. This has seen the introduction of a new Member for Complaints (Housing) role within the Cabinet as well as the introduction of a fortnightly Housing Complaint Clinic with the purpose of reviewing trends and undertaking route cause analysis to help drive improvements and learning.
- 4.5.7 The Annual Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report were considered initially by the Executive Housing Working Group, which is Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and attended by other key Councillors including the Leader of the Council, prior to being approved by the Cabinet on 5 June 2024.
- 4.5.8 Tenant Satisfaction Measure Perception Surveys for the year to date indicate that 28.8% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the handling of their complaint which represents an improvement of 6% compared to the 2023/24 year end figure.



4.5.9 The Housing Complaint Clinic is continuing to take a lead in monitoring and improving performance, Full details of this work and performance are presented as part of the Council's Quarterly Performance Framework.

## **4.6 COST OF LIVING**

4.6.1 Following approval of the Cost of Living (CoL) Action Plan in October 2022, a number of activities were 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 that is specifically targeted at supporting people facing financial, housing and other difficulties.

4.6.2 A vital component of CoL activities has been the work with partners to reach a broad range of residents in as many compelling ways as possible.

4.6.3 In Quarter 1, the Council continued to provide funding to Irish Network, Bedwell, Chells Manor, St Nicholas and The Oval Community Centres, Junction 7 and Crossroads Care for their community cafes. These are funded until the end of March 2025.

4.6.4 The Council continues to administer the Household Support Fund Scheme. A total of £50,000 has been distributed to groups and organisations that are directly supporting Stevenage residents with food and energy poverty. The current funding has been allocated and a further tranche will be distributed to districts shortly.

4.6.5 The Council is awaiting confirmation from Hertfordshire County Council as to the allocation split between food and energy for the next tranche. Groups that have been supported previously include foodbanks, daycare support centres and community cafes offering free food and refreshments, along with social interaction and support.

## **4.7 STRATEGIC RISK**

4.7.1 The strategic risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 7 October 2024, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 16 October 2024 and were considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 6 November 2024.

4.7.2 The Audit Committee receives a detailed Strategic Risk Report each quarter. The report to the Audit Committee considers the actions which have been identified to mitigate each of the identified risks and the progress of those actions. 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 the Cabinet within this quarterly report.

## **HIGHLIGHTED RISKS**

4.7.3 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 Corporate Policy & Business Support 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. Any financial impact of the under/over achievement of Corporate Performance Indicators will be reported as part of the Quarterly Monitoring report.

## **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 are charged with identifying and addressing any related climate change considerations.

## **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)
- Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- [MSEB Plan on a Page 2024/25 \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/mseb-plan-on-a-page-2024-25)

## **7 APPENDICES**

- Appendix A: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Two 2024/25
- Appendix B: Ombudsman Determinations Quarter Two 2024/25

This page is intentionally left blank

# Corporate Performance Report 2024/25

## 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

### Key to Milestone Status Symbols

- ▲ - Will slip more than 1 quarter
- - Slipped but to be completed within next quarter
- ★ - On track
- ✔ - Completed

## MORE SOCIAL, AFFORDABLE & GOOD QUALITY HOMES 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
Page 37 % of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage two (Housing)				0.00%	0.00%			30/09/2024 No Stage 2 complaint surveys were carried out in the quarter
% of Damp and Mould cases completed on time				64.00%	73.06%			30/09/2024 The KPI for work orders this quarter has been impacted due to several factors: - The management and subsequent removal of two poorly performing contractors. - The reassignment of works and changes in administrative tasks and roles. - Instances of no access, which have led to delayed start and completion dates for contractors, as recorded on the NEC system. The Damp and Mould Team has now been integrated into the repairs unit, and is in the process of aligning its contractors in preparation for the new Framework/Portal. The team continue to work closely with the project team concerning the current list of no access properties. Additionally, documentation has been from Hertfordshire Legal to support a change in the directness of communications regarding access issues. Recent changes in management will prompt a review of team structures and the origination of job roles and responsibilities.
% of Damp and Mould inspections completed on time				72.00%	82.22%			30/09/2024 This quarter's KPI was adversely affected by a number of properties where access was not granted, resulting in missed target times being recorded on the NEC system. The team are actively collaborating with the project team and the Hertfordshire Legal department to minimise the number of properties impacted by access issues. However, there are still several overdue cases that will influence the Q3 KPI data.















	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
% of tenants satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage one (Housing)				36.00%	47.00%			30/09/2024 15 stage 1 complaint surveys were completed in this quarter. 40% very satisfied 7% fairly satisfied 13% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 20% fairly dissatisfied 20% very dissatisfied
Average time taken to relet a routine void (GN). key to key				100.00	89.00			30/09/2024 Although performance shows only a slight downward trajectory in Q2 compared to Q1 this is because the relet times are still being impacted by properties which became void in the previous year but have only recently been relet. Through data segmentation it can be demonstrated that average relet times are coming down more significantly for newer voids – for example those which became void and were relet in Q2: Routine Voids <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 general needs properties with an average relet time of 36 days</li> <li>• 4 ILS properties with an average relet time of 59 days</li> </ul> Major Works Voids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 general needs properties with an average relet time of 57.5 days</li> </ul> There were 98 voids at 30 September of which 38 were ready to let. The majority of those ready to let were ILS properties, a number of which are considered harder to let and/or designated as flexi-care. The asset review of challenging assets will be looking at ILS schemes in this category. More recently performance has been impacted by the termination of arrangements with 2 of 3 of interim contractors and although new temporary cover is being put in place this is likely to have some impact on Q3 performance.


	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
BV213: Homelessness preventions	97.00	156.00	206.00	37.00	58.00	60.00	90.00	<p>30/09/2024</p> <p>The triage service, introduced to enable Housing Options Caseworkers to focus on more in-depth casework, remains effective. This service ensures timely signposting and the provision of early advice and guidance to vulnerable customers, allowing the team to respond efficiently.</p> <p>The team continues to differentiate between successful outcomes for the prevention and relief duties. This split remains valuable in maintaining a focused approach to preventive measures within the prevention duty.</p> <p>The ongoing lack of affordable private rented accommodation and the financial challenges faced by applicants continue to drive high demand for the service. However, the team has maintained its success in securing preventions through alternative measures such as negotiating with excluders and facilitating hostel placements.</p> <p>Despite recent recruitment and adjustments to the customer journey, the team remains well-positioned to prioritize decision-making within reasonable timeframes. This continues to support timely move-on from interim accommodation. However, due to the rise in individual case loads as a result, we are expecting the levels of preventions to drop while recruitment is carried out.</p>
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	394.00	401.00	495.00	497.00	497.00	488.00	489.00	
Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	93.50%		105.31%	96.79%	97.19%	90.00%	90.00%	<p>30/09/2024</p> <p>In Quarter 2 4531 of 4552 repairs were fixed first time</p>
RP01a: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	84.39%	84.77%	94.00%	95.40%	95.97%	90.00%	96.00%	<p>30/09/2024</p> <p>In Quarter 2 7619 of 7939 council homes were maintained as decent against the national minimum Decent Homes standard</p>
RSH BS01: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate			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	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
RSH BS04: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspections certificate	100.00%	100.00%	96.65%	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%	
RSH CH01 (part 2): Number of stage two complaints made by tenants	48	67	88	21	36			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE In Quarter 2 83.3% (30 of 36) stage 2 complaints made by tenants were responded to within Complaint Handling timescales
RSH CH01 (part1): Number of stage one complaints made by tenants	473	655	818	214	357			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE In Quarter 2 94.4% (337 of 357) stage 1 complaints made by tenants were responded to within Complaint Handling timescales
RSH CH02 (part1): Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants and responded to within CH Timescale	323	483	631	199	337			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH CH02 (part2): Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants and responded to within CH Timescale	29	42	61	19	30			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial High Risk Actions					0			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Low Risk Actions					312			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Medium Risk Actions					286			
RSH Rep1: Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale	87%	84%	88%	96%	96%	98%	98%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2, 412 of 431 emergency jobs were completed in target timescales.
RSH Rep2: Proportion of non-emergency (Routine and Urgent) responsive repairs completed within target timescale	85.63%	91.02%	91.98%	95.34%	95.29%	95.00%	95.00%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2, 3907 out of 4100 non-emergency responsive repairs were completed within target. (This is broken down to 1110 out of 1194 urgent jobs and 2797 of 2906 routine jobs)
VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	99.47%	99.78%		99.58%	99.14%	100.00%	100.00%	



## MORE SOCIAL, AFFORDABLE & GOOD QUALITY HOMES 2024/25 MILESTONES





	Performance	Comments
 Allocations - Deliver a new Policy which meets statutory duties & makes best use of housing stock		30 Sep 2024 Work is ongoing and is now due for completion at the end of Q3
 Brent Court Garages - Park improvements		30 Sep 2024 The equipment has been ordered and will be installed on site over the coming months.
 Brent Court Garages - Start on site for new build of 96 home Independent Living Scheme		30 Sep 2024 A report to appoint a new contractor is scheduled to be reviewed at Cabinet in October, with a start on site in terms of site clearance due to begin in the new year.
 Burwell Phase 2 - Topping out of 20 homes for affordable rent		30 Sep 2024 The pre-commencement condition which had remained outstanding with the lead local authority for over 6 months has now been discharged allowing a meaningful start on site to begin.
 Caretaking Improvement Plan - Project plan agreed following Ridge Review		30 Sep 2024 The team have received the Caretaking Improvement plan from Ridge and have set up a scrutiny panel of tenants and leaseholders to conduct a scrutiny review of the caretaking service alongside the consultant's report. Their first meeting was held next on 16th October where they discussed and agreed their terms of reference and approach to the review.
 Combine Providing Homes Services, SADA, No More & Safeguarding to create Community Advice & Support.		30 Sep 2024 teams have come together as Community Advice & Support, working well together, as part of the piece of work the team are updating policies procedures and strategies
 Courtlands - Handover of 17 homes for private sale within the WOC		30 Sep 2024 The statutory utility provider has now agreed to the required diversion following 8 months of discussion meaning units impacted by the diversion can proceed at a quicker pace, however this has had an impact on forecast handover date.




	Performance	Comments
 Dunn Close - Handover of 27 home supported housing scheme		30 Sep 2024 The scheme is on track for handover at the end of the year.
 Ellis Avenue Planning Application submitted		30 Sep 2024 This is completed.
 Empty Homes Improvement Plan - Business case for future delivery model		30 Sep 2024 A report was presented to Cabinet on 9 October setting out a proposed future delivery model along with updates on the improvement plans for Voids and Repairs and the recommendations were agreed.
 Establish client and contractor functions		30 Sep 2024 This is in progress but will not be fully established until appointments are made to key management and other roles to support these functions which is anticipated to be concluded during Q3.
 Kenilworth Phase 2 - Choose delivery partner		30 Sep 2024 The procurement exercise finished on the 3 October, with a Cabinet report to delegate the appointment of the contractor due on 9 October
 The Oval - Appoint contractor		30 Sep 2024 Tender documents for the scheme are drafted and will be out to market within the next 4 weeks.
 The Oval - Demolition of Hobbs Court		30 Sep 2024 The demolition works are completed.
 The Oval - Planning permission for a mixed use scheme		30 Sep 2024 Planning permission was granted in the July Planning Committee.

## TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 ytd	Comments
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in thirteen	85.7%	76.9%	83.3%	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	60.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 there were no major applications to be determined
Ni157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in eight weeks	97.1%	98.0%	98.5%	100.0%	97.1%	65.0%	65.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 16 of 17 minor planning applications were determined within target timescales.
NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined in eight weeks	94.4%	95.1%	96.3%	98.2%	96.1%	80.0%	80.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 42 of 45 other planning applications were determined within target timescales.

## TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cycling and Pedestrian Improvements Arts and Heritage trail - Procurement of works		30 Sep 2024 During Q2 the tender for the heritage trail closed, with four bids being received. A panel made up of SBC (regeneration and green spaces) and HCC evaluated the bids and a winning bid selected. The winning bidder will be fully confirmed in October once the standstill period has passed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Diversification of retail project - Action plan confirmed		30 Sep 2024 The programme management office has undertaken an analysis of this pot of funding and options are being taken to the October Cabinet.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure - Legal agreement reached		30 Sep 2024 Pleased to report the legal agreement (S106) was signed within this quarter.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mission 44: Evaluation - Evaluate Phase One of the Pioneering Young STEM futures programme		


	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mission 44: Phase 2 Proposal - Approval of Phase 2 of Pioneering Young Stem Futures programme		30 Sep 2024 Approval for P2 of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme, has been pushed back to the January meeting of the M44 board as suggested may be the case in the previous update.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mission 44: Pilot STEM projects - Complete delivery of the 'Access to All' pilot programme		30 Sep 2024 Both Delivery and Evaluation for this project are now complete. Evaluation has been provided to Mission44 ahead of conversations around Phase Two of the programme.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Submit mid year figures for Communities & Place UKSPF funding		30 Sep 2024 Deadline for submission of mid-year figures is the 1st of November. On track to meet this submission deadline, including signoff from the Deputy S151 Officer.

## THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 ytd	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
ASB6: Percentage of ASB cases resulting in successful enforcement action	52.00%	77.00%	95.00%	93.00%	96.00%	80.00%	80.00%	
CD1 Number of people engaged in Cooperative Neighbourhood 'Community & Place' initiatives	3,400.00	5,100.00	7,300.00	2,200.00	4,671.00			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH NM01(part1): ASB cases opened by or on behalf of the provider during the reporting year	54.00	70.00	108.00	21.00	37.00			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH NM01(part2) ASB cases that involve hate incidents opened by or on behalf of the provider during	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00			30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
% of Fly Tipping Clearances completed				60.40%	84.00%			
% of Graffiti Clearances completed				18.00%	71.00%			30/09/2024 The council's programme to tackle graffiti is supported by a joint officer and member working group. It has strands around cleansing, enforcement and prevention. A specific graffiti team within the councils Direct Services has been stood up to focus on graffiti clearance. In order to maintain this approach beyond this financial year a growth bid or the provision of external funding will need to be agreed.
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	11.02%	11.07%	11.07%	6.99%	7.50%	6.87%	6.67%	30/09/2024 The residential garages void rate for Quarter 2 is 7.50% against a target of 6.87%. There was a 4.8% increase in offers in Quarter 2 compared to Quarter 1, with several completed sites from the Garages Improvement Programme (GIP) returned for re-letting. However, the low acceptance rate of 66% during the first 3 weeks of July and the high level of terminations in September (largely due to moving house and cost) means that the void rate slightly increased. Terminations were high in September 2024 at 55 (compared to 33 in September 2023). They were significantly lower in July and August 2024 however. The terminations are due to a multitude of reasons, however the cost of the garage rent was the main factor in 22% of cases. Offers in September were high at 72 for the month with an acceptance rate of 81%, even though advertising on social media was paused due to negative comments on social media re cleansing and sweeping/heavy rainfall and floods. In Quarter 3, the garages team will continue with their targeted marketing strategy and with reminder emails to capture late responses to offers. Work continues to progress the mapping feature in digital lettings, which will help residents to identify the exact location of available garages. This is likely to go live in Quarter 4.
ES1: Percentage of residential bins collected	99.65%	99.67%	99.67%	99.64%	99.67%	99.00%	99.00%	

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 ytd	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 (YTD)	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	240.00	360.00	483.49	126.70		245.00	360.00	30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q2 will not be available until the end of December 2024.
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	42.70%	36.90%	34.00%	42.20%		40.00%	35.00%	30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q2 will not be available until the end of December 2024
CWLS1: EvAc - No of under 16 using facilities and outreach prog at least once p/w	19,804.00	15,141.00	20,094.00	26,117.00	19,833.00	20,000.00	15,000.00	30/09/2024 School swimming, this is a data collection issue each school tells the pool how many children it is going to bring, that was the data used last year. This year the pool staff team are counting the numbers that actually attend, the difference is generally because children go sick or cant swim for what ever reason plus also schools dont tend to be very accurate when planning a swimming visit. Swim parties have increased since last year , more children are attending the swimming club and gala bookings have increased. Last year the theatre hosted the bi-annual Stevenage Festival and they have a lot of children attending, no festival this year thus the numbers are down. Golf course and driving range, Everyone Active have focused on driving junior golf with the introduction of an academy, junior packages and memberships, this has proved to work really well. For the first time Everyone Active hosted summer camps during the holiday at Ridlins.



## THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CN Centralised Forward Planning-Collate a plan of meetings, walkabouts, and events across all areas		30 Sep 2024 The new format for the co-operative meeting has been slightly delayed due to three pre-election periods and will now take place at the end of October. This meeting will follow the police priority model, starting with a Strategic Board Priority session for all members, followed by three breakout rooms divided into North, Central, and South areas. The second Strategic Board Priority meeting is scheduled for February 2025. The first round of ward walkabouts took place in early August, with the next round planned for after the Strategic Board Priority Setting meeting in November which the team have begun to book in. The team has also been actively involved in supporting and attending town-wide events such as the Teddy Bears' Picnic, Bedwell Funday, Sport in the Park, Peartree Park Community Day, and Build a Better Bedwell. These efforts aim to enhance community engagement in multiple ongoing consultations.

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
CC1: Percentage of homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C or above	55.00%	57.00%	58.00%	62.33%	64.43%	63.00%	64.00%	

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18 EV charging bays for 36 cars		30 Sep 2024 The Neighbourhood Centre Chargepoint project was funded using On Street Residential Chargepoint funding from OZAV. Eighteen charge points, each serving two EV bays were installed at the following locations: 3 @ The Hyde shops 2 @ The Glebe shops (rear car park) 3 @ Oaks Cross shops 3 @ Filey Close shops 3 @ Bedwell Shops 1 @ Archer Road shops 3 @ St Nicholas Park pavilion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 year local plan Cabinet approval (June) Consultation (July Aug)		30 Sep 2024 Reg 18 completed. Reg 19 to Nov Cabinet then consultation.

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity Action Plan - Adopt Wilder Stevenage action plan 2024-29		30 Sep 2024 The Biodiversity Action Plan will go to Cabinet on 9 October 2024 for approval.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change - Finalise Climate Change adaptation report. Update risk register.		30 Sep 2024 Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) report presented to SLT and its incorporation to the Operational Risk Register agreed. Coordinating presentation for the Audit Committee.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy Topic Reference Panel - Objectives and participants of panel agreed		30 Sep 2024 On hold until a decision is made from UK Government on the new regulatory landscape for community energy, particularly through the implementation of the Local Power Plan.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meadow Grassland Sites - Identify new sites for meadow grasslands		30 Sep 2024 Ongoing. Sites have been identified by further work is needed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting - Identify sites to plant new trees		30 Sep 2024 Sites ID



## BALANCING THE BUDGET 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
% of Corporate Building Overall Completed Remedials				84.00%	82.50%			30/09/2024 While the facilities team have made significant progress, with 2,825 remedials completed out of a total of 3,422, a substantial number remain outstanding. To address this, the team is taking proactive steps, including engaging additional contractors to increase capacity and expedite the resolution of these issues. At the same time, new reports are continually generating further remedials, which adds to the workload. Despite these challenges, the team remain fully committed to addressing all remedials efficiently, ensuring a balance between completing existing works and managing new priorities. The focus is on maintaining the compliance of our buildings across the portfolio.
% of Corporate Building Overall Compliance Inspections completed				100.00%	100.00%			30/09/2024 Inspections Required - 58 Inspections Completed - 58  31/08/2024 Inspections Required - 58 Inspections Completed - 58  31/07/2024 Inspections Required - 58 Inspections Completed - 58
% reviews and projects each year completed from the 5 year transformation programme			0.00%	0.00%	0.00%			30/09/2024 Reviews, in the form of business cases and projects (including process reviews) are underway, but no reviews have been completed during Q2 2024/25. The transformation business cases for Community Advice and Support Services and for Neighbourhood Focused Services are being finalised and are expected to be completed in Q4.
CompGF1: % of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	81.10%	91.90%	87.60%	82.20%	87.00%	80.00%	80.00%	
CSC Sat: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	88.20%	91.60%	91.00%	92.80%	92.10%	80.00%	80.00%	







	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
Dig2: Number of online payments	58,347.00	87,259.00	115,124.00	29,182.00	59,095.00	59,500.00	90,000.00	30/09/2024 Online payments have had a long term increasing trend, as a result of new digital services enabling more Council services to be paid for online, and changing personal preferences. There was some change to the normal payment trends in Q3/4 2023/4 because of the introduction of the Voicescape rent collection text message service. This encouraged more people than normal to pay over the telephone. Since then the number of online payments has resumed its increasing trend.
Finance BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	64.11%	91.07%	98.99%	38.65%	63.11%	60.00%	89.00%	
Finance BV66a: Rent collection rate	95.14%	95.96%	97.46%	89.44%	97.00%	95.14%	96.70%	30/09/2024 Income collection for Q2-2024 is 97%, this is above the set target of 95.14% an improvement of 1.86% compared to Q2-2023. Arrears are standing at 2.67% at end of Q2-2024 which is an improvement of 0.30% compared to Q2-2023. The Income Team's effort continues to be focused on improving income collection to expected levels whilst balancing tenancy sustainment.
Finance BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	59.00%	85.30%	94.30%	32.90%	59.10%	60.00%	86.00%	30/09/2024 The Revenue team is continuing to pursue all outstanding debt, utilising all available tools. Where possible, they are also encouraging residents to apply for benefits when appropriate.
Garage/Commercial/Parking- income raised vs budget for the top 3 income streams of the General Fund				100.00%	100.00%			
NEW - CR1: % of commercial rent collected from estates			92%	91%	91%	90%	90%	
NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	7.80	6.66	4.72	7.70	6.02	12.00	10.00	
Tracking delivery of financial benefit of £350,000 GF & HRA transformation savings.			0.00%	0.00%	0.00%			30/09/2024 Work to enable financial savings through Transformation is underway, but no cashable savings were realised in Q2 2024-25


Page 50

BALANCING THE BUDGET 2024/25 MILESTONES

Performance

Comments

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business Process improvements/efficiencies		30 Sep 2024 Work continues on improving business processes and commercialising services. Quarter 2 saw the launch of commercial Health and Safety courses and review of commercial opportunities at the Museum was taken to the September meeting of the Commercial and Investment Working Group.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial Garages - Actively advertise commercialgarages & include in trade waste brochure		30 Sep 2024 The void rate for commercial garages is 7% against a target of 7.28%. They are being actively advertised through channels such as the trade waste brochure and officers are using internal networks (such as the town centre team) to promote them.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Debt and Income Stream - Review		30 Sep 2024 A new automated process to send out reminders has been implemented. The next stage in the process will be to ensure that services are reviewing and managing outstanding debt to ensure all debt is collected.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garage Voids - Reduce garage voids		30 Sep 2024 The residential garages void rate for Quarter 2 is 7.50% against a target of 6.87%. There was a 4.8% increase in offers in Quarter 2 compared to Quarter 1, with several completed sites from the Garages Improvement Programme (GIP) returned for re-letting. However, the low acceptance rate of 66% during the first 3 weeks of July and the high level of terminations in September (largely due to moving house and cost) means that the void rate slightly increased. In Quarter 3, the garages team will continue with their targeted marketing strategy and with reminder emails to capture late responses to offers. Work continues to progress the mapping feature in digital lettings, which will help residents to identify the exact location of available garages. This is likely to go live in Quarter 4.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased Sustainable Income - report increased income to Commercial and Investment Working Group		30 Sep 2024 The proposed Fees and Charges for 2025/26 total £431k additional income towards the General Fund Savings target whilst on the Housing Revenue Account the additional income totals £2,487 towards the savings target. The Commercial KPIs reported to the Commercial and Investment Working Group show quarterly performance for income generating areas against targets. In quarter 2, most commercial offers such as advertising and sponsorship, parcel lockers and engineering fees are on track to hit their targets. Trade waste sales continue to perform well, with minimal losses and new trade waste customers meaning the growth of market share, whilst some commercial offers in cemeteries require more support and marketing to achieve their targets.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Insourcing Options- review of services provided to or on behalf of the council by external supplier		30 Sep 2024 The contract for the CCTV Control Room is due to end on 30th April 2025, with the option to extend by 2 years. As per the Insourcing Roadmap, a detailed business case exploring the potential to insource the CCTV operatives was taken to the September meeting of the Commercial and Investment Working Group. The recommendation was that the CCTV Control Room operations contract is extended for a total of 2 years and reviewed again one year out from the contract end date. This recommendation was upheld by Members and the report was presented at the September meeting of the CCTV Partnership Board.

