

# Public Document Pack



## CABINET

**Date: Wednesday, 12 March 2025**  
**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

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## AGENDA

### **PART 1**

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

**2. MINUTES - CABINET 12 FEBRUARY 2025**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 February 2025 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 5 – 12

**3. MINUTES - SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEES**

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

Community Select Committee – 29 January 2025 and 5 February 2025

Pages 13 – 22

**4. CORPORATE CO-OPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REVIEW**

To gain approval from Cabinet to delegate authority to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation to sign off the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 following further consultation with the community and stakeholders.

Pages 23 – 72

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

To seek Members' approval of the confirming of two revised Article 4 Directions to remove the permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from office and light industrial uses to residential use in Gunnels Wood and Pin Green.

Pages 73 – 96

**6. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2024/25**

To receive a report highlighting the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 3 2024/25 and provide an update on progress against Cost-of-Living support for residents and current strategic risks.

Pages 97 – 142

**7. THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (INCLUDING THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25)**

To update Members on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2024/25 net expenditure and seek approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.

Pages 143 – 174

**8. VOIDS POLICY AND LETTABLE STANDARDS**

To present a new Void Management Policy and revised Lettable Standard for approval.

Pages 175 – 208

**9. AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY**

To seek approval of an updated version of the Aids and Adaptations Policy following a review and consultation with tenants.

Pages 209 – 232

**10. HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS**

To provide an overview of the Government's new High Street Rental Auctions process including an outline of how a consultation process would operate in Stevenage with regard to designated High Street Rental Auctions areas.

Pages 233 – 244

**11. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**12. 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.

**13. PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS**

To provide an update on the Re-Procurement of the Framework Contract for the Provision of Agency workers for the Council.

**14. SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE - DESIGN AND PLANNING SUBMISSION**

To update Members on the Sports and Leisure Centre within the Government's Towns Fund programme being delivered by Stevenage Borough Council.

**15. SBC LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LOCALITY REVIEW UPDATE)**

To provide Members with an update of the progress and actions being taken to meet the capital requirements as set out in the 15 November 2023 Executive report in relation to