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MTFS - Identify update budget gap for MTFS and present to Executive		30 Sep 2024 Report is being drafted for November Cabinet

## CROSS CUTTING 2024/25 MILESTONES

There are no cross-cutting milestones due this quarter

### OFLOG MEASURES (ANNUAL)

	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Comments
Council tax revenue per dwelling	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Debt servicing as % of Core Spending Power	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Level of Band D council tax rates	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Reserves as a percentage of Net Revenue Expenditure	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Reserves as a percentage of Service Spend	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Total Core Spending Power per dwelling	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Total debt as % of Core Spending Power	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r	n/r
Contamination rate of recycling - calculated as estimated proportion that is rejected of total amount			8.00		2.68			30/09/2024 This is a new measure. The contamination relates to (1) moisture content of the paper and (2) food waste and other materials mixed in the plastics / cans.
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	480.00	720.00	966.98	253.40		490.00	720.00	30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q2 will not be available until the end of December 2024.
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	85.40	73.80	68.00	84.40		80.00	70.00	30/09/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q2 will not be available until the end of December 2024
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in thirteen	85.7%	76.9%	83.3%	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	60.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 there were no major applications to be determined
NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in eight weeks	97.1%	98.0%	98.5%	100.0%	97.1%	65.0%	65.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 16 of 17 minor planning applications were determined
NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined in eight weeks	94.4%	95.1%	96.3%	98.2%	96.1%	80.0%	80.0%	30/09/2024 In Quarter 2 42 of 45 other planning applications were determined

Page 53

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX B

The outcome of three cases was presented as part of the Q1 report, the Housing Ombudsman Service has advised the Council of the outcome of three further cases during Q2 which are set out below. No formal determinations have been by the Housing Ombudsman Service but all three have been closed by the Ombudsman after their consideration as either being resolved following their intervention or where the complaint was withdrawn. No further action is required in respect of any of these cases and this item is for information only.

Complaint No	Council Process Ended	To Ombudsman	Ombudsmen Decision	Issue	Determination/Outcome	Order
4	10/3/23	15/01/24	08/07/24	Repairs	Resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None Complaint Resolved following Ombudsmen's Intervention</li> </ul>
				Complaint Handling	Resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None Complaint Resolved following Ombudsmen's Intervention</li> </ul>
5	05/06/23	18/03/24	21/08/24	Property Alterations	Resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None Complaint Resolved following Ombudsmen's Intervention, local redress.</li> </ul>
6	N/A	Not known	11/07/24	ASB	Council asked to deal with at Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Housing Ombudsman Service is not progressing this case as needs to exhaust the Councils process before they would consider</li> </ul>

This page is intentionally left blank



---

**Meeting** CABINET

**Portfolio Area** RESOURCES and TRANSFORMATION

**Date** 11 December 2024



## COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Brian Moldon / Clare Fletcher

**Contributor** Clare Fletcher | 2933

**Lead Officers** Brian Moldon

**Contact Officer** Brian Moldon

#### 1. PURPOSE

1.1 To seek members approval of the Council Tax Base for 2025/26.

#### 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 2025/26 will be 29,154.9 equivalent "Band D" properties, reduced to 28,571.8 equivalent "Band D" properties after making allowances for a 98.0% collection rate.

2.2 The 2025/26 Council Tax Base is approved subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2025/26. The Cabinet approved the CTS scheme at its meeting on 13 November 2024.

### 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 15 September 2024 was 38,395, compared to 38,213 as at 11 September 2023, an increase of 182 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 2025/26 include known construction numbers planned, giving a total of 208 (pro rata), new homes for 2025/26 with the majority being band 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

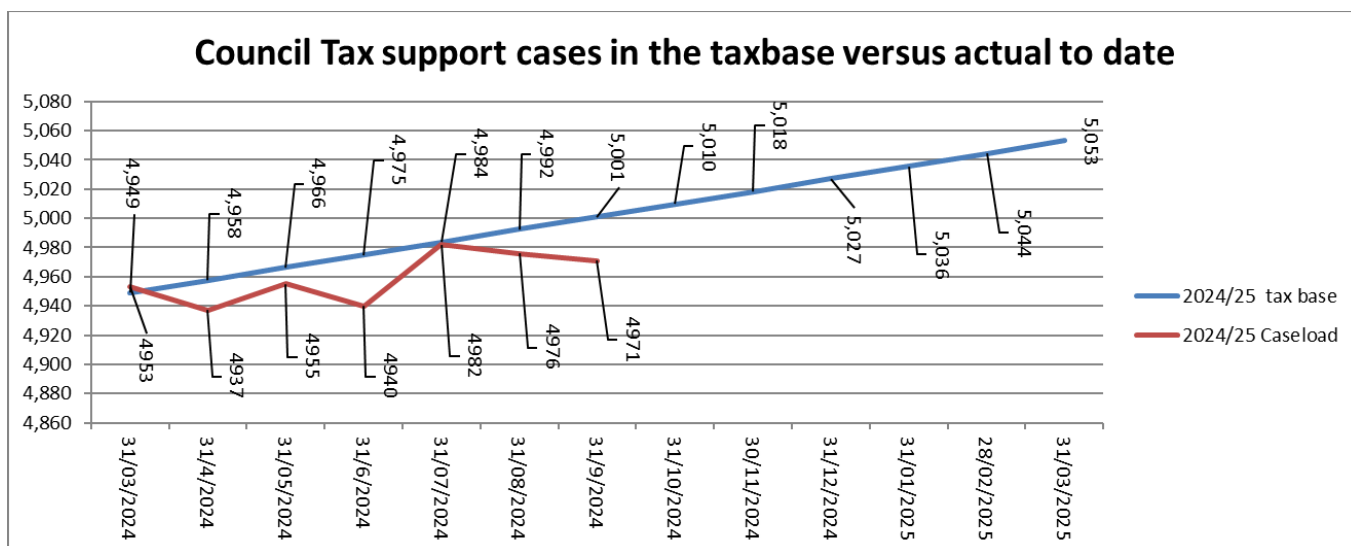
is 29,154.9 dwellings, which is less than the actual number of dwellings because the majority of dwellings in Stevenage are in Band C.

- 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 2023/24 and 2024/25 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	2023/24	2024/25	Charge Per day	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,605.63	£1,685.75	£4.62	4.99%	77.47%
Stevenage Borough Council	£232.31	£239.26	£0.66	2.99%	11.00%
Police Crime Commissioner	£238.00	£251.00	£0.69	5.46%	11.53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,075.94</b>	<b>£2,176.01</b>	<b>£5.97</b>	<b>4.82%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Council Tax Support (CTS)

- 4.1.7. The 2025/26 Council Tax Base proposed is based on the current Council Tax Support Scheme liability of 8.5% and as agreed at the November 2024 Cabinet. The 2024/25 taxbase had assumed a 2% projected increase in council tax support numbers as a result of changes in the local economy and growth in new properties. The chart below shows the 2024/25 tax base assumed CTS, versus the actual and shows the projected increase has not materialised to date.

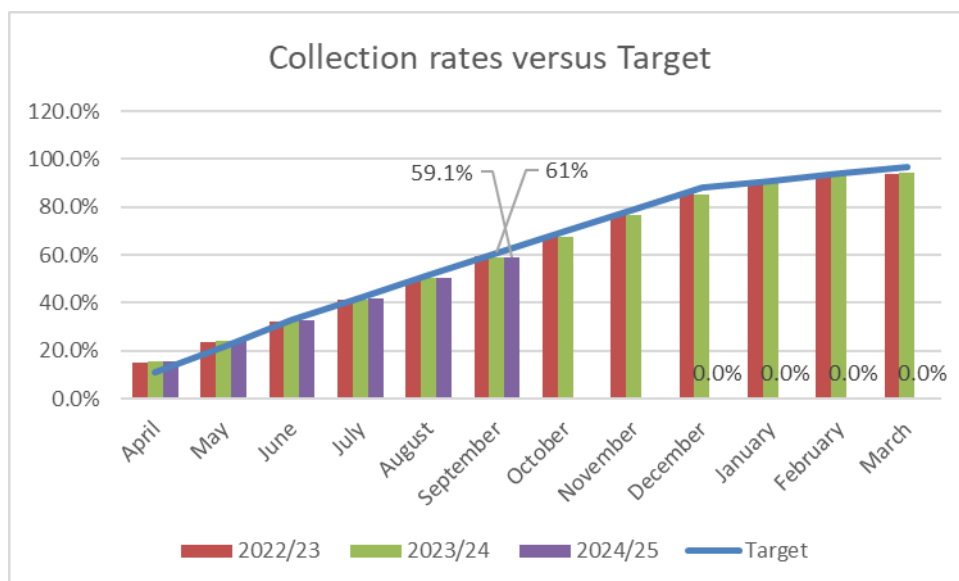


- 4.1.8. For 2025/26, it has been assumed that the CTS caseload will increase by 1%, based on previous years' data and the latest knowledge from the team on the volume of claims. The cost of CTS to the taxbase for those working and pensionable age is estimated at £6,397,988 for 2025/26, (2024/25 £6,197,146), however the County Council has the biggest cost burden for this,

as they account for 77.47% (2024/25) of the tax base with SBC at 11.00%. The average caseload level of CTS in the 2025/26 taxbase is modelled as 5,014 (based on 1 April 2025 4,989 cases increasing to 5,039 by 31 March 2026 assuming a 1% increase), versus a 4,971 total caseload for working and pensionable age claimants as at the 1 October 2024.

### Collection Rate

- 4.1.9. The previous year's collection rate has remained at 98.25%. However, since COVID, the levels of debt have started to increase for Council Tax, which is similar to many councils in Hertfordshire. The Council achieves circa 98% but over a five-year period, meaning there is a risk to collection and the in-year collection rate has dropped to under 95%. Officers are looking at options to improve collection rates.
- 4.1.10. Based on the collection rate analysis and the current length of time to collect, it is proposed that the 2025/26 collection rate percentage reduces to 98%. The amount collected to 30 September was 59.1% (2023/24 59.0%, target 61.0%). The current in year collection rate is lower than the target, a 1.9% under-recovery of council tax would equate to £1.182Million for a full year, (SBC's share would be £129,975). This is not significant difference and there are other factors which influence cash collected, such as the level of properties in the taxbase and the level of discounts.



- 4.1.11. The Council Tax Base for 2025/26 after making allowances for a collection rate of 98.0% is 28,571.8 equivalent “Band D” properties. (The comparative figure for 2024/25 was 28,579.4). This is 79 Band D equivalent properties lower than the Medium-Term Financial Strategy estimate for the year or £19,286 less collectable council tax before any increase for 2025/26 is considered.

## **4.2 2024/25 Council Tax base versus approved taxbase**

- 4.2.1 The Council approved a 2024/25 tax base of 28,579 at the 13 December 2023 Executive, which represented a 1.51% increase from the 2023/24 taxbase. This assumed projected growth of 270 new properties and a 2% increase in

Council Tax Support (CTS), however, the tax base currently remains below the approved 2024/25 tax base due to several factors:

- New properties have not come online as quickly as projected. This is due to a combination of delays in construction and the Valuation Office (VO) taking time to value and list the properties.
- The VO also changed how they value and band Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties. Previously, each room was considered a separate property, but now the entire property is counted as one. For example, Archways House had 16 Band A properties (one for each room), which has now been converted into a single Band C property.
- There was a slight improvement in the projection regarding the levels of CTS and its impact on the tax base. For 2024/25, the Council reduced the projected increase in CTS from 5% in 2023/24 to 2% in 2024/25. The latest forecast shows that the current levels are just below the 2% increase, which has helped mitigate the impact of the aforementioned issues.

4.2.2 To mitigate potential delays in 2025/26 new property projections, the Council has extended the expected time for new properties to come online from 3 months to 4 months. This adjustment will result in a slightly lower projected tax base in the future, with the benefits materialising in subsequent years.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. The revised taxbase will be included in the Draft 2025/26 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Report to the January 2025 Cabinet.

5.1.2. The increase in assumed property numbers and the discount assumptions including Council Tax Support (compared to 2024/25 approved taxbase) is the equivalent to a total additional 278.48 equivalent Band D properties or £66,630 before any council tax increase is considered. The reason for the increased council tax income is shown in the table below, (this is before any council tax increase for 2025/26).

<b>Increased income from 2025/26 taxbase compared to 2024/25 before any council tax increase</b>			
	<b>2024/25 Estimate £</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £</b>	<b>Increase /(decrease) £</b>
Properties numbers	8,344,404	8,377,527	33,123
Council Tax Support Scheme	(766,168)	(703,481)	62,687
Changes to other discounts & Premium	(670,448)	(698,441)	(27,993)
Increase in bad debt 2%	(120,886)	(122,073)	(1,187)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 6,786,902</b>	<b>£ 6,853,532</b>	<b>£ 66,630</b>

### 5.2. Legal Implications

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

### **5.3. Policy Implications**

5.3.1. None.

### **5.4. Equal Opportunities Implications**

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

### **5.5. Risk Implications**

5.5.1. The assumptions made are reasonable at the current time but, if the level of anticipated growth in the 2025/26 Tax Base is not realised and/or the council tax support caseload increases, there could be an in-year deficit on the Collection Fund.

### **5.6. Climate Change Implications**

5.6.1. None.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 – Council Tax Support Scheme

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A 2025/26 Council Tax Base

Appendix A  
BAND

	Disabled	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTALS
AS AT CTB1	0	1703	6888	21753	3369	3261	981	434	16	38405
ADD EXPECTED NEW PROPERTIES	0	0.75	136.62	50.66	15.66	3.35	0	1	0	208.04
EXEMPTIONS	0	-63	-174	-247	-38	-30	-9	-5	0	-566
DISABLED RELIEF	0	-3	-8	-88	-10	-28	-6	-6	-2	-151
DISABLED RELIEF ADJ	3	8	88	10	28	6	6	2	0	151
DWELLINGS SUB-TOTAL ASSUMED DISCOUNTS	3	1645.75	6930.62	21478.66	3364.66	3212.35	972	426	14	38047.04
25% (SINGLE PERSON DISCOUNT)	2	1138.50	4204.78	6537.19	828.83	597.61	139.00	58.13364055	1	13,507.05
50% (EMPTY WORK-RELATED AND ALL PERSONS DISREGARDED & Empty unfurnished	0	0	9	30	3	3	4	8	7	64
Council Tax Support (Reduction Scheme)	1.62	332.84	1193.20	1748.32	159.89	44.90	9.30	4.29	0.00	3494.35
total discounts	3.62	1471.34	5406.98	8315.51	991.72	645.51	152.30	70.42	8.00	17065.40
TOTAL DWELLINGS charged at 100%	-0.62	174.41	1523.64	13163.15	2372.94	2566.84	819.70	355.58	6.00	20981.64
Long term empty premium @ 50%	0.00	13.00	50.00	29.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	0.00	101.00
Value of discounted properties	1.50	853.88	3158.08	4917.89	623.13	449.71	106.25	47.60	4.25	10162.29
DWELLINGS AFTER DISCOUNTS	0.88	1034.78	4706.73	18095.54	2997.06	3018.05	926.95	404.18	10.25	31194.43
RATIO TO BAND D	0.56	0.67	0.78	0.89	1.00	1.22	1.44	1.67	2.00	
NO OF BAND D EQUIVALENT	0.49	689.85	3660.79	16084.93	2997.06	3688.73	1338.92	673.64	20.50	29154.91

TAXBASE	29154.9
98.00%	28571.8

This page is intentionally left blank



**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Housing  
**Date** 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024



## REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATORY JUDGEMENT

### NO DECISION REQUIRED

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is a statutory agency established by the previous Government to set and regulate standards which all Registered Social Landlords including Local Authorities are required to deliver, to help ensure tenants experience high quality homes and services.
- 1.2 Following a planned inspection the RSH has issued a Regulatory Judgement for Stevenage Borough Council, as part of the early stages of the Regulators first programme of planned inspections against the Consumer Standards, which took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.
- 1.3 This report sets out the findings of the inspection and confirms the actions required to support outcomes for tenants across all aspects of the Consumer Standards.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the Regulatory Judgement of a C2 Grade issued by the Regulator of Social Housing on the 27 November 2024, following a proactive planned inspection of Stevenage Borough Council, as a Registered Social Landlord.
- 2.2 To endorse the ongoing work in place which will include actions to ensure continuous improvement to address both the areas of improvement required

as part of the inspection process but to also complete the improvement plans already in place as considered by the Regulator as part of their Inspection.

- 2.3 That delegated authority is given to Strategic Director (RP) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to develop and approve a Provider Improvement Plan with the Regulator for Social Housing.
- 2.4 That the Executive Housing Working Group will receive progress updates on the planned improvements on a bi-monthly basis.
- 2.5 That the efforts of the Leader, Members and Officers be congratulated for the achievement of a C2 grade and the strong level of assurance of the housing service that this judgement provides.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) sets the standards which Social Landlords, including local authorities, must deliver to ensure tenants experience high quality homes and services.
- 3.2 In April 2024, the RSH assumed new powers arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, to proactively inspect all Registered Social Landlords (local authority landlords and housing associations) with over 1000 homes, as part of a continuing effort to drive up standards within the social housing sector.
- 3.3 Landlords will be subject to proactive inspection every four years and can also be subject to unplanned visits at any time. The proactive inspection regime will lead to a 'Regulatory Judgement' for each Social Landlord, which will be published by the RSH. The judgement is against the Consumer Standards, known as the 'C' Grade.
- 3.4 The Regulator uses 4 grades ranging from C1, where the landlord is delivering the outcomes required in all areas, to C4 where there are very serious failings.

Grading	Description
C1	RSH judgement is that overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise recurrence.
C2	RSH judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.
C3	RSH judgement is that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.

C4	RSH judgement is that there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes so that improved outcomes are delivered.
----	--

3.5 From the 1 April 2024 to the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 the RSH has published 42 Regulatory Judgements as set out within the table below.

Type of Landlord	C1	C2	C3	C4
Local Authority	1	9	15	1
Housing Association	9	14	3	0

3.6 Housing Associations have been subject to formalised inspections for a number of years and so are generally considered to be better placed to respond to the new regulatory framework, which is illustrated in the judgements published to date.

3.7 Registered Providers (Housing Associations) also receive gradings from the RSH for financial viability ('V' grade) and governance ('G' grade) however the Regulator has a narrower scope for Local Authorities.

3.8 There are 4 new Consumer Standards which took effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and which all Social Landlords will be required to comply with, which are:-

- Safety and Quality Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard

3.9 These Standards cover 19 Required Outcomes which are then reviewed and considered as part of the regulatory regime.

## 4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

### Social Housing Regulation Inspection

4.1 An inspection of Stevenage Borough Council as a social landlord took place between June and mid-September 2024. All four of the Consumer Standards and all 19 areas of focus were considered as part of the inspection and the Regulatory Judgement has now been published.

4.2 The Council has been awarded a C2 grade, the second highest and will be the 7<sup>th</sup> Local Authority landlord to receive this grade, a copy of the formal Regulatory Judgement can be found in Appendix A to this report.

- 4.3 The Regulatory Judgement recognises a track record of reviewing services, identifying areas for improvement and the ability to deliver against agreed plans. The judgement confirms that the Council has provided assurance that it meets the Consumer Standards in most areas but identifies that further work is required in some areas.
- 4.4 The specific wording for a C2 grade is: “Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the Consumer Standards and improvement is needed”.
- 4.5 The RSH confirms within its guidance that “where we judge a landlord to be C2 this is because we have identified some weaknesses which we consider are material to the landlord’s delivery of the outcomes of the Consumer Standards, which if not addressed, are likely to lead to poor outcomes for tenants. We expect that landlords graded at C2 will develop a plan to drive relevant improvement and will be able to show that weaknesses have been addressed so that outcomes for tenants are improved. We expect landlords to share relevant improvement plans with tenants.”
- 4.6 As part of the Inspection the Regulator has identified that the Council has been able to demonstrate a strong track record of identifying issues, developing credible plans, and delivering the required improvements. The judgement confirms that the Council is self-aware and has plans in place to bring about the remaining areas of improvements required.
- 4.7 As part of the Judgement the RSH has identified a number of strengths and areas of compliance which include recognising that the Council: -
- a. Is meeting statutory health and safety testing and surveying requirements, and that performance is monitored by senior officers and councillors.
  - b. Provided plans to complete compliance actions following a risk-based approach for health and safety actions.
  - c. Provides an effective repairs service and takes action to improve the service and outcomes for tenants when issues occur.
  - d. Demonstrates a commitment to treating tenants with fairness and respect.
  - e. The Council identified issues in complaint handling and has made improvements, and it uses learning from this process to improve services.
  - f. The Council works with a range of partners to tackle ASB and uses its powers when appropriate, and with appropriate oversight.
  - g. Households were offered tenancies which were compatible with purpose, and the needs of individual households.
  - h. The approach to letting is fair and transparent and takes into account the needs of tenants.
- 4.8 The Regulators Judgement also identified areas where the Council needs to make improvements which are as follows: -

- a. Whilst the Council reports on its health and safety performance, it was identified that reporting did not include remedial actions which have arisen from testing and surveying.
  - b. Limited performance information is provided to tenants, and there are weaknesses in the Council providing meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise strategies, policies and services.
  - c. The approach to tenant engagement needs to be strengthened.
  - d. There is scope for the Council to improve its use of tenant information, which could strengthen the Councils ability to tailor services to tenants' individual needs and demonstrate outcomes for tenants.
- 4.9 The judgement highlights that the Council demonstrated through the inspection that it understands where it needs to make improvements, and the Regulator has confirmed that it will engage with the council as it makes improvements in these areas.
- 4.10 Following a Regulator Judgement all landlords that have not achieved a C1 grading, to set out details of its plans to drive the relevant improvement. Then to demonstrate that weakness have been addressed with improvements seen for tenants with details of this judgment and the approach being shared with tenants.
- 4.11 The Regulator has provided the Council with a named contact with whom there will be ongoing dialogue and we will work with them to confirm that the relevant plans are in place, and to ensure that appropriate progress is maintained against these plans. The Regulator has confirmed that they will be contact in December to arrange the first of these meetings.
- 4.12 As part of the Councils ongoing focus on service improvements a number of transformation and improvement projects are already in place, and these cover the areas identified by the Regulator as being in need to improvement.
- 4.13 It is therefore proposed that these individual improvement and transformation projects will continue, however for transparency and completeness it is proposed that a summary Regulatory Judgement Action Plan has been prepared below against which progress will be reported:

<b>Areas identified within the Regulatory Judgement</b>	<b>SBC Response</b>
1. Whilst the Council reports on its health and safety performance, it was identified that reporting did not include remedial actions which have arisen from testing and surveying.	The Council currently has a compliance scorecard that is reported to EHWG and through the Corporate H&S structure. Future performance reports to Cabinet will include remedial actions that have arisen from testing and surveying along with timescales for their

	remedy and will be reported quarterly.
2. Limited performance information is provided to tenants, and there are weaknesses in the Council providing meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise strategies and, policies and services.	Information on service performance will be published on a dedicated area on the Councils website, with quarterly tenant updates and summaries provided both online and via social media, along with an annual tenant's report. New scrutiny arrangements are being introduced to provide meaningful opportunities for tenant influence, as part of the new Resident Engagement Strategy. The Council is working with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service to facilitate independent scrutiny opportunities.
3. The approach to tenant engagement needs to be strengthened	The Councils new Resident Engagement Strategy is now being implemented, with additional resources being recruited to support this work.
4. There is scope for the Council to improve its use of tenant information, which could strengthen the Councils ability to tailor services to tenants' individual needs and demonstrate outcomes for tenants.	As part of a Council Transformation Project a Fair Access workstream is in place, this is delivering improved IT which will facilitate the way in which services can be tailored. Information will also be used in the development of strategies and services with details of outcomes being shared with residents. A Data Manager will be recruited to in Q4 24-25 to ensure tenant and stock data is accurate and available to support service improvement.

4.14 It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Strategic Director (RP) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to develop and approve a Provider Improvement Plan with the Regulator for Social Housing.

4.15 Progress against the plan will be reported to the EHWG on a bi-monthly basis, and to Cabinet as part of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Framework. Whilst action 1 is already being put in place, the full and comprehensive implementation of the remaining areas will form part of larger medium-term plans, however work on these areas is already underway, and the framework for the remaining areas is currently being implemented.

4.16 The Council has published details of the judgement along with details of the planned actions on its website and will also include details in the Annual Tenants Report.

### **Service Improvement**

4.17 As outlined previously the Consumer Standards were updated in April 2024, which along with the developing legislative framework have all influenced the environment in which the inspection has taken place. As part of the Councils planning for the new regulatory regime a number of service reviews have been carried out and improvement plans put in place, however, due to the complexity or lead in time for some of this work it has not in all cases been possible to fully implement the current improvement plans.

4.18 As part of the Regulatory Judgement it was acknowledged that the Council already has a number of improvement plans in place and the Regulator has emphasised the importance of full delivery against these plans, which include those for: -

- Repairs
- Voids
- Damp and Mould
- Housing IT
- Fair Access

4.19 The achievement of a C2 grade is a positive outcome and testament to the considerable hard work, focus and effort by members and officers, in meeting the new Standards.

4.20 It is particularly reassuring that a number of the areas identified as part of the self-assessment of concern previously are now recognised as areas of strength, and that areas identified as needing to be developed and improved had already been identified by the Council. Importantly, there was nothing identified during the process that the Council was not aware of, did not make the inspection team aware of, or did not have credible plans in place to address.

### **Inspection Process**

4.21 There are a number of stages to the inspection, with the Council initially required to provide a written submission in June 2024, setting out the local context, including details of Governance, staffing structures and the Councils strategic framework and priorities. The Regulator also considered details of the Councils various statutory data submissions including the Tenants Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) as part of the process to identify which of the 19 Specific Outcomes within the four standards would form the focus of the onsite inspection and the evidence review.

4.22 The next stage was the document review in which the Council was asked to provide both written context along with evidence for specific areas of focus. In total, this submission included 18 service area overviews, assessment responses, along with more than 300 documents, this was completed in July 2024.

- 4.23 The final stage was the onsite phase which took place in September, this included: -
- A formal presentation to the Regulator by Members,
  - 14 interviews with key Members and officers,
  - Attendance by the Regulatory Team at an Executive Housing Working Group
  - A resident consultation event for the new repairs policy and
  - A private face to face session for invited residents with the Regulators Inspection Team.
- 4.24 Following the inspection, the Regulator then requested 2 further rounds of information and sought clarity in respect of specific issues or areas during September and October.
- 4.25 The Regulator then considered its judgement which following their own internal review and moderation process was submitted to the Council in mid-November.
- 4.26 It is important that Cabinet formally note the outcome of the planned inspection, and importance of the continued delivery of planned improvements to ensure improved services, homes and outcomes for residents across all aspects of the Regulators Consumer Standards.
- 4.27 The Regulatory Judgement has not been consulted upon, however the RSH as part of their inspection met with residents, the Leader of the Council, key Portfolio Holders, the Councils Chief Executive and other officers.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the inspection or this report. As part of the preparation for the new Regulatory regime the Council has already made appropriate financial provision, and the C2 is in part to the additional focus that this investment has facilitated. It should be noted however that the regulatory framework in which the Councils housing service operates continues to develop with additional legislative requirements planned and new guidance due to be issued. As details of these areas are known they will be considered as part of the Councils normal budgetary process.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 extended the Regulator of Social Housing's inspection regime under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. It also introduced new duties for social landlords, including relating to health and safety and electrical safety. These new duties add to the Council's existing legal obligations towards its tenants, including repairing obligations.



- 5.3 Additionally, the Council must now comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code which is underpinned by statute. Any gaps or areas of concern must be brought to the attention of the Senior Leadership Team, Councillors and if applicable at any stage, the Regulator for Social Housing. The Regulatory Judgement provides positive assurance on a number of areas and clarity on the aspects where further improvement is required.
- 5.4 The outcome of the Regulatory Judgement will be shared proactively with the Council's Internal and External auditors.
- 5.5 Whilst it is essential that the Council has proper regard to the findings of the Regulatory Judgment, members are reminded that this is only one measure of compliance with the Council's legal obligations, and it must continue to proactively manage compliance with all such obligations whether or not expressly addressed in the Judgment.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.6 The Council takes the Consumer Standards and the outcome of the Regulatory Judgement seriously and will continue to maintain a corporate focus to ensure effective oversight, transparency and accountability. This includes strengthening the approach by which tenants are able to influence housing service policy and performance.
- 5.7 Improvement and performance oversight will continue to be maintained through the EHWG, especially overseeing the delivery of existing Improvement and Transformational Plans for repairs and maintenance, data management, system change and tenant engagement and scrutiny.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.8 The new Regulatory framework and the additional duties and obligations has been considered in the preparation for the inspection and as part of the wider policy framework which exists for housing. This judgement does not impact directly upon this, as the required framework is in place, but the wider environment continues to develop and will be monitored through the Councils normal performance management framework.

### **Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 5.9 Additional resources have been approved in year to drive Resident Engagement and Influence activities as well as improvements across voids and repairs. No additional implications have been identified at this time.
- 5.10 There may be a future requirement for additional or specialist project management resource to ensure that improvement action plans can be delivered in a timely way. This will be considered as each Transformation Programme is delivered and progressed.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.11 The Regulatory Judgement confirms that the Council provided assurance that it treats tenant with fairness and respect. The judgment also confirms that the council needs to improve the collection, quality, and use of tenant

information to strengthen the Council's ability to proactively tailor services to tenants' needs and to more clearly demonstrate outcomes for tenants.

- 5.12 Under the equality duty (set out in the Equality Act 2010), public authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and consider the potential impact decisions and actions on each of the protected characteristics.
- 5.13 Plans currently in place as set out previously will ensure compliance with the relevant standards.

#### **Information Technology Implications**

- 5.14 The delivery of a number of elements of the improvement plans are dependent on the implementation of a number of IT related projects, which includes the implementation of new compliance software, the NEC Cloud migration, along with the NEC upgrade, and the additional system capability.
- 5.15 Each of these areas is being delivered as part of a separate improvement project with formal oversight in place.

#### **Other Corporate Implications**

- 5.16 The Judgement has been provided by the Regulator of Social Housing, and as a Registered Social Landlord the Council is subject to the ongoing regulation of this agency.
- 5.17 In addition to the planned inspection which has now taken place the Regulator is able at any time to undertake responsive inspections or to seek assurance for any area that is subject to its oversight.

#### **Other Implications**

- 5.18 None

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, which may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

BD1 [Consumer Standards Code of Practice](#)

### **APPENDICES**

- A Stevenage Borough Council RJ Final
- B <Insert Appendix Heading...Press Return to add more appendix titles>



This page is intentionally left blank



# Stevenage Borough Council (26UH) Regulatory Judgement

27 November 2024

## Our Judgement

	<b>Grade/Judgement</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Date of assessment</b>
<b>Consumer</b>	C2 Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.	First grading	November 2024

## Reason for publication

We are publishing a regulatory judgement for Stevenage Borough Council (Stevenage BC) following an inspection completed in November 2024.

This regulatory judgement confirms a consumer grading of C2. This is the first time we have issued a consumer grade in relation to this landlord.

## Summary of the decision

From the evidence and assurance gained during the inspection, we have concluded that there are some weaknesses in Stevenage BC delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed, specifically in relation to outcomes in our Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. Based on this assessment, we have concluded a C2 grade for Stevenage BC.

## How we reached our judgement

We carried out an inspection of Stevenage BC to assess how well Stevenage BC is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards, as part of our planned regulatory inspection programme. During the inspection we considered all four of the consumer standards: Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Safety and Quality Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

During the inspection we observed the housing board and a tenant workshop. We also met with tenants, officers and elected members including the leader of Stevenage BC, and the portfolio holder for housing. We also reviewed a wide range of documents provided by Stevenage BC.

Our regulatory judgement is based on all the relevant information we obtained during the inspection as well as analysis of information received from Stevenage BC through routine regulatory returns and other regulatory engagement activity.

## Summary of findings

### Consumer – C2

**November 2024**

In relation to the Safety and Quality Standard, Stevenage BC provided evidence-based assurance that it has appropriate systems in place to manage its health and safety responsibilities and to ensure the health and safety of its tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. Stevenage BC is meeting statutory health and safety testing and surveying requirements, and performance is monitored by senior officers and councillors. We identified that reporting did not include remedial actions that have arisen from testing and surveying and this has been fed back to Stevenage BC. Stevenage BC has more than 900 overdue remedial actions from fire risk assessments, mostly categorised as medium risk actions. Stevenage BC has provided evidence of plans to complete the actions and is being supported by an external contractor to complete these following a risk-based approach. We will continue to monitor completion of the actions through our ongoing engagement with Stevenage BC.

Stevenage BC has demonstrated that it provides an effective repairs service to tenants and takes action to improve service and outcomes for tenants when issues occur. Stevenage BC identified issues with the quality of its repairs service and time taken to complete repairs. In response, Stevenage BC has made changes to the repairs service to deliver better outcomes for its tenants. We have seen evidence of the effectiveness of the improvement plans, Stevenage BC is now performing above its service standard for the timeliness of repairs, and tenant satisfaction is improving.

Stevenage BC has also developed its approach to damp and mould so that it can respond effectively to reports and manage risks to tenants.

The Safety and Quality Standard also requires landlords to have an accurate, up to date and evidenced, understanding of the condition of its homes at an individual property level based on a physical assessment of all homes and to ensure that homes meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard. There is evidence that arrangements are in place to make sure there is an accurate record of the condition of Stevenage BC's homes, including a process for keeping this information up to date through a programme of physical inspections. There is evidence that Stevenage BC uses the information it has on the quality and safety of its homes to make decisions on future investment to maintain and improve the condition of its homes.

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard includes the requirement for landlords to provide information so tenants can access landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. It also requires landlords to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly. Through our inspection, we found that there are weaknesses in Stevenage BC providing meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise its strategies, policies and services. During our engagement, we found that Stevenage BC provided limited performance information to tenants. Stevenage BC acknowledges that this is an area that needs to be improved and has recently established a resident engagement strategy and increased resources to deliver the strategy. Stevenage BC has engaged external support to develop tenant engagement. This work is ongoing, and we will continue to monitor how Stevenage BC is strengthening its approach to tenant engagement.

Through the inspection, we saw evidence that Stevenage BC had identified weaknesses in how it handles tenant complaints and made improvements as a result. We saw evidence that Stevenage BC undertakes work to understand why tenants complain and uses any learning from complaints to improve services for tenants. Stevenage BC identified a significant proportion of complaints related to repairs and the learning from these complaints was used to develop the repairs improvement programme. This has improved Stevenage BC's repairs performance and reduced the number of complaints from tenants about repairs.

Stevenage BC demonstrates a commitment to treating tenants with fairness and respect. Through our inspection, we identified there is scope for it to improve its use of tenant information that will strengthen Stevenage BC's ability to tailor services to tenants' individual needs and demonstrate outcomes for tenants.

In relation to the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Stevenage BC demonstrated that it works proactively with a range of relevant partner organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where it provides

homes. We saw evidence that it has oversight of the number of anti-social behaviour cases and hate incidents and that it uses a range of powers where appropriate.

In relation to the Tenancy Standard, we saw evidence that Stevenage BC was offering tenancies or terms of occupation that were compatible with the purpose of its accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of its housing stock. Stevenage BC has recently revised its allocations policy that sets out its approach to ensuring all properties are let in a fair and transparent way and takes into account the needs of tenants and prospective tenants.

Stevenage BC demonstrated through the inspection that it understands where it needs to make improvements and we will engage with Stevenage BC as it makes improvements in these areas.

## **Background to the judgement**

### **About the landlord**

Stevenage BC owns and manages around 7,700 social housing homes in Hertfordshire. The majority of homes are general needs with some supported and sheltered housing.

### **Our role and regulatory approach**

We regulate for a viable, efficient, and well governed social housing sector able to deliver quality homes and services for current and future tenants.

We regulate at the landlord level to drive improvement in how landlords operate. By landlord we mean a registered provider of social housing. These can either be local authorities, or private registered providers (other organisations registered with us such as non-profit housing associations, co-operatives, or profit-making organisations).

We set standards which state outcomes that landlords must deliver. The outcomes of our standards include both the required outcomes and specific expectations we set. Where we find there are significant failures in landlords which we consider to be material to the landlord's delivery of those outcomes, we hold them to account. Ultimately this provides protection for tenants' homes and services and achieves better outcomes for current and future tenants. It also contributes to a sustainable sector which can attract strong investment.



We have a different role for regulating local authorities than for other landlords. This is because we have a narrower role for local authorities and the Governance and Financial Viability Standard, and Value for Money Standard do not apply. Further detail on which standards apply to different landlords can be found on our [standards page](#).

We assess the performance of landlords through inspections and by reviewing data that landlords are required to submit to us. In-Depth Assessments (IDAs) were one of our previous assessment processes, which are now replaced by our new inspections programme from 1 April 2024. We also respond where there is an issue or a potential issue that may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of our standards. We publish regulatory judgements that describe our view of landlords' performance with our standards. We also publish grades for landlords with more than 1,000 social housing homes.

The Housing Ombudsman deals with individual complaints. When individual complaints are referred to us, we investigate if we consider that the issue may be material to a landlord's delivery of the outcomes of our standards.

For more information about our approach to regulation, please see [Regulating the standards](#).

This page is intentionally left blank

**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Housing and Housing Development  
**Date** 11 December 2024



## RESPONSIVE REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY

**LEAD OFFICERS:** DENISE LEWIS / ANDREW GARSIDE  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** DENISE LEWIS  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** LEANNE KAZER

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a final version of the Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy for approval following consultation with tenants and leaseholders.
- 1.2 The key objective of the policy is to keep residents' homes safe and in a good state of repair, and in so doing provide assurance that the Council is meeting legal and regulatory requirements.
- 1.3 This policy supports the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and the key priority of maintaining good quality homes.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the outcomes from the consultation with tenants and leaseholders on the Repairs and Maintenance Policy and how this is reflected in the final version.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the inclusion of a recharge policy for missed appointments by tenants which aligns with the compensation payable to tenants for missed appointments by the Council.
- 2.3 Subject to recommendation 2.2 above that Cabinet approve the Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy attached at Appendix A.

- 2.4 That Cabinet note that the Policy will become effective from 1 January 2025 and that this will be publicised on the Council's website.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A good repairs and maintenance service is one of the most important services provided by a social landlord. Not only is it the service that affects the greatest proportion of tenants, but it is also the service that is most highly valued and can have the greatest impact on tenants' quality of life and the overall level of satisfaction with their landlord.
- 3.2 Resident satisfaction with the delivery of repairs and maintenance services is a key focus area for the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Safety and Quality Standard set out the following expectations of Registered Social Housing Providers:
- (1) that repairs and maintenance issues should be able to be reported easily.
  - (2) that timescales for the completion of repairs are clearly communicated to tenants and that take appropriate steps are taken to deliver to them.
  - (3) that tenants are kept informed about repairs and maintenance to their homes, with clear and timely communication.
  - (4) that landlords understand and fulfil their maintenance responsibilities in respect of communal areas.
  - (5) that the delivery of repairs and maintenance is informed by the needs of tenants and provides value for money.
- 3.3 As a Registered Provider, the Council is required to meet a range of regulatory and legislative responsibilities. To achieve this there is a need to ensure that there is an adequate level of oversight, awareness and understanding of key issues and responsibilities around responsive repairs and maintenance.
- 3.4 When considering overall satisfaction across the social housing sector, the Housemark Membership and Sector Performance Mid-Year Report shows a significant decline in satisfaction over the last five years. A number of factors are believed to have influenced this trend, including the Covid-19 Pandemic, the UK economic downturn, cost of living, material availability, cost inflation, labour availability and the energy crisis etc.
- 3.5 In response to tenant feedback and complaints information in 2023 the Council commissioned an external consultancy to review its Repairs and Maintenance service. The outcome of the independent review led to an improvement plan which is currently being implemented. This includes the need to have a Repairs and Maintenance Policy, which sets out clear roles and responsibilities of the Council and its tenants.
- 3.6 Despite the significant challenges and difficult decisions that the Council has faced, the Council remains financially resilient and continues to deliver improvements to its housing repairs and maintenance services, including:

a. The council completed 19,780 repair jobs in 2023/24 and reported the following: 92% (3593) of 3906 non-emergency repairs were completed on time. 91.5% (3980) of all repairs (4347) were completed on time. 135 void property refurbishment works were completed, which has reduced the number of voids that are 'work in progress' to 38 during Q1 2024/25.

b. In addition, further training and expansion of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) Knowledge Base has helped increase staff knowledge and access to timely information, which has reduced the average call response and handling times for repairs.

c. A service review of both Voids and Repairs was completed in 2023/24 along with Scrutiny Reviews of the Repairs and Void Service by the Community Select Committee. The recommendations made have informed the Council's improvement plans that are to be delivered over the next 12-18 months.

d. Following a review of current arrangements, new interim contractors have been appointed to support the Repairs Service, including for specialist works such as roofing, pending a procurement process to award longer-term contracts which are included on the Forward Plan for Cabinet approval later in 2024/25.

e. A fencing programme has been put in place by the Housing Investment team, which carried out fencing works on 342 properties in 2023/24 and aims to clear the historic backlog of fencing replacement work during 2024/25. The Repairs and Maintenance team have also completed the backlog of repair only type jobs through sourcing contractor support as well as using in-house Operatives.

f. New ways of working for the Repairs Supervisors and Maintenance Surveyors have been introduced to increase first time fix rates, productivity, and customer satisfaction.

g. Development of a 'Booking Hub', a new online service which will allow customers to select their own repair appointment times for certain types of repairs, which is still being tested prior to being launched to tenants later in 2024/25.

3.7 The Housing Repairs Service was subject to scrutiny review by the Council's Community Select Committee during 2023/24, and a set of recommendations were approved on 8 January 2024. The progress against each of the agreed recommendations is set out in the table below:

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Actions agreed and progress to date</b>	<b>RAG status</b>
1	Development of a suite of Policies and Procedures for Housing Property Services		
	Develop a suite of policies, procedures and processes so that issues like quantifying the level of a repair	The improvement plans for the Repairs service includes the development of relevant policies, procedures, processes and service standards to which customers can hold SBC accountable as their landlord.	Green

	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
	into an agreed standard can be established which should help the authority manage repairs in a more planned way.	Update: Repairs and Maintenance Policy being presented to Cabinet for approval at this meeting.	
2	Improved Communications (internal and external)		
	<p>(i) To ensure that staff communicate effectively with tenants and with colleagues to get repairs resolved quickly and efficiently;</p> <p>(ii) the repairs service improve communications with tenants via direct engagement, social media and newsletters so that tenants are aware of the implications of missing appointments. When there are repeated failures to keep appointments there should be a charge made.</p>	<p>(i) Engage with customers more effectively when dealing with repair requests, keeping them updated on progress and provide opportunities to help shape services including consultation on relevant policies and standards.</p> <p>Progress to date – consultation with residents carried out as part of the development of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.</p> <p>Fewer complaints being received relating to the Repairs service whilst learning is being identified and used to improve the service.</p> <p>To improve communications and collaboration between teams to ensure that customers receive a seamless repairs service.</p> <p>(ii) As part of the implementation of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy charges for missed appointments by customers will be made where appropriate. To raise awareness a range of communication methods will be used.</p>	Green

	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
3	<p>Make better use of technology</p> <p>This could include:</p> <p>(i) encouraging tenants to send in digital photos and videos of the repair;</p> <p>(ii) using data on in year repairs against previous years to see trends and to profile the type of work that would be expected in different age/style of housing stock;</p> <p>(iii) consider as a future development using remote diagnostic tools that are available in the housing sector or the development of an in-house housing App that tenants could use to report on repairs and general stock condition.</p>	<p>(i) To enable more customers to use digital technology to report repairs, including submission of photos and/or video evidence to help improve the % of repairs which can be diagnosed accurately at first point of contact which in turn should improve first time fix rates and maximise productivity.</p> <p>Update: this remains a work in progress and requires development of key housing business systems and processes which is dependent on implementation of the NEC upgrade and migration roadmap.</p> <p>(ii) Improving data quality and making better use of data to understand trends, inform service improvements and investment needs of the stock is a key workstream within the Repairs improvement plans.</p> <p>Update: repairs data is being used to inform the refresh of the asset review and for budget-setting purposes.</p> <p>(iii) The use of remote diagnostic tools such as Aico devices is being made in a targeted way in a small number of properties, for example to monitor environmental conditions and exposure to risk of condensation and mould. The expansion of their use in more of our housing stock will be explored subject to a business case being agreed and being affordable within the HRA Business Plan.</p> <p>Update: monitoring data from the pilot properties needs to be analysed over a period to inform future plans so still too early to look at wider business case.</p>	Amber

	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
		<p>(iv) There are plans to reintroduce an on-line 'repairs finder' tool to help customers when reporting their repairs and the CSC will also be able to use this when speaking with customers reporting repairs by telephone to help accurately diagnose repairs at first point of contact. The Repairs service will work closely with the CSC to update the Knowledge Base which will help maximise the number of calls about repairs that can be dealt with at first point of contact. Other tools that may be available on the market which could help improve the customer experience when reporting and keeping track of their repairs will also be explored. The enhancement of on-line housing accounts to enable updates to be provided on the status of reported repairs will be considered where this would help customers to self-serve at a time that suits them.</p> <p>Update: Due to the prioritisation of the migration of the NEC housing system to the Cloud, this project has been deferred and will be reprioritised for delivery during 2025/26.</p>	
4	Work with the Customer Service Centre regarding training	<p>Reintroducing 'Repairs Finder' and working with the CSC to ensure that the Knowledge Base is up to date and sufficiently comprehensive should enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) customer enquiries about repairs (and/or investment) to be dealt with appropriately at first point of contact and,</li> <li>(ii) accurate repairs diagnosis enabling the right Operative or contractor to be assigned to carry out the work improving first time fix rates and customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>	Amber



	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
		Update: The Repairs team have been working with CSC to ensure scripts and associated processes are up to date and work effectively and this is an ongoing process. This will help to inform the configuration and implementation of a Repairs Finder Tool.	
5	Review of the booking system (DRS)	<p>Review the workflow process to include a checking mechanism to ensure the right resource is allocated to a job based on the information available. However, we are reliant on information provided by customers and even with the utilisation of tools such as Repairs Finder this risk cannot be fully eliminated as given the high volume of repairs reported each year these cannot all be checked prior to attending site.</p> <p>Update: the first-time fix repairs KPI for 2024/25 as reported to Cabinet as part of the quarterly performance monitoring report shows a high percentage of jobs are being completed on the first visit but where this is not the case the root causes are being picked up through customer and Operative feedback and addressed as part of learning.</p>	Green
6	Streamline working between Housing Asset Management and Repairs teams	<p>The Repairs improvement plan incorporates actions around improving communication and ways of working across teams to ensure a seamless service for customers and promoting a customer care culture. This will be supported by development of policies, processes and procedures to ensure clarity on and consistent ways of working.</p> <p>Some positive progress has been made on how teams work together for example in managing the fencing repairs backlog and working on protocols for determining when a replacement is required rather than a repair for key components in a home such as windows, doors, kitchens and bathrooms. But more work is required to get written procedures in place and</p>	Green

	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
		embedded within the teams and build and sustain an SBC values-based culture. This will be one of the priorities for the new Head of Repairs and Voids once appointed.	
7	Development of an audit trail via a tracker for each repair/enquiry	<p>This requires making better use of existing systems to enable the data to be held by and/or accessible within NEC, for example via the integrated scheduling software (DRS).</p> <p>Update: Whilst some progress has been made in adopting a case management approach further development of this approach is dependent on delivery of the housing systems roadmap which in turn is dependent on migration of the NEC system into the Cloud as this will enable the system to be upgraded and wider functionality accessed.</p>	Amber
8	<p>Development of Customer Self-serve App</p> <p>That the booking hub that is currently under development be brought back to Community Select Committee Members to view to establish the efficacy of the system. While there are improvements in use of technology, it will remain the case that there will be residents who cannot access on-line services and officers will need to offer a customer facing approach.</p>	<p>Whilst developing a Booking Hub to promote reporting repairs on-line other methods will continue to be offered to ensure the service is accessible to all customers.</p> <p>The system will shortly move into the testing phase. Subject to the outcome of the testing a soft launch date for the Booking Hub will be set and it anticipated that this will be within Q4 2024/25.</p>	Amber

	Recommendation	Actions agreed and progress to date	RAG status
9	Collecting feedback from all stakeholders	<p>Officers will collect and respond to feedback from all relevant stakeholders including customers, staff and elected members on how the service is performing. This will be reflected in service specific and corporate KPI's and reported to the Executive Housing Working Group and Cabinet.</p> <p>Update: performance reporting is included on the agenda for EHWG and also Cabinet as part of the quarterly performance report. Feedback from customers is received via the TSM's, transactional surveys and complaints and member enquiries are responded to with themes identified used to inform service improvements as reported to the fortnightly complaints handling clinics chaired by the Housing and Housing Development Portfolio Holder.</p>	Green

- 3.8 The outcomes from the scrutiny carried out by the Committee have been used to help inform the Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the wider Repairs improvement plan.
- 3.9 Tenant and Leaseholder consultation commenced in February 2024. This initially targeted tenants and leaseholders who had raised a repair in the last 12 months and was later expanded to focus groups and pop-up events across the town and social media. Approximately 100 responses had been received by the end of June 2024.
- 3.10 Key feedback themes include the need to:
- improve communication and information sharing (newsletters, reminders, leaflets).
  - listen to customers and acting on feedback.
  - clear roles and responsibilities between SBC and customers.
  - undertake regular inspections of all council owns homes.
  - improve the level of customer service.
  - reduce waiting times for certain jobs and ensure all repairs are completed within timescales.
- 3.11 In response to the independently commissioned and internal scrutiny reviews and a detailed assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, the Council has developed a Repairs Improvement

Programme. The related projects are being delivered as part of the Corporate Transformation Programme to address the root causes of the issues highlighted.

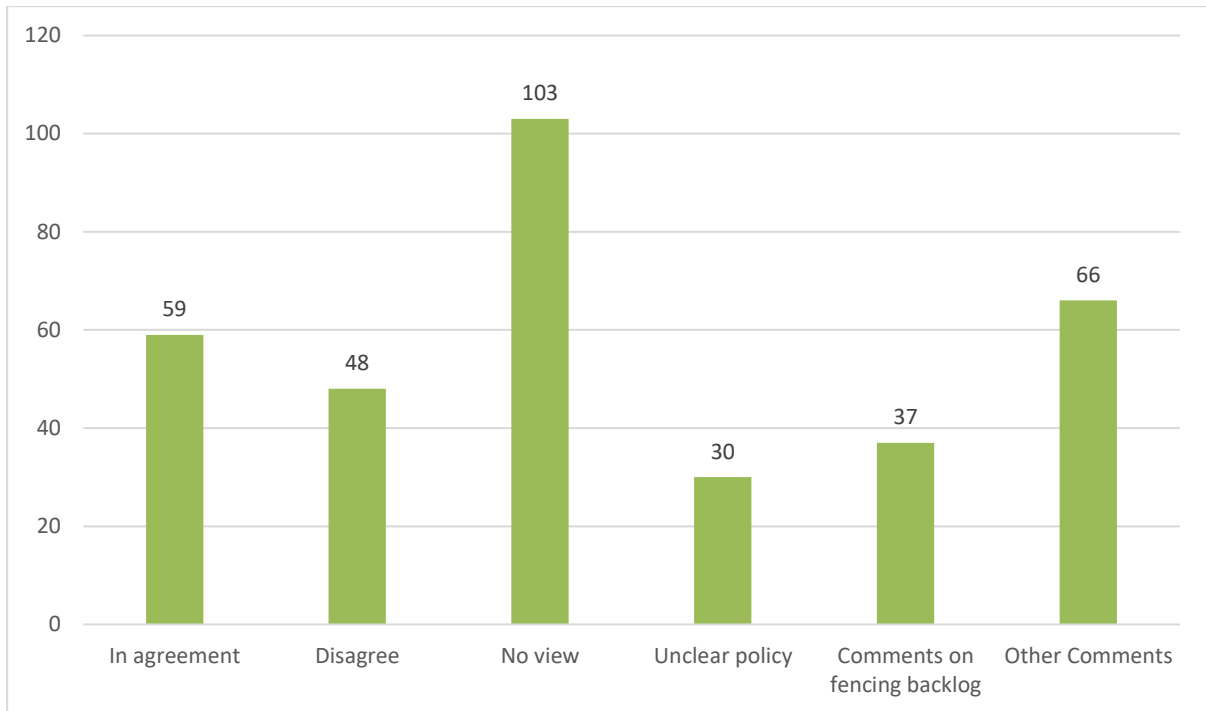
- 3.12 The Council is currently procuring new support contractors for the Repairs and Voids service to help deliver this policy successfully. A report on the proposed contract award will be presented to Cabinet in Quarter 4 2024/25.
- 3.13 Work is also underway to develop an internal agreement between Housing Asset Management (client) and Repairs and Maintenance (internal contractor) teams to establish effective monitoring of the implementation of this policy.
- 3.14 A pre-consultation draft of the Policy was presented in Cabinet in July 2024, the recommendation to carry out further consultation between August-September 2024 on the Policy was approved.
- 3.15 The Fencing Policy was agreed to be included as an appendix to the main Repairs and Maintenance Policy, this approach is to enable future policies such as planned & cyclical maintenance to be included as appendices to the main overarching Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

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

- 4.1 The final version of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy is attached at Appendix A.
- 4.2 Appendix B sets out the draft Fencing Policy which seeks to standardise the specifications of all types of fencing work SBC will undertake within its housing stock. This will not only help manage expectations and demands on the service but help ensure costs are sustainable within the HRA Business Plan.
- 4.3 The new policy has been developed taking into account the feedback from residents, the revised Complaint Handling Code and Housing Ombudsman Service reports including the most recent on *Attitudes, respect and rights – relationship of equals*.
- 4.4 The main revisions to the policy include:
  - a. Clear roles and responsibilities (tenants, leaseholders and Council).
  - b. Priorities and timescales.
  - c. Appointments and missed appointments.
  - d. Access to properties.
  - e. Rechargeable repairs.
- 4.5 The Fencing Policy has been shaped using benchmarking information and the approach is in line with that taken by many other local authorities.
- 4.6 As part of the policy review, work has been being undertaken to identify possible recharges to be applied in relation to missed appointments by tenants. This has been incorporated in the recommendations. The recharge would be subject to manager discretion to ensure that any genuine reasons

for missed appointments can be taken into account making a decision on a recharge. The level of recharge is aligned with the compensation payable to tenants for missed appointments by the Council. The current Compensation Policy allows tenants to claim for any appointments the Council or contractors working on behalf of do not attend.

- 4.7 The Policy is supported by a new Reasonable Adjustment Policy, which sets out how the Council will adjust the provision of services to meet the needs of vulnerable residents to ensure fair access to services.
- 4.8 The draft Policy has been shared for information with the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.9 The Executive Housing Working Group (EHWG) considered the draft policy on the 26 June 2024 and endorsed the proposed approach to consultation.
- 4.10 The draft policy was shared for further consultation to seek views of tenants and leaseholders, this took place between August and September 2024. A range of consultation methods such as face-to-face focus group(s) and an online engagement platform, was used to ensure residents had the opportunity to engage with the Council in a way that suits them.
- 4.11 From the consultation 343 responses were received. Some of the feedback from the consultation includes:
  - Responsibilities for tenant's, leaseholders, and the Council: majority of respondents (80%) stated that responsibilities are clear.
  - Views on a charge being implemented for missed appointments: once again the majority of respondents were in agreement that it is implemented, the responses however come with a caveat that the Council should also pay compensation to residents for appointments that are not upheld. For information, there is provision in the Compensation Policy for missed appointments by the Council.
  - Residents who use the Housing Online account and how easy it is to report a repair: the majority find reporting a repair 'somewhat easy', however there are a number of respondents that said that they find it 'neither easy nor difficult' and 'difficult to report a repair'.
  - Reasonable adjustments that may need to be factored into the policy: the majority, 62% responded 'No'. The respondents that answered 'Yes' to this question, some of the common themes include the ability to have flexible appointments and disability support needs to be accounted for within the policy.
  - Views on the Fencing Policy: the majority of respondents did not have a view on the proposed policy with the split of responses shown below:



4.12 From the consultation feedback received alterations have been made to the policies, these include:

- Easy read versions have been created.
- Wording has been amended within the policy particularly clarification on repairs to windows and the elements that can be repaired i.e., replacement hinges, handles, blown units.
- A change within the 'responsive repairs responsibilities' chart, 'Glazing accidentally broken caused by Council or contractors' changed from tenant responsibility to SBC - this was due to an error with the chart and has been rectified.

4.13 The final version of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy was considered by the Executive Housing Working Group on 7 November 2024 who endorsed the Policy as attached as Appendix A and B and supported the recommendations set out in this report.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

5.1 Additional resources which will support the implementation of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy has been outlined within the Q4 2023/24 Financial Outturn Report which was considered at the Cabinet meeting in July and subsequently an additional budget request was approved by Full Council on 31 July 2024.

5.2 The policy will be used to inform the 2025/26 budget-setting process along with other required legislative changes and service-related pressures.

- 5.3 The policy should mitigate against future disrepair claims and repairs complaint related compensation awards that result from outstanding repairs within Council owned properties.
- 5.4 The policy incorporates a reasonable recharge in relation to missed appointments by customers, which aligns with the compensation payable to tenants for missed appointments by the Council in accordance with the Compensation Policy.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.5 The policy has been developed in line with the legal and regulatory requirements as set out in the Policy.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.6 The adoption of the policy will help mitigate risks around tenant safety in the homes that the Council manages. However, to further mitigate the risks associated with outstanding repairs and maintenance, it is essential to ensure the policy is appropriately embedded in working practices. To ensure effective implementation the policy will need to be underpinned by supporting procedures and associated training for staff.
- 5.7 The risks are mitigated by the tracking of performance against key performance indicators and ensuring compliance with the Consumer Standards in relation to Quality and Safety.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.8 Equality and Diversity implications are monitored and evaluated within the delivery of the service. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced, a copy of which is included at Appendix B. This will be updated in line with the review process for this policy and/or when there are any changes in relevant legislation whichever is sooner.
- 5.9 The Policy recognises that some tenants or members of their household may require additional considerations to facilitate the completion of their responsive repairs and can request that the council make reasonable adjustments in multiple ways including in person, in writing for example by email or post or by telephone.
- 5.10 To ensure accessibility of the Policy to all members of the community an easy read version of the Policy is available and will be published on the website and copies of the Policy can also be provided in suitable alternative formats upon request.
- 5.11 The EqiA will be updated alongside Policy reviews to ensure that in practice tenants and leaseholders are considered fairly and consistently, that the service is accessible to all, individual needs are recognised and reasonable adjustments are made in line with the Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 Fencing Policy – Benchmarking
- BD2 Consultation Data Analysis

## **APPENDICES**

- A Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy (incorporating a Fencing Policy)
- B Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)



# Responsive Repairs & Maintenance Policy

---

Stevenage Borough Council

2024

<b>Date created</b>	December 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Owner</b>	Assistant Director Building Safety and Housing Property Services
<b>Version</b>	Final
<b>Author</b>	Leanne Kamoga (Asset Management Co-ordinator)
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Building Safety and Housing Property Services – Housing Asset Management
<b>Policy Review Date</b>	December 2026
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Date</b>	December 2024

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk).

## Contents

---

1. Purpose.....	3
2. Scope.....	3
3. Legal Framework.....	4
4. Equalities.....	5
5. Data Protection.....	5
6. Policy .....	5
7. Consultation .....	21
8. Monitoring and Review .....	22
9. References and Resources .....	22
10. Abbreviations and Definitions .....	23
11. Appendices.....	23
12. Version History .....	23

## 1. Purpose

### 1.1 What is the policy position?

The aim of this policy is to outline the framework within which the Repairs service operates, and through this:

- to demonstrate how decisions regarding responsive repairs are made for both tenants' homes and communal areas.
- to document the principles on which future service developments and improvements can be designed and implemented.

For Leaseholders, it aims to provide a clear framework within which the Responsive Repairs policy will operate regarding communal repairs and leaseholder issues and alongside other Council services where relevant. It also explains where responsibility for an issue may rest with the leaseholder, not the Council. In all cases leaseholders are advised to check their individual lease for specific information about their individual liabilities for repairs. Through the policy leaseholders will be able to see how decisions regarding responsive repairs to communal areas, or where a leaseholder's home is involved, are made and where responsibility lies.

### 1.2 What does it aim to achieve?

The policy will assist the Responsive Repairs team to deliver a service that:

- meets the routine, urgent and emergency repair needs of Stevenage Borough Council's (the Council) tenants either at their request, or at the request of a legitimate third party; in relation to the Landlords repairing obligations under the relevant legislation.
- meets customer expectations in line with published service standards and timeframes and achieves an agreed level of customer satisfaction.
- addresses customer-related damage and misuse of the Council's housing stock and Repairs services to safeguard council properties and minimise unnecessary spending on repairs;
- uses available budgets effectively and efficiently in the delivery the service;
- complies with legal and statutory requirements.

### 1.3 Does it replace an existing Policy?

This policy replaces a previous draft Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

## 2. Scope

### 2.1 Who does this policy apply to?

By definition, a responsive repair is an item of routine, urgent or emergency maintenance within a council-owned home or communal area, undertaken in response to a request from a tenant, leaseholder or a legitimate third party in line with the council's repairing obligations.

The Repairs service does not cover gas servicing, issues relating to fire safety, cyclical maintenance, void properties, initial damp and condensation investigations, mechanical and electrical issues, aids and adaptations, planned maintenance programmes and other types of work that may be perceived as repairs. These works are completed by other service areas and will have their own policies and/or guidance.

This policy scope covers how the Repairs service will meet its obligations as a landlord to council tenants and leaseholders, as set out by statute and/or under the terms of the lease.

Communal and structural repairs responsibilities will usually fall to the Council. Leaseholders should refer to their individual lease for further information. Repairs within the leaseholder's property are the responsibility of the leaseholder.

### 3. Legal Framework

#### 3.1 What legislation is this policy associated with? What are the legislative requirements that the Council must fulfil?

Key legislation relating to this policy and statutory provisions of the relevant acts are as follows:

##### Tenants:

**Landlord and Tenant Act 1985:** This Act gives landlords an absolute obligation to carry out basic repairs, including to the structure and exterior of the property and installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity, and for sanitation, space heating and heating water.

**Defective Premises Act 1972:** Section 4 of this Act places a duty on the landlord to take reasonable care to ensure that anyone who might be expected to be affected by defects in the property is reasonably safe from injury or damage to their property.

**Environmental Protection Act 1990:** This Act makes provision for the control of premises whose conditions are considered to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance.

**The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994:** The Right to Repair legislation gives the right to tenants to have small emergency or urgent repairs carried out quickly and to receive payment if the landlord fails to meet obligations.

**Housing Act 2004:** Replaced the existing housing fitness standard with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. It introduced mandatory HMO licensing, additional & selective licensing and the tenancy deposit protection scheme.

**Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation Act) 2018:** This Act states that any property offered by the Council must be fit for human habitation at the time of the Tenancy commencing, and for the duration of that Tenancy.

**Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023:** This Act sets out requirements for Social Housing landlords with regards to ensuring tenants and leaseholders are safe in their home and it meets the required quality standard (Decent Homes) communicating landlord performance and having complaints dealt with promptly and fairly. Subject to secondary legislation, will also introduce Awaab's Law.

##### Leaseholders:

**The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Reasonableness and the Tribunal)** (as amended): states that a service charge is only recoverable by a landlord so far as the costs have been reasonably incurred. It further states that the service charge is only recoverable if the works have been carried out to a reasonable standard.

**The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, section 151** (known as Section 20): explains the consultation process a landlord must follow by law with leaseholders before carrying out qualifying work or entering into a long-term agreement for providing services.

**Section 20B of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 (Limitation Period on Recovery of Service Charge Costs):** states that a landlord cannot recover service charge costs that were incurred more than 18 months before they formally demand them, unless they have written to the leaseholder within 18 months of incurring the costs and informing them that they incurred costs, the amount and that they will be demanded in due course.

**Section 22 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985:** explains the leaseholder’s right to inspect accounts, receipts and other documents supporting a summary of service charge expenditure and the period allowed for the leaseholder to request this.

**Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023:** This Act sets out requirements for Social Housing landlords with regards to ensuring tenants and leaseholders are safe in their home, communicating landlord performance and having complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.

## 4. Equalities

Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this policy, the council will carry out its functions in a way that:

- a. Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010).
- b. Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.
- c. Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.

Further information on the Council’s fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

## 5. Data Protection

The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as very important to delivery of services.

The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Councils approach to handling information please see [Data Protection Act \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk)

## 6. Policy

The Council values our tenants and leaseholders’ views and is keen to ensure they have a say in how the service is delivered. The main objective of this policy is to keep residents’ homes safe and in a good state of repair, and in so doing provide assurance that the Council is meeting legal and regulatory requirements. The feedback received during the consultation process has helped inform the development of this policy.

### 6.1 Responsive Repairs Responsibilities - Tenants

Responsive Repairs responsibilities are fulfilled by the Responsive Repairs service within the Council. Below is a list of repairs showing which are SBC responsibility and which are tenant’s responsibility. Please note this is not an exhaustive list:

Repair	Details	SBC	Tenant
Baths and basins	Sanitary ware, plumbing connections, bath seals, tiling around the bath	✓	

Bathroom fixtures and fittings	Toilet seats, bathroom cabinets, mirrors, shower curtains, unheated towel rails, toilet holders, plugs, chains		✓
Blockages	Bath, basins and toilets isolated within council homes		✓
Blockages	Where blockages occur outside of homes or are directly affecting council homes	✓	
Boilers	Annual servicing and breakdown	✓	
Ceilings		✓	
Communal areas	Including lighting, doors, door locks, door entry phones, bin stores, recycling areas, cleaning, lifts, communal heating, and ground maintenance	✓	
Decoration	External	✓	
Decoration	Internal		✓
Entrance door (front, back and side)	Including frame and door and draught excluders	✓	
Entrance door locks	Including loss of keys and repairs to forced entry if you get locked out		✓
Internal doors	Repairing or replacing door and/or frames	✓	
Door furniture	Including handles, letterboxes and door bells		✓
Drains	Outside, blocked or damaged within the property boundary	✓	
Electric appliances	Such as cookers, fridges, washing machines and dishwashers		✓
Fences and gates	Where provided by SBC in line with the Fencing Policy.	✓	
Fixtures and fittings	Such as coat hooks, curtains, curtain rails		✓
Flat blocks main and rear entry door	Both manual and electronic	✓	
Floorboards and subfloors	Floorboards and latex levelling of hard floors	✓	
Floor coverings	Including adapting floors to accommodate carpets		✓
Garden to individual home	Including turf, repairs or replacement of dustbins/wheelie bins and recycling refuse areas, trees and shrubs		✓
Garages	Attached garages only (excluding garage blocks)	✓	
Glazing	If broken into, tenant must get a crime reference number		✓
Glazing	Glazing accidentally broken caused by Council or contractors	✓	
Gutters	Repairs with clearing and cleaning subject to the cyclical maintenance policy.	✓	
Heating	Including solar thermal or PV panels	✓	
Hot water heaters	Including immersion heaters	✓	
Infestations	Including cockroaches, mice, rats or bedbugs and squirrels (treatments for these types of pests are free of charge for council tenants)	✓	
Infestations	Treatment for all other pests not mentioned above are chargeable		✓
Infestations	Where pests are affecting homes from neighbouring properties or communal areas, these will be investigated and remedied on a case-by-case basis	✓	
Kitchen units	Including worktops	✓	

Light fittings	Light bulbs, fuses, pull cords and fluorescent tubes (including bulbs in sealed units)		✓
Paths	Including path repairs, steps, footpaths and ramps	✓	
Pilot lights	Including resetting any heating controls		✓
Plastering	Including making good post repair works	✓	
Plumbing repairs and leaks	Including outside pipes	✓	
Porches and canopies		✓	
Roofing and outside walls	Ensuring the property is weatherproof and watertight	✓	
Showers	Where provided by SBC only.	✓	
Stairs	Including banister, handrail and staircases	✓	
Switches and sockets		✓	
Telephone points			✓
TV aerial points	In tenant owned properties only. SBC responsible for communal lounges		✓
Ventilation systems	Including heat recovery systems and mechanical extraction fans.	✓	
Wall tiling	Including patch repairs and making good post repairs works	✓	
Washing lines	Including rotary lines (unless in communal areas)		✓
Water leaks	Including sealant around sinks and bath	✓	
Windows	Including blown units, seals, windowsills, sash cords, catch, frames, hinges, and handles	✓	

In line with the Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy, the Repairs service does not accept requests where the responsibility for the repair rests with the tenant. Further clarification is available on the Council's website and in the Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy.

The Repairs service will not accept responsive repairs requests in some situations if basic checks or preparation work have not yet been completed by the tenant to make sure the repair is required and/or prepare the work area. The following list of examples is not exhaustive, but includes:

- checking and resetting trip switches to help identify if the issue relates to an electrical item within the home or an electrical fault in the property;
- attempting to clear blockages in wastes, gullies and toilets;
- cleaning out shower heads;
- removing items such as furniture that would otherwise prevent an operative from accessing the repair area;
- lifting any fitted carpets, laminate flooring and similar that may be required to access and complete the repair;
- maintaining the property to a standard of cleanliness and without a build-up of clutter or rubbish that will allow an operative to carry out repairs safely;
- moving white goods and/or furniture out of the area to be worked on.

Furthermore, the Repairs service:

- requires a suitable and sufficient accessible route to and from the area to be worked on to complete repairs.
- may not accept repairs requests from tenants with regards to fixtures and fittings added to the property by the current or previous tenants.



- does not offer lock changes, fit additional locks, fixtures and fittings, or install tenants own purchased goods, fixtures and fittings.
- will not decorate any areas affected by the works following completion of the repair.
- will ensure that during any repair work, disruption is kept to a minimum and that following any repair work, the area is left clean and tidy.
- does not assist to gain entry to their properties. In exceptional circumstances, only following a referral from another team or from the Police will this take place. The named tenant must be present when the lock change is carried out in order to take ownership of the keys.

The Council acknowledges that sometimes a tenant may encounter an exceptional circumstance that requires additional consideration for a repairs-related decision to be made. If a tenant believes they have an exceptional circumstance that cannot be resolved within the scope of the Responsive Repairs policy, the Repairs service will liaise with Resident and Estates Services and/or other services as necessary regarding the circumstances to agree a solution. If the special consideration is agreed to be necessary to safeguard either person or property and also found to be outside the tenant’s ability to fulfil, this will be taken into consideration in reaching a decision. SBC will also make reasonable adjustments to enable fair and equal access to the Repairs service.

In the unlikely event that any request made for additional consideration results in a referral that cannot be fulfilled by the Repairs service using available resources, or where they feel insufficient information has been obtained to make the referral, they reserve the right to decline the request to allow the referring officer to then look at alternative options in other areas. If a referral is made, the Repairs service will also explain why they are unable to carry out the work requested.

In some cases where disrepair or damage falls within the scope of the Repairs service, the extent of the repair required may result in the Council:

- temporarily cutting off services;
- temporarily stopping all rights of access to the property;
- permanently diverting rights of access (such as paths or water pipes) as long as it is no less beneficial to the property;
- decanting the tenant to an alternative property in line with the Council’s Decant Policy to enable the repair to be carried out.

In some cases, a repair issue may be covered by the Council’s buildings’ insurance (for example, water damage or fire). In order for a potentially eligible repair to be investigated, a tenant must initially:

- report the damage within 30 days of it occurring;
- report any act of criminal damage or vandalism that caused the repair to the Police and obtain a valid crime reference number.

## 6.2 Responsive Repairs – Leaseholder

### 6.2.1 Responsibilities

<b>Council’s responsibilities</b>	
All communal repairs to an estate and block, including:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the structure and outside of the block including the roof;</li> <li>• shared areas;</li> <li>• shared services, water tanks, plumbing and electricity supplies;</li> <li>• drainage, gutters, rainwater and soil pipes;</li> <li>• outside areas of the estate, estate walls and shared fences.</li> </ul>



<b>Leaseholder's responsibilities</b>	
Keeping the inside of their home in good condition. This includes fixing and maintaining the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cisterns, tanks, pipes and wires which serve only the leasehold property;</li> <li>• stoptaps, including those between the mains supply and pipes serving the leasehold property;</li> <li>• non-structural walls;</li> <li>• doors and frames inside the property including other internal wooden features;</li> <li>• any flat entrance doors and frames which open onto a landing or corridor and not the outside of the building;</li> <li>• plaster, tiling and other wall and ceiling surfaces;</li> <li>• inside wall surfaces;</li> <li>• any heating or hot water services which are only provided for the leasehold property;</li> <li>• ensuring that any water flowing from their overflow pipe does not cause damage to the external structure of the building.</li> </ul>
Reporting any problems or defects relating to the following:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the structure of the building;</li> <li>• any issue within their property that is damaging or is likely to damage the homes surrounding the leasehold property and/or the structure of the building/and/or the health and safety of others;</li> <li>• repairs issues identified within communal areas and the estate;</li> <li>• communal heating systems.</li> </ul>
Actions of anyone visiting or associated with their property.	
Costs associated with remedying any leaks in their property and leaks from their property into any other resident's property as a result of overflowing baths, sinks, basins or showers, or as a result of wear and tear or damage relating to pipework, and also faulty work carried out by the leaseholder or their representative.	
Ensuring that any water flowing from their overflow pipe does not cause damage to the external structure of the building. Where repairs associated are not carried out in a timely fashion and damage is caused to the building, the Repairs service will repair the damage and the full cost of any action taken to put things right will be charged to the leaseholder.	
Making reasonable checks when reporting communal and structural work directly to ensure that another order for the same work has not already been raised. If reporting through their Housing Online account, leaseholders will be able to see orders already raised against their block and estate to see if the work has already been reported.	

Repairing responsibilities are fulfilled by several specialist teams within the Council depending on the nature and type of work, whether it is cyclical or part of a planned maintenance programme. The Council may ask the leaseholder to complete specified repairs that are the leaseholder's responsibility within a reasonable timeframe, and it is the leaseholder's responsibility to arrange this.

The Repairs service will ensure that during any repairs work carried out to communal areas and within the estate, disruption is kept to a minimum and that following any repair work, the area is left clean.

In some cases, the extent of the responsive repair required may result in the Council:

- temporarily cutting off services to the estate and/or block;
- temporarily stopping all rights of access to the estate and/or block;

- diverting rights of access (such as paths or water pipes) as long as it is no less beneficial to the estate and/or block.

Leaseholders are required to pay a proportion of the full cost of repairs and maintenance to the structure and exterior of the block and communal areas as set out in their lease. For more information, please visit: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/leaseholders/your-leaseholder-service-charges/your-leaseholder-service-charges-explained>

As part of their commitment to managing repairs to Council properties efficiently and effectively, the Repairs service will investigate repeated attendance requests and investigate, considering other factors such as warranties and defect periods in their investigation, and will seek to address the issue liaising with other Council services as appropriate to find a solution.

### **6.2.2 Leaseholder Responsive Repairs – Building’s Insurance**

In some cases, a leaseholder’s repair issue may be covered by the Council’s building’s insurance policy. Eligible work, once assessed, may be completed by the Repairs service, another Council service or a third party through the insurance providers depending on the repairs issue.

All leasehold flats within Council-owned blocks are insured on a block policy. Repairs issues covered by the leaseholders’ block building’s insurance policy which relate to communal areas and the estate should be reported to the council, to prevent cost recharged incorrectly to leaseholders. All other claims should be made through the building’s insurance policy provider. For more information, visit <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/leaseholders/leaseholder-buildings-insurance> or contact the Resident and Estates Services.

Where a repair to a communal area or within the estate is required as a result of vandalism or criminal damage, the leaseholder should report the damage as soon within 90 days of the damage occurring and also report the damage to the police to obtain a valid crime reference number to be presented at the time of reporting the work to the Council.

Leaseholders are also reminded that not all work will be covered by Council responsibility or buildings’ insurance. In respect of non-building related items leaseholders are advised to take out their own contents’ insurance. Such schemes are widely available, and leaseholders can choose one to meet their own needs. Information on a home contents insurance scheme provided by the Council can be found on the Council’s website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/home-contents-insurance>.

### **6.2.3 Leaseholder - Leaks**

Where a leaseholder incurs a leak into their property which they believe to be from another property, they should first try to speak to the resident in the adjoining property to allow them to locate and stop the leak.

If the adjoining property is a Council property, the tenant should also be advised to notify the Council immediately to allow them to take action and stop the leak. Leaks need to be dealt with in as timely a manner as possible and the leaseholder is encouraged to contact the Council with details of the leak, what is thought to be causing it and the flat number from where it is thought to be coming from as early as possible for investigations and further appropriate action to be taken.

The leaseholder may also contact the council’s buildings insurer who may be able to offer further advice. Please see section 6.2.2.

If a leaseholder is notified by the Council that a leak is coming from their property into an adjoining property, they should act on this promptly and contact the Resident and Estates Services with

either their findings or plans to rectify the leak. Failure to do so could result in the Council gaining access to the leaseholder property and turning off the water supply. If this action is taken, all costs of repair including the forced access will be recharged to the leaseholder.

If forced entry must be made to turn off a leaseholder's water supply, the Council will not be held liable for the repair of any door fittings and fixtures damaged as a result of gaining entry, nor will it be under any obligation to repair the leak if it is located within the leaseholder's property. The leaseholder will need to arrange for immediate repairs to be made to rectify the issue before they turn the water back on.

### **6.3 Reporting a responsive repair**

Tenants and leaseholders have a responsibility to report any disrepair or damage to Council property (only tenants) and communal areas, including criminal damage, damage caused by neglect or through the fault of a third party, accidental damage and fair wear and tear.

The easiest and most effective way to raise a responsive repair is through their **Housing Online - My Repairs** account. Where a repair cannot be reported through Housing Online – My Repairs, please contact the Council's Customer Service Centre.

The Repairs service will investigate repairs requests from leaseholders relating to the structure of the building, communal area and estate repairs and issues relating to the supply of services to each property and take appropriate action. The leaseholder should first check the repairs raised on the block to see if there is already an order open for the work. Failure to check this may lead to duplicated orders and unnecessary attendances which may then also be reflected in leasehold service charges for the block.

Emergency repairs should be reported by telephone to the Customer Service Centre during normal working hours (Mon to Fri 09:00 – 17:00) on one of the following numbers: 01438 211011 / 0800 1123444.

Emergency communal repairs that pose a risk to the safety of residents or the structure of the building and which occur out of hours, including at weekends and during bank holidays, should be reported to the Council's out of hours service on the following number: 01438 314963.

### **6.4 Who can report a responsive repair?**

#### **Tenants:**

Responsive repairs can be reported by a tenant, a known household member or a legitimate third party. If a named tenant wishes to have another person act on their behalf and at their own risk to manage their responsive repairs, details must be provided in writing with the required permissions. This is required to comply with data protection legislation.

#### **Leaseholders**

Responsive repairs in communal areas and within the estate can be reported by the leaseholder, a member of their household or a legitimate third party. Council tenants are also expected to report repairs issues in these areas.

If a named leaseholder wishes to have another person act on their behalf and at their own risk to manage their reports and interactions with the Repairs service concerning communal and estate responsive repairs, details must be provided in writing with the required permissions. This is required to comply with data protection legislation.

## **6.5 Repairs Priorities and Timescales**

The Repairs service works within a clear framework of priorities and timescales to assess incoming repairs from tenants and repairs to communal areas or within the estate for leaseholders. The different priorities within the framework are outlined below to help understand how their requested repair will be handled and within what timeframe.

The Repairs service cannot always accurately diagnose faults at the point of reporting, but the framework enables the service to identify the trade, priority type and timeframe required and send an operative to fully diagnose and complete the repair.

All response times reflect the period from the responsive repair being reported to its completion.

The reporting to completion times (which in some cases may be through inspection, rather than repair in the first instance) within the Responsive Repairs framework are as follows:

- Emergency Repairs: 24 hours
- Urgent Repairs: 5 working days
- Routine Repairs: 20 working days

Tenants and leaseholders may be asked to repay in full any costs or liabilities incurred by the Repairs service resulting from misuse of the service. Examples of misuse include (although not exhaustively):

- Providing misinformation to obtain a faster response time.
- Failing to be at the property when the operative attends the arranged appointment or emergency attendance.

The Repairs service reserves the right to amend repairs timeframes on a temporary basis in certain circumstances. Examples include, although not exhaustively:

- an extended period for fencing repairs following a period of extreme weather that has resulted in a significant amount of additional work in this area being reported;
- an extended period for guttering repairs following a period of extreme weather or seasonally when demand for such work rises to a level that it cannot reasonably be met within the stated timeframe with available resources.

The service will always endeavour to complete all requested responsive repairs works within the stated timeframes. When this isn't possible, those requesting the affected responsive repair will be notified either at the time of reporting, or within 5 working days depending on how the report is made, that delays are occurring and why and will be given a revised timeframe for the completion of the work.

Leaseholders can view jobs raised against their block, including jobs that are currently open and awaiting completion, through their Housing Online account.

## **6.6 Emergency responsive repairs**

A responsive repair is assessed as Emergency and attended to within 24 hours if one or more of the following criteria are met at initial assessment:

- a. there is a probable health or safety risk to a person or persons if the repair isn't resolved or made safe;
- b. there is a probable risk to the structure of the property and/or other fixtures and fittings if the repair isn't resolved or made safe;

- c. there is a probable risk of severe hardship to a person or persons if the repair isn't resolved or alternative facilities provided.

For tenants, emergency responsive repairs examples might include, although not exhaustively:

- an insecure external window, door or lock if ground floor;
- total loss of electric power;
- an unsafe power or lighting socket or electrical fitting;
- leak from a water or heating pipe, tank or cistern if not containable;
- total loss of water supply to the property;
- a blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling or house) toilet pan;
- total or partial loss of electric or water heating between 31 October and 1 May in a property that does not have a gas heating and/or hot water system.

The primary aim of an emergency responsive repair attendance is to eliminate the initial factor(s) causing the emergency and repair during the attendance where possible. Follow-on work if required will be prioritised as either Urgent or Routine, depending on the type of work required and in line with other repairs of a similar nature where no emergency element exists.

## **6.7 Emergency out-of-hours responsive repairs**

The Out Of Hours service is available to customers outside working hours (17:00-09:00) only where there is an immediate risk to a person or property if the repair is not made safe at the earliest opportunity. This implies the repair cannot be reasonably managed until 09:00 the following working day.

The daytime Repairs service reserves the right to refer assessed emergency responsive repairs to the Council's Out Of Hours service to be completed or made safe outside normal working hours where this is required.

Where the repair does not meet the criteria for an emergency out of hours attendance, the customer will be advised to contact the Repairs service via the Customer Service Centre from 09:00 on the next working day.

If the repair requires further work, an appointment will be scheduled. As the element of the emergency repair that was posing an immediate risk to a person or property has been addressed, the remaining work required will be allocated a priority of Urgent or Routine.

In specific circumstances where it's not possible to make safe through the Out Of Hours service (adverse weather), the reporting party will be advised to contact the Council from 09:00 the next working day and offered basic advice to manage the situation. If the issue occurs over a weekend or prior to a Bank Holiday, the Out Of Hours service will further advise the customer to call back if the situation deteriorates to be reassessed and put out to contractor, should it be safe to do so.

If it is unsafe for the occupants to remain in the property, alternative accommodation arrangements will be made. This may be on a day-by-day basis or a temporary decant (please note this may be a hotel) to an alternative property, depending on availability. Council officers will make necessary decant arrangements to suitable accommodation in line with the Council's Decant Policy.

Customers may be asked to repay in full any costs or liabilities incurred by the Repairs service resulting from misuse of the Out Of Hours service. Standard charges can be viewed on the Council website - [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk).

The Repairs service will monitor usage of the Out of Hours service and will refer instances of misuse or concern to Resident and Estates Services and other services where relevant. Examples of misuse or concern include, but not exhaustively:

- mis-reporting a repair that is not an immediate risk to a person or property in order to get an out of hour attendance;
- regularly reporting avoidable circumstances;
- failure to be at the property when the out of hours operative attends;
- a pattern of reporting issues solely to the out of hours service which may suggest the user is making a conscious decision to bypass the daytime service and obtain preferential treatment;
- concern about the welfare of the caller;
- concern about the behaviour of the caller towards out of hours staff or attending contractors.

### **6.8 Urgent responsive repairs**

A responsive repair is assessed as Urgent if it may cause substantial discomfort to the customer and potential damage to the property if not repaired. The repairs in this priority category are defined by legislation. An Urgent responsive repair will be completed within 5 working days. Examples of Urgent responsive repairs to tenant properties include:

- partial loss of electric power;
- partial loss of water supply to property;
- total or partial loss of electric space or water heating between 1 May to the 31 October in a property that does not have a gas heating and/or hot water system;
- blocked sink, bath or basin;
- a toilet not flushing (where there is no other working toilet in the dwelling or house);
- tap which cannot be turned;
- loose or detached banister or hand rail;
- rotten timber flooring or stair tread;
- some window repairs relating to securing the property;
- a leaking roof or mechanical extractor fan in internal kitchen or bathroom not working.

### **6.9 Routine responsive repairs**

A responsive repair is assessed as Routine and completed within 20 working days if it causes only minor inconvenience and will have no impact on the safety of a person or property if completed within 20 working days. Examples of routine responsive repairs to tenant properties include ease and adjust windows or doors; bath panel repair/replace; gate and fence repairs; blown/misted windows.

### **6.10 Right to Repair**

The Repairs service Right to Repair obligations are fully met through the terms of this policy. For more information:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/repairs/right-to-repair>

### **6.11 Ensuring the service meets customer's needs**

The Repairs service recognises that some tenants or members of their household may require additional considerations to be made to facilitate the completion of their responsive repairs and can request that the council make reasonable adjustments in person, in writing for example by email or post or by telephone.



Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Giving residents the opportunity to be accompanied by a representative when meeting with the Council.
- Provision of auxiliary aids such as hearing loops and adapted computer software and devices.
- Interpretation service (for example British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter).
- Print off and provision of accessible documents (for example in large print, braille, easy read).
- Arranging for residents to provide details over the phone or in-person rather than on-line or paper copy.

We're committed to listening to the voices of the communities we serve. This is underpinned by our fulfilment of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act (2010) and through the implementation of the Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (2022-2026). As a Council we will make reasonable adjustments to make sure that anyone who wishes to access our repairs service can do so.

### **6.11 Appointments**

Appointments are not offered to customers reporting an Emergency responsive repair, as the Repairs service will attend within 24 working hours. The tenant or a representative of the tenant aged 18 or over is expected to remain at the property over this period to give access and also stay at the property until the repair is made safe or completed.

Appointments are not offered on communal repairs. These will be attended by an operative (or nominated contractor) in line their assessed priority and attached timeframe.

We will offer appointments on all responsive repairs work assessed as Urgent or Routine within a tenanted property on a slot basis as follows (excluding Bank Holidays):

- am: Monday to Friday 08:00 – 13:00
- pm: Monday to Friday 12:00 – 16:00
- school run: Monday to Friday 09:30 – 14:30

Examples of situations that may result in the need to move appointments may include, although not exhaustively:

- diagnosis on attendance that work required is of a more extensive nature than originally anticipated and/or requires immediate attention and an extension to the appointment time allotted.
- a report of a serious emergency that requires immediate attention and may also require more than one operative/sub-contractor.
- severe weather conditions affecting the ability to travel around the town safely.
- a sudden reduction in available resource, for example the temporary loss of staff members through illness.
- the introduction of national or regional government restrictions.

### **6.12 Tenants allowing access**

In line with the Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy, tenants must allow access to the Repairs service for the following purposes:

- to inspect requested responsive repairs in the property, or to the communal areas, block or estate of which the property forms a part.
- to carry out Emergency, Urgent and Routine responsive repairs or other necessary works to the property, or to the communal areas, block or estate of which the property forms a part.
- to carry out safety checks in areas managed by the service.

Operatives from the Repairs service and/or contractors will show an official identification card prior to starting the inspection or work in a property.

The Repairs service requires that young children and pets are kept away from the area of repair work whilst the attending operative/sub-contractor carries out the repair.

Failure to allow access to your property for a pre-arranged appointment is a breach of your responsibilities as outlined in the Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy.

In some cases, and in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement and Conditions of Tenancy, immediate access to a property is required such as in cases of serious water or sewage leaks or unsafe electrics. The tenant agrees that the Repairs service can enter the property without prior access agreed and without written notice whether they are there or not in the following circumstances:

- to inspect a property and carry out any responsive repairs needed to make a serious emergency responsive repair safe, such as major leaks, electrical or gas safety;
- (by force as necessary) if there is a fire, flood or danger to Health and Safety.

In cases where forced entry is required the Repairs service will make sure the property is left secure but reserves the right to charge the tenant for the costs of forcing entry.

If an operative or officer attending an appointment is subject to any form of harassment, abuse, violence or the threat of violence, they are within their rights to leave the property. The Council takes all reports of such incidents directed against council employees very seriously and will refer the matter to the Police and/other relevant authorities.

### **6.13 Leaseholders allowing access**

The Repairs service does not carry out repairs and maintenance work within and relating to the leaseholder's specific property. This is the leaseholder's responsibility. Leaseholders can find further guidance within their individual lease.

After previous notice in writing, the Repairs service and/or authorised representatives, have the right to enter a leaseholder property at all reasonable times for the purposes of carrying out its responsibilities under the lease. Failure to allow access in such circumstances is a breach of the terms of the lease and the Repairs service will forward details to the Resident and Estates team, who will work with the Repairs service to take appropriate action.

The leaseholder agrees that in the event of a serious situation (such as fire or flood) where immediate action is required to remove an imminent risk to either person or property, and where the leaseholder cannot be contacted through the methods they have provided, the Council may



need to force entry into the leaseholder property without prior agreement and without written notice to contain the serious situation. The matter will be referred to the Resident and Estates Services and may be reported to the Emergency Services so that access can be obtained, and the issue made safe. The property will be made secure at the end of the visit. The leaseholder will be financially liable for any costs incurred during this process, including the cost of any responsive repairs work required to make safe.

It is the leaseholder's responsibility to ensure that contact details held for them by the Council are kept up to date to minimise the need for forced entry should a serious situation occur.

#### **6.14 Missed appointments**

The nature of the Repairs service means that sometimes exceptional situations will arise that require re-routing of work and/or resources leading to an appointment being missed or rearranged at very short notice. In such circumstances the Repairs service will contact the tenant at the earliest possible opportunity and arrange for the work to be completed at a later date. If attempts to reach the tenant have been made and the tenant is uncontactable, the Repairs service reserves the right to move the appointment even if the tenant cannot be reached.

Tenants can amend appointments made for responsive repairs to a new date and time up to the day of the appointment. It is the tenant's responsibility to notify the Repairs service if they wish to rearrange or cancel an appointment.

The Council does not make compensation payments for problems resulting from matters beyond its control, including the need to reschedule work and resources at short notice. However, if the Council fails to keep a prearranged appointment without good reason, it is envisioned a compensation payment will be offered.

The Repairs service has a responsibility to monitor missed appointments by customers. If the customer is not home or fails to allow access to a pre-arranged appointment or emergency attendance, it is a breach or failure of their responsibilities. It is envisioned the Council will determine the level of recharge applicable for the missed appointment.

In the event of a missed appointment, the attending operative or officer will attempt to contact the customer through the contact details held by the service. If no contact can be made, or if the customer is unable to come to the property immediately to allow access, photographic evidence will be taken recording the date and time the property was visited, and a card was left.

It is the responsibility of the customer to make sure that correct contact details are provided at the time of reporting the responsive repair.

At this stage, the repairs order will be closed. It is the responsibility of the customer to re-order the work and arrange a new appointment if work is still required.

#### **6.15 Charges and upfront payments**

The Head of Repairs and Maintenance has overall accountability for:

- identifying chargeable work carried out by the Repairs service;
- providing customers with the costs of chargeable work;

- providing details of chargeable work to the Residents and Estates Services and the Income Services team so that costs can be effectively recovered;

Further information about chargeable repairs and upfront payments can be found in the Council's Housing Income policy.

It is envisaged the Repairs service will monitor requests for responsive repairs per properties and per block. Such monitoring will help identify:

- properties where additional repairs or maintenance intervention may be required to minimise ongoing repairs;
- blocks where communal and estate repairs requests are above average;
- properties where the actions or inactions of the tenant or leaseholder may be contributing to the high repair needs of the property or block.

This information will enable the Council to look at strategies to help reduce repairs and maintenance costs and it will also be referred to Resident and Estates Services for further investigation. The tenant or leaseholder may be subject to charges by the Repairs service for any work carried out that is not deemed to be a result of fair wear and tear.

### **Tenants**

The Repairs service does not accept repairs requests for items or issues that are the tenant's responsibility. In individual cases where a repair is the tenant's responsibility, but the tenant lacks the financial resources to effect the repair, the tenant should contact the Income Services team for advice. Depending on the nature of the repair and circumstances of the tenant, it may be possible to arrange payment upfront in instalments so that the repair can be referred on collection of the full amount and completed by the Repairs service.

In cases where the repair is the tenant's responsibility and it also poses a risk to person or property, where the tenant lacks the financial resources to effect the repair, the Repairs service may attend and make safe and the tenant will be liable for a standard attendance fee and the cost of any works completed plus VAT. Arrangements to pay this amount will then be made through the Income Services team.

The Repairs service has a duty to inform liable parties of the costs they may incur if a responsive repair is chargeable. Details of standard amounts for chargeable repairs can be found on the Council's website [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk). Further advice can be obtained from the Repairs service.

Tenants are responsible for carrying out most repairs that are caused by accidental damage, misuse or neglect by any member of the household, any visitors to the household and includes issues in both individual properties and communal areas.

Tenants will be charged for any responsive repairs attended where the Repairs service has reason to believe that the repair is necessary for any reason other than wear and tear. Such cases will be referred with full information to Income Services for perusal of recharged costs.

The Repairs service does not charge for repairs in the following circumstances:

- the damage is as a result of domestic violence, except where the perpetrator is a named tenant of the property;
- damage due to some other violent incident directed towards the tenant or a member of their household by an external third party where the damage has been reported within 30 days of the incident and the tenant has also received a crime reference number;
- damage due to hate crime directed towards the tenant or a member of their household by an external third party where the damage has been reported within 30 days of the incident and the tenant has also received a crime reference number;
- cracked, broken or damaged glazing, damaged door frames and/or landlord's fixtures and fittings where the damage has been caused as a result of a break-in or burglary where the damage has been reported within 30 days and the tenant has also received a crime reference number;
- a small number of circumstances where the accidental damage meets specific criteria meaning that it is covered by the Council's buildings' insurance.

The Council has a responsibility to recover costs from tenants following an agreed upfront responsive repair referral that is the tenant's responsibility.

### **Leaseholder**

All leaseholders are required to pay a proportion of the full costs of repairs and maintenance to the structure and exterior of the block, communal areas and the estate as set out in their lease.

The Council has a responsibility to recover costs from leaseholders as a result of a responsive repair or other circumstance.

### **6.16 Circumstances when a responsive repairs request cannot be accepted**

Responsive repairs requests will not be accepted in the following circumstances:

- the repair to the property, or communal area or estate repairs requested is due to be completed as part of a planned investment programme, capital project or major works scheme and there will be no risk to person or property until this work is carried out;
- the tenant has started the Right to Buy process;
- an abandonment notice has been issued;
- the tenant is refusing to give access for the annual gas safety service.

Where the tenant has started the Right to Buy process, the Repairs service will only accept and/or fulfil requests where there is a legal obligation to do so (in emergency cases). This extends to repairs previously ordered but not yet completed and where there is no legal requirement to complete. These works will be cancelled at the point the Right to Buy process is initiated.

### **6.17 Use of specialist contractors**

The Repairs service reserves the right to pass work to approved contractors for completion. All contractors working on behalf of the Repairs service will carry identification.

Contractors are, in effect, an extension of the Repairs service. Any issues or feedback relating to contractors, or their work can be reported to the Repairs service in the usual way or submitted through the council's compliments and complaints system.

### **6.18 Notifying leaseholders**

A Section 20 notice (S20) is a notice to tell you that we intend to carry out works or provide a service that Leaseholders will need to pay towards. The consultation process (as it's referred to), has three stages:

- The first stage is where we notify you of our intention to do works.
- The second stage is to notify you of the estimates we have obtained.
- The third stage is to notify you (where applicable) of award of contract to who will carry out the works.

### **6.19 Quality Control**

The Repairs service will carry out random post-inspections on both in-house and contracted works and will monitor and report on overall service quality control as a key performance indicator. Post-inspections will be arranged to cover a random sample of different repair types, property types, communal and estate areas and across different geographical areas of the town.

Where a customer has reason to believe that work completed falls below an acceptable level of quality, they have the right to contact the Repairs service and ask for a post-inspection to be carried out.

### **6.20 Health and Safety**

To ensure that standards of health, safety and employee and resident welfare are met, the Repairs service and its contractors comply with all relevant legislation, codes of practice, guidance notes and the Council's own Health and Safety Management Framework.

### **6.21 Performance and Delivery**

Performance indicators will be set and reviewed with specific, clear and attainable targets to ensure that the Repairs service is delivered effectively and in a timely manner.

### **6.22 Customer Satisfaction**

The Repairs service will contact tenants and leaseholders from time to time to ask for comments and feedback on the service received. Feedback is used to review and improve service delivery and achieve the agreed level of customer satisfaction. The information received from the customer satisfaction surveys will feed into the service key performance indicators (KPIs). This could be by phone call, text message, email, face-to-face or other media as appropriate.

Surveys are based on specified work recently completed. This means that tenants and leaseholders may be invited to give feedback more than once in any given year if various jobs have been carried out. The service values and appreciates all feedback provided.

### **6.23 Complaints**

The Council operates a complaints process which is available to any customer who is not satisfied with the way their repair request has been dealt with. Details of the complaints process can be found on the council's website – [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk).

## 7 Consultation

7.1 As a Cooperative Council, we are passionate about our communities and making sure they have a say in how services are delivered.

7.2 The policy was consulted with the Cabinet, the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Executive Housing Working Group.

7.3 The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) from 2023/24 were reviewed to analyse responses that mentioned Repairs as a factor in the tenant's overall satisfaction. 1,000 tenants were surveyed in total. Questions related to the Council's Responsive Repairs and Maintenance service (TP02 and TP03) were qualified questions, where tenants would have to have completed a repair in that last 12 months. 607 tenants said 'yes' to a repair in the last 12 months, and therefore answered TP02 and TP03:

<b>TP02 – Satisfaction with repairs</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	36.4%
Fairly satisfied	26.3%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.4%
Fairly dissatisfied	12.3%
Very dissatisfied	9.6%

<b>TP03 – Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very satisfied	29.9%
Fairly satisfied	22.5%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.7%
Fairly dissatisfied	13.4%
Very dissatisfied	17.5%

The individual responses related to Repairs included the following:

<b>Overall theme</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Delays	35%
Quality	14%
No action taken	7%
Fences	8%
Windows	8%
Other specific repairs	7%
Roof	3%
Maintenance	1%
Positive feedback	13%
Other general comments	5%

This policy has considered the individual responses from the TSMs in the information of this policy and will continue to be reviewed following further TSM results.

### 7.3 Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Service Survey

Tenant and Leaseholder consultation regarding the Council’s Responsive Repairs and Maintenance service took place between February and April 2024. This initially targeted tenants and leaseholders who had raised a repair in the last 12 months. It was later expanded to focus groups and pop-up events across the town and social media. 95 responses were received by the end of June 2024. These responses helped shaped further consultation which took place during the summer of 2024.

Key feedback themes include the need to:

- improve communication and information sharing (newsletters, reminders, leaflets);
- listen to customers and acting on feedback;
- clear roles and responsibilities between SBC and customers;
- undertake regular inspections of all council owns homes;
- improve the level of customer service;
- reduce waiting times for certain jobs and ensure all repairs are completed within timescales.

## 8 Monitoring and Review

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services has overall responsibility for the policy and for ensuring it is fully implemented and operating effectively.

The Head of Repairs and Maintenance is responsible for:

- the effective implementation and delivery of the policy;
- monitoring performance and delivery;
- developing processes and procedures in line with the policy;

The Head of Housing Asset Management is responsible for:

- reviewing the policy;
- ensuring that the policy aims and terms are adhered to.

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Housing Asset Management every 2 years or earlier if there is a change in any relevant legislation and/or regulatory standards. Where more than 10% of the policy content is changed the Assistant Director and appropriate Portfolio Holder will be required to decide if the policy needs to be formally reconsidered by the Cabinet or appropriate decision-making body.

Where there is a request for the content of the policy to be reviewed in response to a complaint, the relevant Business Unit’s Assistant Director will be notified. If the Assistant Director agrees that a review of policy is required, this will be discussed with the appropriate Portfolio Holder. The Head of Service will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

## 9 References and Resources

Links (Internal)	Links (External)
------------------	------------------

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy and Tenancy Agreement Conditions</li> <li>• Individual Lease Terms</li> <li>• Income Services Policy</li> <li>• Damp and Mould Policy</li> <li>• Decant Policy</li> <li>• Mutual Exchange Policy</li> <li>• Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Housing Asset Management Strategy</li> <li>• Complaints Policy</li> <li>• Asbestos: Management and Action Policy</li> <li>• SBC Staff Protection Policy</li> <li>• SBC Passport to Safety Handbook</li> <li>• Equalities and Diversity Policy</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord and Tenant Act 1985</li> <li>• The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002</li> <li>• Housing Act 2004</li> <li>• Defective Premises Act 1972</li> <li>• Environmental Protection Act 1990</li> <li>• The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation Act) 2018</li> <li>• Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023</li> <li>• Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</li> <li>• Equality Act 2010</li> <li>• Decent Homes Standard</li> </ul>
---	--

## 9 Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation

PSED: Public Sector Equality Duty

The Council: Stevenage Brough Council

## 10 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Fencing Policy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

## 11 Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
January 2024	Creation	Ana Hetherington

**Once approved, please send a copy of the policy to [policy@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:policy@stevenage.gov.uk) for Council records.**

This page is intentionally left blank





# First things first: does this activity need an EqIA?

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

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

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

.....

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

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

Name of assessor:  
Role:  
Date:

Decision approved by:  
Role:  
Date:

# Full Equality Impact Assessment

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

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		<b>Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy</b>			
Lead Assessor	Paul Connolly – Interim Head of Repairs and Maintenance			Assessment team	Mark Gibbs – Repairs Manager  Ana Hetherington – Business Improvement Manager
Start date	January 2024	End date	December 2025		
When will the EqlA be reviewed?		December 2025			

Who may be affected by it?	Staff, Stevenage Borough Council Housing Tenants and Leaseholders
What are the key aims of it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that our customers are treated in a fair and consistent way.</li> <li>• Focus on working in partnership with our tenants and leaseholders ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is provided.</li> <li>• Where reasonably practical, ensure that homes are maintained to the required habitable standard and the internal environment is safe and in a healthy condition and the fabric of the property is protected from damage.</li> <li>• Undertake effective investigations and meet the routine, urgent and emergency repair needs of Stevenage Borough Council tenants and leaseholders at their request.</li> <li>• Comply with statutory requirements and good practice.</li> <li>• Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to offer value for money.</li> </ul>

What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Ensuring all are treated fairly and in a consistent way.	Promote equal opportunities	Demonstrating what service can be expected from the council for all tenants and leaseholders.	Encourage good relations	Encouraging partnership working.
What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002 Defective Premises Act 1972 Environmental Protection Act 1990 The Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation Act) 2018 Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 NEC – Housing management internal system				

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>We understand there is a proportion of customers who will be considered vulnerable. In these instances, we will make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis to support them as best we can.</p> <p>Refresher training and raising awareness to staff on Equality Act 2010 will help promote equality and inclusion overall going forward. To be delivered via HR iLearn training and Toolbox talk training sessions.</p>
--	---

## Evidence and impact assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact	Self-service 24 hour access through the Online Housing account to report repairs.	Negative impact	Those elderly or with no access to online service may need extra support to report a repair.	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	This service is available to all tenants and leaseholders who need to report a repair for their home, communal area or estate. Customers are able to report a repair via their Housing Online account, by phoning the Customer Service Centre or seek guidance at reception at Daneshill House. The choice of contact points will provide the extra support these groups may require to report a repair, where they do not have access to online services, or they prefer speaking to someone over the phone or face to face.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote how the Council can provide assistance and guidance and the policy document. This may be reasonable adjustments, language services, documents in other formats, etc.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A		

<b>Disability</b>					
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	Some customers might not be able to use traditional contact points or may need special arrangements during their repairs appointment.	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Customers are able to report a repair via their housing Online account, the Customer Service Centre or seek guidance at reception at Daneshill House. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis and alternative format of information is available. The Repairs system allows for special requests to be logged for operatives to be informed on these prior to their visits.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The council will work with other departments to support customers as needed.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A		

<b>Gender reassignment</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		Customers are able to report a repair via their housing Online account, the Customer Service Centre or seek guidance at reception at Daneshill House. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis and alternative format of information is available. The Repairs system allows for special requests to be logged for operatives to be informed on these prior to their visits.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Refresher training and raising awareness to staff on Equality Act 2010.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A		

<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

<b>Race</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

<b>Religion or belief</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

<b>Sex</b>					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

<b>Sexual orientation</b>					
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		N/A			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

## Socio-economic<sup>1</sup>

e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users,  
social value in procurement

Positive impact	Being able to identify financial difficulties or ability to maintain property.	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		The Council's Repairs staff are our eyes and ears on the front line and they are able to raise to management any safeguarding concerns in relation to our tenants and leaseholders. Operatives should (whilst in a customers home): 1. Monitor a persons Emotional and Physical Wellbeing. 2. Look for any indicators that suggest a person is at risk of harm (such as changes to their demeanour or behaviours) 3. Make a point of recording any indicators (day/date/time + their findings) 4. They should always report their concerns to the appropriate persons (they should not engage with the customer as to their concerns) 5. An appropriate person can then if its felt necessary, carry out a wellbeing check to ensure there are no safeguarding issues.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Further training and collaborative work across departments.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Safeguarding training for staff.		

## Other

please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

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

## What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?	Repairs Pulse Survey took place in January 2024.	Residents?	<p>Tenant and Leaseholder pre-consultation took place in February 2024. This targeted tenants and leaseholders who had raised a repair in the last 12 months and was later expanded to focus groups and pop-up events across the town and social media. Approximately 100 responses had been received by the end of June 2024.</p> <p>The draft Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Policy was also subject to further tenant and leaseholder consultation for 6 weeks during summer 2024, closing on 30 September. Comments received have been taken into consideration in the final version of the Policy as presented to Cabinet in December 2024 for approval.</p>
Voluntary & community sector?	N/A	Partners?	N/A
Other stakeholders?	The Executive Housing Working Group received a pre-consultation draft in July and an updated version following consultation with tenants and leaseholders in November for their views and comments ahead of presentation to Cabinet for approval (July and December).		

## Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the <b>overall findings</b> of the assessment and <b>reasons for outcome (please choose one)</b> :	
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified	This EIA demonstrates the proposed policy is robust and there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. All opportunities to promote equality have been/will be undertaken.



Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the <b>actions that are needed</b> as a result of this assessment and how they will help to <b>remove discrimination &amp; harassment, promote equal opportunities</b> and / or <b>encourage good relations</b> :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Safeguarding training for Repairs staff	Yes	Head of Repairs and Maintenance	TBC	Include in planned training programme

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Denise Lewis Assistant Director Building Safety and Housing Property Services**

**Date: November 2024**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Housing  
**Date** 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024



## HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY 2025-2030

**AUTHORS:** SARAH PATEMAN / KERRY CLIFFORD  
**CONTRIBUTOR:** WILL PETERS  
**LEAD OFFICER:** KERRY CLIFFORD

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a final version of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030 and associated action plan for approval, following consultation with residents and key stakeholders.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory duty on housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a homelessness review, every five years. The Council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy expired at the end of March 2024.
- 1.3 The Council has continued to implement the current strategy during 2024, and it has been agreed with the Ministry of Communities Housing and Local Government that the Council will publish its new strategy by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the duty placed on the Council to publish a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy every five years.
- 2.2 The Cabinet notes the outcome of public consultation of the Strategy with residents and key stakeholders.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approves the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Plan, attached at Appendix A & C.
- 2.4 That Cabinet recommends that the Action Plan and Strategy outcomes to be reviewed on an annual basis by the Executive Housing Working Group.
- 2.5 That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to approve any amendments to the strategy and action plan, post the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty, under the Homelessness Act 2002, to carry out a review of homelessness in their local area and to formulate a Homelessness Strategy every five years. Detailed guidance on this is provided in the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.
- 3.2 Homelessness strategies should also have regard to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which introduced additional powers and duties for Local Authorities for the prevention and relief of homelessness and augmented the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) including additional duties to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 3.3 Housing authorities must consult with key stakeholders before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy and may also wish to consult service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people.
- 3.4 As part of any homelessness strategy, housing authorities are also required to develop effective action plans to ensure that the priorities set out in the Strategy are achieved.
- 3.5 In July 2024, Cabinet was asked to consider a draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030 and agreed the recommendation that the draft strategy be put out for public consultation before the final strategy be presented back to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

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

- 4.1 The Council's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy expired at the end of March 2024. The Council has a statutory duty as per the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 to develop and publish a new

Strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness. The Council has continued to implement the current strategy during 2024.

- 4.2 Throughout June 2024, a consultation took place with key stakeholders, targeting the partner list of the Rough Sleeper Team as well as a wider cohort of partners who help to deliver the aims of the Strategy. The consultation focussed on what the core priorities of the Strategy should be and helped to frame the vision for the Strategy.
- 4.3 The Strategy retains a clear focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness; or if prevention is not possible, to end homelessness at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.4 The vision of the draft Strategy is: ***Working co-operatively to prevent and reduce homelessness and to end rough sleeping in Stevenage.***
- 4.5 Stakeholders also helped to develop the following four summarised priorities and key commitments for the Strategy over the next five years, which are:

#### **Priority 1: Prevention and Relief of Homelessness**

- Work collaboratively with strategic partners at a strategic and operational level to improve homelessness prevention and relief services. This includes working with Change Grow Live and Mind in Herts to ensure support and advice is provided to vulnerable clients, many of whom have complex needs.
- Avoid unnecessary evictions and recurring homelessness by maintaining a dedicated resource to provide private rented sector tenancy sustainment support.
- Ensure that all customer contact is managed effectively and advice and support is provided in a timely manner.
- Ensure the viability and ongoing delivery of the Council's Housing Futures (Formerly known as Housing First) Scheme, which provides accommodation for rough sleepers and wrap around support.

#### **Priority 2: Provision of Good Quality Temporary Accommodation**

- Enhance the Council's emergency and temporary accommodation portfolio to ensure needs are met and to reduce the use of inappropriate bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Deliver a new specialist emergency and temporary accommodation scheme in Dunn Close, which will provide suitable accommodation for those with physical disabilities.
- Provide debt and financial advice and support to clients in temporary accommodation so they can manage their finances more effectively.
- Deliver value for money services and increase the transparency of service charges.

#### **Priority 3: The Delivery of new Affordable and Social Rented Homes**

- Deliver 500 new Council owned social and affordable rented properties over the next 10 years.

- Utilise private sale schemes within the HRA to cross subsidise other affordable housing schemes.

#### **Priority 4: Support for Homeless Households**

- Provide targeted welfare and debt advice and support that enable families and vulnerable adults to maximise their household income and mitigate the effects of welfare reforms.
  - Provide tenancy sustainment support to reduce incidences of homelessness.
  - Continue to provide specialist support through the Council's Housing Management, Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse and No More Services.
- 4.6 Following the July Cabinet, public consultation of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy took place during August and September and received an additional 38 responses. Consultation was completed via an on-line survey which was promoted through social media and during face-to-face interactions with service users.
- 4.7 During the consultation period, the Council also collected transactional service and satisfaction data to help understand customer journey and perceived gaps in service provision.
- 4.8 Consultees were asked to provide what they believed the three main challenges were in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. The responses indicated that alcohol and drug use, adverse experiences and trauma as well as lack of affordable housing were challenges. These challenges have been reflected in priorities 2 and 4 as well as within the Strategy itself.
- 4.9 Consultation also sought to identify what the public perceive the potential causes of homelessness were, with lack of affordable housing, drug use, mental health issues and lack of available support services in the community being considered the main drivers.
- 4.10 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy has been updated to reflect the consultation that has been undertaken and it is recommended that the Strategy is approved by Cabinet prior to being formally published before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.
- 4.11 Following consultation there has been a review of the information available to those experiencing homelessness on the council's website to ensure that it is easy to follow and up to date. This was also a recommendation from the Community Select Committee, when the Allocations Policy was considered in June 2024.
- 4.12 Further insight will continue to be gained from service users as to how easy or difficult it is to contact the council, to ensure that the service offered is accessible to all and quick to respond.
- 4.13 To successfully implement the Strategy, a review of resources will be undertaken to align activities and identify pathways of support to effectively deliver the aims of the Strategy.

- 4.14 For 2025/26 the new Government has announced that it will be consolidating the rough sleeping and single homelessness grant (Rough Sleeping Initiative, which includes Housing First and Accommodation for ex-offenders) to run alongside the Homeless Prevention Grant. It is not yet known what the funding settlement for the Council will be, therefore services and resources will be further reviewed to ensure that statutory services can continue to be delivered whilst recognising the impact a reduction in funding could have on the ability to deliver the range of discretionary services currently in place.
- 4.15 It may be necessary for the Council to undertake a further review the Strategy once the Government publishes it's anticipated 10 Year Housing Strategy, which is expected in 2025.
- 4.16 The Council will continue to monitor and report on a range of key performance indicators to assess the demand for services related to the delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.
- 4.17 It is recommended that the Action Plan and Strategy outcomes are reviewed on an annual basis by the Executive Housing Working Group.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 It is important to ensure that the Council has sufficient arrangements in place to prevent homelessness and to ensure that it reduces the costs associated with providing emergency and temporary accommodation and to limit the use of hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 5.2 The Homelessness function is a cost to the General Fund and as such, the net cost of the service is funded via Council Tax and direct Government grants.
- 5.3 The delivery of the Housing Futures (Housing First) Scheme and the expansion of the Council's Homelessness, Housing Options and Rough Sleeper services has been heavily reliant on external Government funding which runs to March 2025. At the point of writing this report the Government has not given any funding guarantees post this date, and therefore consideration to funding these services will need to be considered as part of the General Fund and HRA Budget setting process for 2025/26 and the ability to deliver key elements of the Action Plan.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.4 Section 3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Council to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy for:
- a) Preventing homeless in its district
  - b) Securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in its district who are or may become homeless.
  - c) Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their district –

- i. who are or may become homeless; or
    - ii. who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
  - d) Keep the Strategy under review.
- 5.5 **Section 3 (7A)** Homelessness Act 2002 provides that in formulating or modifying a homelessness Strategy, the Council must have regard to
- A. its current allocation scheme under section 166A of the Housing Act 1996,
  - B. its current tenancy Strategy under section 150 of the Localism Act 2011
- 5.6 Section 3 (8) Homelessness Act 2002 provides that before adopting or modifying a homelessness Strategy the authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons as they consider appropriate.
- 5.7 In exercising its functions relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, including the development of its Homelessness Strategy, the Council must have regard to the Homelessness Code of Guidance Guide for Local Authorities issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.8 The identified and continuing risk within the Strategy relates to the budgets available and continuing Government funding. If funding is no longer available, the Council would not be able to maintain a staffing level which can match the current case level demands. This will affect the Council's ability to provide a full service, which is a statutory obligation.
- 5.9 Due to Stevenage's location and good transport links, there is a risk of an increase of homeless people coming to the area from London including those placed here by other local authorities. This could reduce the number of properties available in the private sector and could create a shortfall and consequently increase of cost of supply.
- 5.10 There has been an increased demand for services due to the use of hotels to house Asylum Seekers and Refugees, to mitigate against this a contracted post for an initial 24 months will be created during 2024.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.11 The Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy outlines the Council's approach to tackling homelessness in its local area. It is consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan objectives to promote sustained economic growth, job creation, provision of affordable homes and housing growth and to deliver value for money. The Strategy also fulfils the Council's co-operative principles through partnership working and inclusivity; and upholds the Council's values by responding to homelessness through group problem solving, innovation and openness.



### **Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 5.12 Staffing implications relate to funding and growth bids - reduced staff levels could lead to increased caseloads, failure to deliver an effective service and staff and customer dissatisfaction.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.13 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed, considering the implications of the Strategy for all communities. A copy of this Assessment is attached at Appendix B.

### **Service Delivery Implications**

- 5.14 Service delivery relies on grant funding. If this grant funding is reduced, the delivery model may need to be reviewed further and the service tailored accordingly. This in turn may impact on service delivery and the Council's ability to retain staff.

### **Information Technology Implications**

- 5.15 There are no implications arising from this report.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e., they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

BD1 [Homelessness Code of Guidance](#)

BD2 [Cabinet Report – draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030](#)

## **APPENDICES**

- A Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030  
B Equality Impact Assessment  
C Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Plan 2024-2025

This page is intentionally left blank

# Appendix A

# Homelessness and Rough

# Sleeper Strategy

# 2025-2030



# CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
Statistical Overview .....	5
Homeless Reduction Act.....	6
Homeless Prevention .....	6
Key Achievements .....	8
Future Ambitions.....	11
Our Priorities .....	12
Priority One .....	12
Priority Two .....	13
Priority Three .....	13
Priority Four .....	13
Consultation.....	14
Health and Wellbeing .....	16
Limitations.....	17



# Foreword

The Council is pleased to introduce Stevenage Borough Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025-2030.

Homelessness occurs for a variety of reasons and can affect any household. The journey is not always simple and can cause great upset to families and individuals, which is why Stevenage Borough Council is committed to eradicating homelessness and ensuring that everyone who finds themselves in this situation can secure and sustain a safe home that meets their needs and allows them to achieve their full potential.

This Strategy sets out our key aims for tackling Homelessness and Rough Sleeping across the borough with the four key priorities being:

- Prevention and Relief of Homelessness
- Provision of Temporary Accommodation
- Housing Development
- Support for Homeless Households

The Council's previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was adopted in 2019 and months later the global pandemic of Covid 19 presented significant challenges on housing and homelessness. Whilst this time was extremely difficult for all, through strength in partnerships and working innovatively, Stevenage adapted its approach and was able to transform services for the better.

The road ahead is still challenging with ongoing emphasis being placed on Local Authorities by Central Government and other agencies to continue to eradicate Rough Sleeping by 2027, but where it does occur, making it brief and non-recurring and consideration still needs to be given to the continuing housing crisis across the UK. There are also challenges presented to the Council with uncertainty on Government funding available to sustain our non-statutory support services and pressure from an increase in Asylum Seeker and Refugee cohorts.

Stevenage, as a Co-operative Council, will continue to improve the availability of housing, particularly social housing, with at least 500 new Council homes being built over the next five years. In line with our co-operative principles, we aim to (with the co-operation of groups within our communities) protect the vulnerable in our communities, such as those that are faced with or have been homeless.

To prepare this Strategy, consultation has been undertaken with Stevenage residents who have been homeless, slept rough and had no fixed address. The Council has worked with these residents to better understand the needs of the service users and to inform future approaches.

We recognise the causes of homelessness are complex and we are not able to solve this on our own; many households who contact the Council with a housing need often have with our continued joint working with partners and stakeholders across Stevenage and Hertfordshire, we are confident that we are well placed to meet our statutory duty, as well strategic aims over the next five years.

**Cllr Jackie Hollywell**

Portfolio Holder for Housing







# Statistical Overview

---

Government figures suggest that the number of families considered homeless in England has increased by 7% in a year. In the first three months of 2023/2024, there were estimated to be 10,670 families with children identified as homeless and owed a relief duty, a rise of 6.5% for the same quarter from the previous year.

The data also reveals that the number of households living in temporary accommodation on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 was 104,150, which marked an increase of 10% from the same period the previous year. Homelessness is rising locally as well as nationally. In 2023/24, 1665 people presented as homeless in Stevenage compared to 1407 the year previous.

Nationally, the number of people estimated to be rough sleeping on a single night in Autumn 2023 was 3,898, which has risen for the second year in a row but remains lower than the peak in 2017. Rough sleeping has increased in every region of England, with nearly half (46%) of all people rough sleeping being in London and the Southeast. In Stevenage the Rough Sleeper Team have supported 191 rough sleepers since August 2023, an average of 19 people per month, not including 10 who are known rough sleepers in Stevenage.

There has also been an increase in the need for emergency and temporary accommodation for people who have physical disabilities. This has placed additional pressures on the service and has helped inform our decision to include the provision of adapted properties in our newly developed temporary accommodation at Dunn Close, due to open in Autumn 2024.

On the 30 November 2023 the Government released statutory homelessness figures showing nearly 139,000 people were homeless and accessing temporary or emergency accommodation. This is a 14% increase on the previous year's figures. These figures also revealed that over 73,600 households were faced homelessness in England between April and June 2023 which is a stark increase of 3,000 compared to the previous year, according to Shelter.

The Council regularly monitors the demands and trends on services and one of the main demands for the service is the numbers of applicants requiring temporary accommodation.

Since 2017 the housing service has regrettably been required to utilise bed and breakfast and hotels when all Council owned emergency and temporary accommodation units are in use. This is to provide applicants who are owed a s188 interim or s193 main duty for temporary accommodation as per the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). As of June 2024, the Council is averaging 5 people/families in hotel accommodation.

*Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Homelessness statistics [www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics)*

*The Independent 12 September 2019 [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/homeless-families-children-housing-temporary-accommodation-a9102416.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/homeless-families-children-housing-temporary-accommodation-a9102416.html)*

# Homeless Reduction Act

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) defines the responsibilities required by a Local Authority under part 6 and part 7. The legislation that has been introduced further to the Housing Act has amended requirements and added to them. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17) was implemented in April 2018 and introduced additional powers and duties for local authorities for the prevention and relief of Homelessness.

<b>Prevention Duty 56 Days</b>	<b>Relief Duty 56 Days</b>	<b>Main Duty</b>
<i>A duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help prevent any eligible person who is at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless (s.195)</i>	<i>A duty to take 'reasonable steps' to help the applicant to secure suitable accommodation (s.189B)</i>	<i>A duty towards homeless applicants who are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (s.193)</i>

The HRA17 builds on the existing provisions of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) and extends the Council's duties to those who are homeless and focusses on prevention.

# Homeless Prevention

The legal definition of homelessness is broad and does not just apply to people without a roof over their heads or who are sleeping rough. There are several categories as detailed below:

<b>Statutory homeless</b>	Households deemed to be homeless, eligible for support from their local Council and in priority need.
<b>Single homeless</b>	Those who are homeless but do not meet the priority need criteria to be housed by their local authority under homelessness legislation.
<b>Vulnerably housed</b>	People without accommodation, people in temporary, insecure or poor-quality accommodation including those that are overcrowded, or those threatened with homelessness.
<b>Rough Sleeping</b>	People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/ in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air. People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, garages, car parks, cars or stations).
<b>Hidden homeless</b>	People not recorded in official statistics, who tend to sleep on the floors or sofas of friends and families or sleep rough in concealed locations.



The Housing Options team in the last 2 years referenced are those made under Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) which relate to whether the applicant falls under the following criteria:

	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>Eligible but intentionally homeless</b>	13	23
<b>Eligible and in priority need</b>	102	96
<b>Not in priority need</b>	41	125
<b>Not homeless</b>	21	8
<b>Total representations</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>252</b>

The length of time taken to make a decision will vary on a case-by-case basis however cases that are found ‘intentionally’ homeless will generally take a longer period of time based on the complexity of the investigations required to be evidenced in the decision letter.

It is identified by Homelesslink and evidenced in national data returns that the most commonly reported reason for losing accommodation is because friends or relatives are no longer able to provide support or because of relationship breakdown.

For Stevenage, the main reasons reported for homeless approaches are overwhelmingly: relationship breakdown, friends and family are no longer able to accommodate and the loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies “AST” which are tenancies usually provided by the private rented sector.

Community Advice & Support have introduced duty officers and a one front door approach to support the customer’s journey. The ethos behind this is to get the right support for the customer at the right time, when and how they need it. Part of this work is embedding the work with partners and signposting customers for the support they need, considering their individuals’ circumstances and any vulnerabilities.

There is a crisis in the provision of housing on a national level, together with the concerns around the cost of living meaning there is not enough social housing stock to meet the demand. To help eradicate homelessness and meet housing demand, sufficient additional accommodation is needed. The options for home seekers are to buy properties, which could include shared equity, or to rent whether it is in the social/ affordable or private sector.

Challenges such as the cost of living, and further concerns regarding transitioning to Universal Credit which is paid in arrears and causes a delay in the receipt of payments can impact on finances and on paying household costs. This, together with Local Housing Allowance rates that do not match the rents charged in the private rented sector means there is often a substantial gap that would need to be met by the applicant which can cause the private rented sector to be unaffordable for many households. For home seekers to be eligible to buy they would need to have the income to support this, again meaning this can be unachievable for some groups.

There is not, however, enough social/affordable housing to meet the demand alone and therefore to reduce homelessness it is imperative that the Council utilises PRS accommodation and encourages landlords to accept applicants who are open to the Council's services and to charge reasonable rents.

Stevenage has always provided housing advice for single non-priority homeless customers; the Council assists with areas such as:

- Applications to the Housing Register where they meet the local connection criteria.
- Referrals to other accommodation providers such as Stevenage Haven/OneYMCA.
- Referrals to support providers such as the Community Mental Health Team, No More Service, social services.
- Helping customers into Private Rented Sector housing.



## Key Achievements

Since the introduction of the previous Strategy the Council has worked to prevent and reduce homelessness within the borough by working with partners and stakeholders. This Strategy continues the work of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 and goes further to achieve the aims of eradicating homelessness.

Much has been achieved since the 2019-2024 priorities were set, this includes the provision of more temporary accommodation and a new development of temporary provision that includes adapted units, which is due to be completed Autumn 2024. We have also introduced 11 Homeless "pods" for rough sleepers which has allowed the Council to provide crucial support and a sustainable pathway into more secure accommodation. The introduction of Triage Officers within the Housing Options Team provides more overall support by bringing together all the Councils support services under Community Advice and Support Team.

The Council has also strengthened and formalised critical partnerships, multiagency initiatives and more effective ways of working together that have been very successful in securing appropriate accommodation and support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and reducing the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.

Initiative	Outcome
<b>Increased Housing Provisions in Stevenage</b>	590 new homes have been built within Stevenage since 2019, 11 Rough Sleeper pods have been introduced and the Council has built a new temporary accommodation provision, due to be opened in Autumn 2024.
<b>Increased training for Staff</b>	Regular and varied training on homelessness, case law and support provided for staff members.
<b>Private Rented Sector</b>	Increased use of properties in the private rented sector (PRS) to prevent homelessness.
<b>Operation Urban</b>	<p>This initiative was introduced to address rough sleeping and begging issues within the town. The findings from this operation have been that not all individuals that have been reported as rough sleeping are “homeless” but choose to identify as a rough sleeper in the process of begging. Hotspot areas have been identified by the Police, which has highlighted that to address the issues of rough sleeping and homelessness within Stevenage it is important for the Council and Police to work jointly to identify and target support for those genuinely in need and appropriately deal with those committing nuisance begging.</p> <p>There have been a number of successful outcomes for cases dealt with through Operation Urban. In one case a resident with a history of drug use, offending and anti-social behaviour who was regularly found to be rough sleeping was referred to the Council’s No More Service (NMS) who provided intensive support and found him accommodation in the local night shelter Stevenage Haven. The resident has complex needs and is being provided with ongoing support.</p>
<b>Community Advice and Support</b>	Since December 2023 the domestic abuse service (SADA) has been part of Community Advice & Support together with other support services, some of the areas include Housing Options, Rough Sleeper Team, Safeguarding and the No More Service giving customers ‘one front door’ access to support and advice.
<b>Best use of Stock</b>	To meet the demands across the services the Council has allocated some of its own housing stock for use as emergency and temporary housing. This is further supported through the link with the Open Market Acquisition (OMA) program, allowing for additional emergency/ temporary accommodation units to be provided and less reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.
<b>Rough Sleeper Services</b>	Funding secured from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Program has provided further resources to allow SBC to develop a Housing Futures Accommodation Scheme and to expand and improve the Rough Sleeper Service which now has four outreach workers who engage with rough sleepers in Stevenage to prevent homelessness.
<b>Cold Weather Provision</b>	The Council provides short term cold weather provision for rough sleepers regardless of priority need during the time of year where the temperature

	drops below freezing. The local night shelter, OneYMCA also provides four bed spaces for this provision, operating from November to March.
<b>Housing Futures</b>	The Council has developed and implemented a hybrid Housing First model called Housing Futures since the end of 2023, in line with the development of the Community Advice and Support business unit. The accommodation provides independent, stable housing to non-priority homeless individuals who are rough sleepers, or at imminent risk of rough sleeping. The accommodation also provides wrap-around support provided jointly by the Council's Rough Sleeper team, the No More Service and external agencies such as Change Grow Live and MIND to help residents with issues surrounding substance misuse and mental health. This is used as a platform to enable individuals with multiple and complex needs to begin recovery and move away from homelessness and ultimately into permanent, secure and safe housing.

What success looks like...

It is important to the Council that it provides a service that delivers real outcomes for people and that we do so in a friendly and non-judgmental way to support people through what is invariably some of the most difficult circumstances that they will ever have to encounter. The case study below highlights some of the incredible work achieved by the team for one service user and the difference it has made to their life.

*Service User X approached Stevenage Borough Council for homelessness support in December 2024 as they had been asked to leave their siblings home due to their addictions to alcohol and cocaine.*

*X had previously not engaged with any drug or alcohol services prior to approaching Stevenage Borough Council for assistance.*

*The Rough Sleeper team supported X and completed referrals to CGL & Emerging Futures through the new partnership Rough Sleeper Detox program.*

*X engaged with the Rough Sleeper team and was kept motivated with continued contact and support from Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators. With X's positive engagement with services, their sibling allowed them to stay in the home until a detox placement was available. This prevented actual street homelessness.*

*X was able to move into the Emerging Futures detox house in January where they were able to get support and remain abstinent. Stevenage Borough Council accommodated X within its Housing Futures scheme once they were deemed ready by Emerging Futures with a planned pathway into permanent and secure housing.*

# Future Ambitions

What we aim to achieve:

- *A supported, streamlined and effective customer journey.*
- *Continuous improvement of our homelessness, prevention and relief work.*
- *Continued co-operative working with our partners at both strategic and operational levels.*
- *Review the Housing Futures model within Stevenage and collect key performance indicators and other data including satisfaction surveys and case studies to continually drive service delivery.*
- *An aspiration to eradicate rough sleeping within Stevenage on a long-term basis.*
- *An increase in the number of private rented sector properties by engaging with private landlords.*
- *A reduction in the number of days applicants are waiting in temporary accommodation by utilising the option to discharge into private sector accommodation where suitable, assisting with signposting for support where needed.*
- *Continuous provision of advice and support to single non-priority homeless applicants.*
- *Provision of advice on housing affordability to ensure sustainable outcomes for all customers and referrals for welfare, debt and advice when needed.*
- *More effective liaison with Housing Associations and an increase in nominations rights to prevent and relieve homelessness.*
- *Communication with the public on the subject of homelessness and rough sleeping including figures and myth busting using a variety of media.*





# Our Priorities

Our future ambitions will be governed by our set priorities within this strategy to prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping. The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and will include feedback from our customers as well as other stakeholders, which will continue to inform our action plan.

This Strategy is based on a review of the current and likely future levels of homelessness in Stevenage and the activities and resources available to prevent homelessness and support homeless people. The Strategy acknowledges that homelessness is on the rise, whilst noting that predicting and analysing future levels is problematic, particularly when trying to forecast the levels of rough sleeping.

## Priority One:

### Prevention and Relief of Homelessness

We Will:

- Continue to improve homelessness prevention and relief work by keeping up to date with best practice across the country to ensure that the Council is providing the best possible service in relation to Homelessness and Rough Sleeper prevention.
- Increase the number of Private Rented properties available and avoiding unnecessary Private Rented evictions by engaging with Private Landlords.
- Monitoring the progress of our Housing Futures model and research future requirements post funding which currently ends in March 2025.
- A reduction in the numbers of those rough sleeping with the ambition to eradicate sleeping rough within Stevenage.
- Provision of advice on housing affordability to ensure sustainable outcomes for all customers.
- Reduce the number of days applicants are waiting in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation by utilising the option to discharge cases owed a duty by the Council into the private rented sector where suitable.
- Reviewing our Cold Weather Provision interventions to ensure that they are fit for purpose and avoid the use of bed and breakfast where possible.

## Priority Two:

### Provision of Good Quality Temporary Accommodation

We Will:

- Increase portfolio of temporary accommodation properties of various sizes and types, helping to minimize the use of Bed and Breakfast provisions.
- Deliver value for money and transparency of service charges.
- Work with partners internally and externally who can offer specialist support.

# Priority Three:

## The Delivery of new Affordable and Social Rented Homes

We Will:

- Provide 500 new affordable homes over 10 years.
- Continue the development of high-quality general needs and independent living accommodation that will create necessary capacity within existing housing stock to allow for move on accommodation.
- Provide accommodation which offers security of tenure, sustainability, and reduced running costs.
- Utilise private sale schemes within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to cross subsidise further development of affordable accommodation.

# Priority Four:

## Support of Homeless Households

We Will:

- Effective tenancy sustainment to reduce incidences of homelessness, including support for families and vulnerable adults to maximise their income and mitigate the effects of welfare reform.
- A supported, streamlined, and effective customer journey for all customers whilst they are given appropriate housing and homelessness advice, including the provision of advice and support to single non-priority homeless applicants.
- Better cross-tenure support between interim and permanent accommodation.
- Continue collaborative working with partners at strategic and operational levels to better support customers and prevent homelessness.

# Consultation

Local authorities are required to work in line with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This Strategy has been published in line with Section 3 of Homelessness Act 2002 which requires local authorities to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy.

The Council is required to provide a Housing Advice and Homelessness service alongside a number of other statutory functions such as the provision of an Allocation Policy.

As per section 2(1) of the 2002 Act, a local authority is required to complete a homelessness review which means a review by a housing authority of:

- a) the levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness in their district.
- b) the activities which are carried out for any the following purposes (or which contribute to achieving any of them):
  - I. preventing homelessness in the housing authority's district.
  - II. securing that accommodation is, or will be, available for people in the district who are, or may become, homeless; and
  - III. providing support for people in the district who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again; and,
- c) the resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations, and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.

The above considerations have been taken into account when setting our priorities and is based on consultation undertaken with members of the public and customer Surveys.

## Consultation with Members of the Public

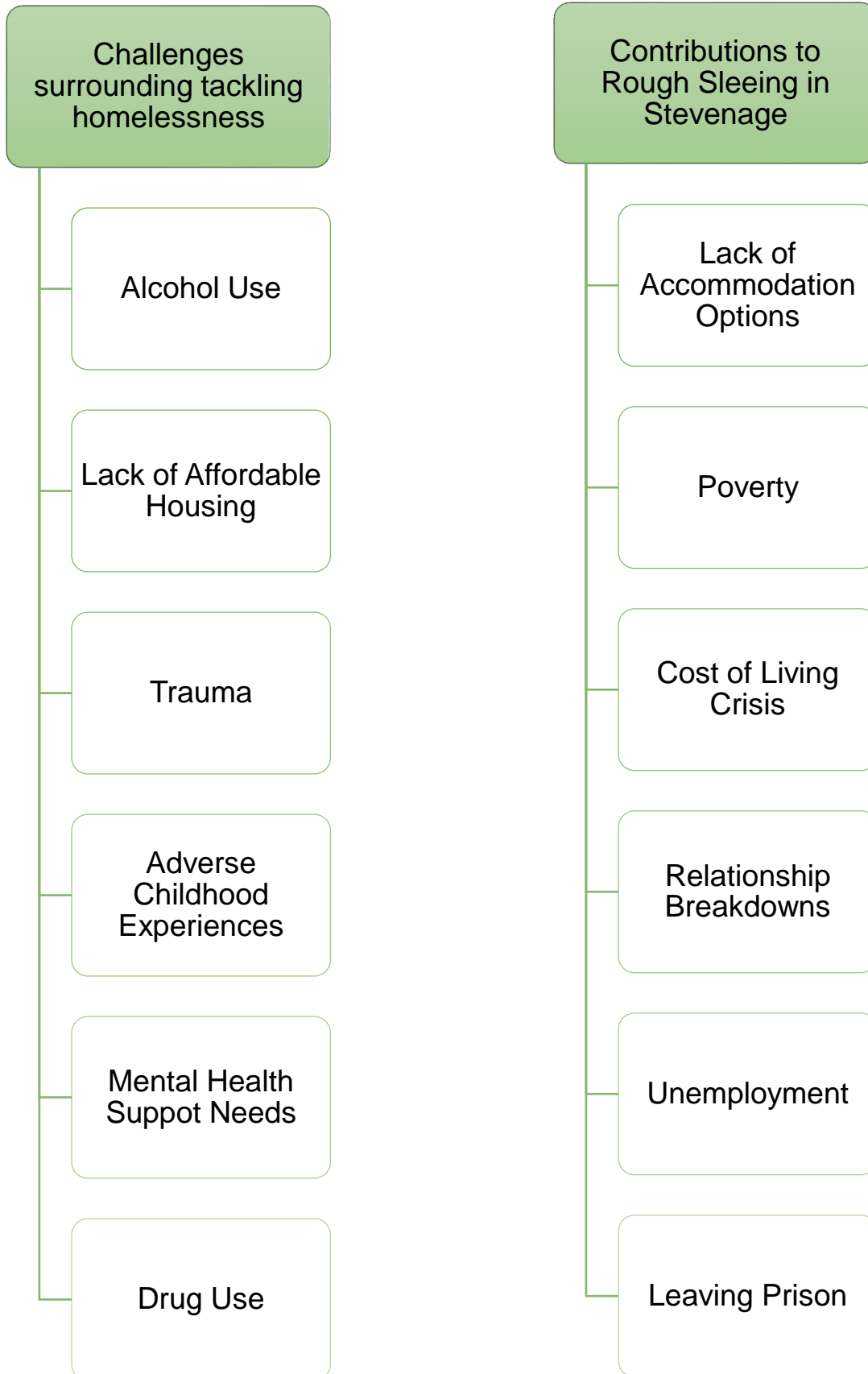
We have consulted with members of the public including professional partners and service users past and present.

The consultation asked:

- *What do you believe are the 3 main challenges surrounding tackling homelessness?*
- *What do you think contributes most to rough sleeping within Stevenage?*



Responses from consultation with Members of the Public included:



## Customer Surveys

At the beginning of the financial year April 1<sup>st</sup> 2024-25 the Housing Options, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation services commenced regular customer satisfaction surveys with our service users to continually review and inform improvements for our homelessness provision.

The aim of the surveys is to continuously seek customer feedback on their experience with the Council's Homelessness services, as well as any feedback on areas for improvement. These surveys help us to identify why people may become homeless or be at risk of homelessness as well inform and shape our services and action plan on an ongoing basis.

Prior to the adoption of this Strategy, we will also consult for no less than eight weeks with members of the public across Stevenage, to ensure that we have captured a holistic view of the priorities for Stevenage's homelessness and rough sleeping service.

# Health and Wellbeing

Stevenage takes the health of its residents seriously and has had a Health and Wellbeing partnership as a thematic group of the local strategic partnership for several years. The health and wellbeing of our homeless or rough sleepers can be seen as a continued focus throughout this Strategy.

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership is a multi-agency forum which includes representatives from the following organisations; Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Public Health, East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group, East and North Herts NHS Trust, Mind in Mid Herts, Healthwatch, Stevenage Football Club Foundation, Citizens Advice Stevenage, Children Centres, Stevenage Leisure Limited, Stevenage Sporting Futures among many others.

The purpose of the partnership is to:

- Achieve better alignment of partners and their efforts to address shared priorities for health and wellbeing.
- Work together to maximise resources, skills, knowledge, and evidence.
- Deliver or commission local projects based on evidence and needs of the local population.
- Increase opportunities to improve health and wellbeing for local residents.
- Champion health and wellbeing and promote positive health-related behaviours.
- Secure additional resources and investment for health and wellbeing projects in Stevenage

Stevenage contributes £5k per financial year to the Herts Young Homeless "Home truths" programme which educates school children across Hertfordshire on a variety of health and wellbeing aspects, including homelessness and housing options. This is to ensure the young people of Stevenage can make well informed choices for the future and aims to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Herts Insight have published the projected population growth for Stevenage and other Hertfordshire Districts over the next 25 years. The projection is that there will be a population increase of 13.8%. We should therefore expect that for Stevenage, the number of presentations of homelessness and housing register applicants will increase.

Due to the importance of the health and wellbeing of applicants who have experienced domestic abuse, the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse service (SADA) works with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their families. The service offers crisis intervention alongside customer led support and signposting to other agencies that suits the individual's needs. The SADA Domestic Abuse Forum is run by survivors who want to make a difference, a drop-in service which runs weekly in person and virtually in Stevenage and North Herts offers support to victims, survivors and their families.

Community Advice & Support manages various Actions Plans that feed into this Strategy including the Modern Slavery Action Plan, Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan, Domestic Abuse Strategy and Tenants Policy, Adult and Children Safeguarding, Adults with Complex Needs Procedure, Allocations Policy and other policies and procedures that can be found on our website.

[www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk).

## Limitations

Whilst this Strategy plans an important role in deepening local understanding of the health and support needs of homeless people in Stevenage, we are aware of certain pressures within the borough.

This includes the reliability on grant funding to support essential but non statutory services, the provision around support for asylum seekers and refugees and their support needs and the cost-of-living crisis, with more families than ever relying on referrals to food banks.

The Council will continue to work Co-operatively with partners and the Community and work towards eradicating homelessness in the town.



## Appendix B



Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024-2029

# Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

[July 2024-July 2029]

<b>Date created</b>	July 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Owner</b>	Sarah Pateman
<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Author</b>	William Peters Rough Sleeper Team & Housing First Manager
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Rough Sleeper Team Community Advice and Support

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk).

**First things first:**

**Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqlA?**

<b>Title:</b>	Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024-2029	
<b>Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:</b>		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		No
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		Yes
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		Yes
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		No

<b>Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:</b>	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes
Encourage good relations?	Yes

**If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.**

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk).

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the .

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role: Assistant Director

Date:

Date:

# Equality Impact Assessment Form

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

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024			
Lead Assessor	Sarah Pateman			Assessment team	William Peters Community Advice and Support
Start date	July 2024	End date	July 2029		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	July 2026				

Page 159

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Users of our Housing Options and Housing Supply Team Households that are in our Emergency and Temporary Accommodation Professional Stakeholders and those in our Co-operative Communities
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>The key aims of the Strategy are to reduce Homelessness and Rough Sleeping within Stevenage, through prevention and relief duties as per the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17).</p> <p>Under the Homelessness Act 2002 every Local Authority is required to develop a Homelessness Strategy and following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the publication of the Rough Sleeper initiative the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government have instructed Local Authorities to update their strategies and publish online by the 31 December 2019.</p> <p>The four aims in the Strategy are set out as: Prevention and Relief of Homelessness Provision of Accommodation Housing Development Support for Homeless Household.</p>

What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	SBC is a third party reporting centre for hate crime / discrimination and actively encouraging more organisations to sign up as third party reporting centres to reach the wider community.	Promote equal opportunities	The service priorities aim to promote equalities through partnership working to ensure that all Stevenage resident have equal opportunity access services.	Encourage good relations	Engagement with a wide range of residents, community safety partners and Housing Services. Developing relationships with vulnerable/marginalised groups through targeted outreach.

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>We have used data/information available both locally and nationally, assessments are up to-date.</p> <p>Information relating to the different groups have been reviewed. Development of this Strategy follows the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA17) and the publication of the Governments Rough Sleeper Initiative and is referenced against the Homelessness code of guidance.</p> <p>The following has contributed to the Strategy and Eq1A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of P1E submissions over the last 5 years. (P1E data was the national homelessness performance return, since the implementation of the HRA17, this has been replaced by H-CLIC) Information included in these submissions are relating to Preventions and Relief of homeless, number of those that become homeless, the reason for homelessness, ethnicity of those that become homeless and whether there are support needs.</li> <li>• Information relating to Housing Options service data on those that have approached the Council</li> <li>• for Housing Advice or actually homeless, published within our own KPI's reporting system – In Phase</li> <li>• Review of data relating to population increases with Hertfordshire 'Herts Insight'</li> <li>• Consultation with professional stakeholders and residents that are in our Temporary Accommodation or residing in the Stevenage Haven.</li> <li>• A review of published strategies around the UK as well as within Hertfordshire</li> </ul>
---	---



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desktop review of the previous Homelessness Strategy 2019-2024</li> </ul>
--	--

<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>As a Local Authority we need to monitor and assess the impact of the Strategy in terms of homeless applicants generally, during the homeless presentation a vulnerability assessment is completed thus ensuring that there is no indirect discrimination contrary to our public sector equality duty.</p>
---	--

## Evidence and Impact Assessment

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

Page 161

Age					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Any vulnerable applicant aged over 55 may benefit from the availability of Independent Living properties this has enabled some homelessness to be prevented through an offer under part 6. This is monitored in relation to the availability of these properties.</p> <p>Our independent Living team are committed to support residents within their own home to live independently, with the development of the Housing Older People Strategy further options will be explored.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Support is provided to those of all aged who are housed within our Emergency and Temporary Accommodation.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

<b>Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness</b>					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Facts and Statistics published by Mind indicate that 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem each year, these range from Anxiety, Depression, Phobias, OCD, PTSD etc, every seven years Mind run a survey measure the number of people who have different types of mental health. The most recent survey was published in 2017. As the reporting on HCLIC becomes available we will be able to monitor better the number of approaches we receive from those that have support needs in this area, the homelessness forum which meets every two months brings together those who work within mental health services as well as those who work with the homeless.</p> <p>Work continues with HCC and we will shortly have available units in a new development where those with specific disabilities will be able live as independently as possible in order to lead normal lives.</p> <p>Training continues to be provided to staff on the effects of disabilities has – such as depression recent suicide awareness training has recently taken place.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Publish with Specialist Support Service how the new units provided at Gresley Way are providing independent living to the residents.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Analysis of information that will be submitted via HCLIC on the numbers and types of support those approaching the service have/require.	

<b>Gender Reassignment</b>					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information	<p>Within the last year we have not had any service data to show that there would be any impact on this group. Staff do have an awareness of this particular group and as with any other groups will ensure that no group is disadvantaged.</p>				

you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b>					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Within the last year we have not had any service data to show that there would be any impact on this group. Staff do have an awareness of this particular group and as with any other groups will ensure that no group is disadvantaged.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

<b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b>					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Legislation protects those who present as pregnant and are classed as priority need if presenting as homeless. Individuals will be provided with Interim Accommodation and support is provided by our Tenancy Support team which includes assistance in applying for any maternity benefits that are available.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

### Race

Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	This strategy will be for all those living within Stevenage, including BME groups. There is no evidence that shows that this group is disproportionately represented in terms of the homelessness acceptances.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

### Religion or Belief

Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The strategy is for all within Stevenage irrespective of religion or beliefs. When working with individuals consideration is taken on whether shared accommodation is suitable and where it is not we will provide self-contained interim accommodation.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

### Sex

Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information	Although the Strategy does not refer to domestic abuse specifically, the Housing Options team work closely with the Council's Community Safety team and the Police.				

you used to support this assessment	<p>Where required and available we will ensure clients are offered Refuge places and if required recommend out of area placements if the client is at risk within Stevenage.</p> <p>While data shows that the majority of approaches are from women, the team are aware that men can also be at risk of domestic abuse and the same consideration should be given to them as well as women.</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Availability and location of any male refuge places

Page 165

<b>Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual</b>					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The strategy will be for all communities within Stevenage irrespective of sexual orientation.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

**Socio-economic<sup>1</sup>**

**e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement**

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

Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>A barrier highlighted by the consultation with both professionals as well as clients of the service related to the continued effects of Welfare Reform, this relates to the benefit cap and the Local Housing Allowance.</p> <p>The strategy recognises this, and we ensure that an affordability assessment is completed with all clients whether their homelessness will be discharged into the Private Sector or not.</p> <p>We also continue to support all clients with Debt Advice and Support relating to this and assist with applications for any unclaimed benefits as well as discretionary housing payments.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

<b>Additional Considerations – Joint Housing Protocol</b> Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>The strategy refers to the Hertfordshire Joint Housing Protocol, it shows the close working relationship between all 10 Hertfordshire districts and promotes the pathway between housing and care leavers. It shows a housing pathway for care leavers and the support available. HCC are currently employing a housing professional to work with care leavers who end up sleeping rough.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Continued funding in relation to Education in schools. This is carried out by Herts Young Homeless		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		Impact of specialist housing professional working with care leavers sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough

## Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Staff reported that working with partners is the key to problem solving and providing support to residents.	Residents?	Residents are consulted with at various opportunities through surveys. This allows us to adapt to resident needs.
Voluntary & community sector?	Voluntary Sectors agree that in order to make a difference it is essential that we work co-operatively, and information is shared regularly.	Partners?	Partners agree that in order to make a difference it is essential that we work co-operatively, and information is shared regularly.
Other stakeholders?			

## Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Explain the <b>overall findings</b> of the assessment and <b>reasons for outcome (please choose one)</b> :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	As below
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

**Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:**

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Improve statistical reporting tools to enable more information relating to advice and support given to those presenting as threatened with homelessness relating to all groups.	This will ensure that we have data on any groups and that there is not direct/indirect discrimination to any particular group.	Operations Manager and Housing Options Manager.	July 2025	Will become part of the normal monitoring processes
Update all policies and procedures relating to Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation ensuring that out of area placement is included.	Promote confidence in both staff members and the public that the correct decisions are made and do not direct or indirectly discriminate.	Housing Options manage, Housing Supply and lettings Manager and Temporary Accommodation Manager.	July 2025	Through Policy Implementation and reviews.
Allocations Policy review to ensure that it does not discriminate against those in protected groups but also that may have had a criminal history.	Promote confidence in both staff members and the public that the correct decisions are made and do not direct or indirectly discriminate.	Housing Supply and Lettings Manager.	July 2025	Through Policy Implementation and reviews.

Page 168

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director:**

**Date: July 2024**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk) for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.



Appendix C  
Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Action Plan  
2024/2025



Priorities:

- 1) Prevention and Relief of Homelessness
- 2) Provision of Good Quality Temporary Accommodation
- 3) The Delivery of new Affordable and Social Rented Homes
- 4) Support of Homeless Households

Priority one: Prevention and Relief of Homelessness

Objective	Measure	Service Involvement	Updates	Status
Continuous improvement in our homelessness prevention and relief work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased training opportunities for staff to understand best practice.</li> <li>• Reduction in repeat homelessness cases.</li> <li>• Government statistical returns (HCLIC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rough Sleeper Team</li> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply</li> <li>• Lettings</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Team</li> </ul>		
Increase the number of Private Rented properties available and avoiding unnecessary Private Rented evictions by engaging with Private Landlords.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a dedicated staffing resource for private sector tenancy sustainment.</li> <li>• Internal KPI's relating to number of tenancies set-up within the Private Rented Sector as well as new properties becoming available.</li> <li>• Reduction of approaches from Housing Options to Housing Supply.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply</li> <li>• Lettings</li> <li>• Development</li> <li>• Private Sector Landlords</li> </ul>		
A reduction in the numbers of those rough sleeping with the ambition to eradicate sleeping rough within Stevenage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by Rough Sleeper Count and verified by Homelesslink.</li> <li>• Effective communication with the public about homelessness and rough sleeping including</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• No More Service</li> <li>• Multi-agency such as Mental Health, Police, Stevenage Haven, etc.</li> </ul>		

	myth busting and the provision of Advice and Support to single 'non-priority' homeless applicants.			
Review the Housing Futures model and funding available to support it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal KPI's</li> <li>• Use satisfaction surveys to understand customer satisfaction levels.</li> <li>• Customer Case Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• No More Service</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Multi-agency such as Mental Health, Police, Stevenage Haven, etc</li> </ul>		
Aim to reduce the number of days applicants are waiting in Temporary Accommodation by utilising the option to discharge cases owed a duty into the Private Rented Sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the numbers of cases discharged into the Private Rented Sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply Teams</li> <li>• Lettings &amp; Temporary Accommodation Team</li> <li>• Private Sector Landlords</li> </ul>		
Provision of advice on housing affordability to ensure sustainability outcomes for all customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income maximisation shown in internal KPIs.</li> <li>• Number of referrals to support services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply</li> <li>• Citizens Advice</li> <li>• Job Centre</li> <li>• Welfare, Benefit and Debt Advice</li> </ul>		

<p>Review of Cold Weather Provision to ensure that they are fit for purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of referrals during Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.</li> <li>• Reduction of cases placed into Bed and Breakfast Provisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rough Sleeper Team</li> <li>• No More Service</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Team</li> <li>• Housing Options</li> </ul>		
--	---	--	--	--

Priority two: Provision of Temporary Accommodation

Objective	Measure	Service Involvement	Updates	Status
<p>Review portfolio of temporary accommodation properties of various sizes and types, helping to meeting customer needs and minimize the use of Bed and Breakfast provisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development due to be available Autumn 2024.</li> <li>• Reduction of cases placed into Bed and Breakfast Provisions.</li> <li>• Measured by the Government Statistical Return HCLIC.</li> <li>• Monthly monitoring of Bed and Breakfast spends.</li> <li>• Finish the development of specialist emergency and temporary accommodation in Dunn Close with accommodation suitable for those with physical disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lettings</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Team</li> <li>• Development</li> <li>• Housing Options</li> </ul>		

Work with partners internally and externally who can offer specialist support, including Welfare Debt & Advice Team to help reduce rent arrears whilst in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by the monthly arrears data.</li> <li>• Referrals to Welfare Debt &amp; Advice Team</li> <li>• Referrals to specialist support services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Team</li> <li>• Welfare Debt &amp; Advice Team</li> <li>• Specialist partner agencies.</li> </ul>		
Value for money and transparency of service charges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use satisfaction surveys to understand customer satisfaction levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lettings</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Team</li> <li>• Income Services</li> <li>• Finance</li> </ul>		

### Priority Three: Housing Development

Objective	Measure	Service Involvement	Updates	Status
The provision of 500 new and affordable homes over 10 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by the number of accommodation units available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Development</li> </ul>		
The development of high-quality accommodation that will create move on possibilities for those in temporary accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less time spent in temporary accommodation monitored by business unit KPI's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Development</li> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Team</li> </ul>		

To provide accommodation that has reduced running costs as a result of designs that allow for better insulated properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use satisfaction surveys to understand customer satisfaction levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Development</li> </ul>		
To utilise private sale schemes within the Housing Revenues Account to cross subsidise further development of affordable accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of spends.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Development</li> <li>• Finance</li> </ul>		

Priority Four: Support for Homeless Households

Objective	Measure	Service Involvement	Updates	Status
Effective tenancy sustainment to reduce incidences of homelessness, including support for families and vulnerable adults to maximise their income and mitigate the effects of welfare reform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by fewer approaches and repeat homelessness.</li> <li>• Income maximisation shown by KPIs</li> <li>• Increase number in referrals to Debt &amp; Advice Team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply</li> <li>• Income Services</li> <li>• Welfare, Benefit and Debt Advice</li> </ul>		
Better cross-tenure support from temporary accommodation to permanent accommodation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase on sustained tenancies.</li> <li>• Use satisfaction surveys to understand customer satisfaction levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenancy Services</li> <li>• Community Safety</li> <li>• Income Services</li> <li>• Specialist Support Services</li> </ul>		

<p>Continued collaborative working with our partners at strategic and operations level to better support customers and prevent homelessness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint agency approach in supporting customers.</li> <li>• Homelessness forum which incorporates Health partners.</li> <li>• Joint Housing Protocol meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Advice and Support Teams: SADA, No More, Welfare Benefit and Debt Advice</li> <li>• Hertfordshire County Council</li> <li>• Herts Young Homeless</li> <li>• The Haven</li> <li>• Aldwyck</li> <li>• OneYMCA</li> <li>• Housing Associations</li> <li>• Local Authorities within Hertfordshire</li> <li>• Mental Health services</li> <li>• Police,</li> <li>• CGL</li> </ul>		
<p>A supported, streamlined, and effective customer journey for all customers whilst they are given appropriate housing and homelessness advice,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by fewer complaints received via the Council's complaints team.</li> <li>• Measured by reduction in Rough Sleeping via the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Options</li> <li>• Housing Supply</li> <li>• Customer Service Centre</li> </ul>		

including the provision of advice and support to single non-priority homeless applicants.	Rough Sleeper count.			
---	----------------------	--	--	--



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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank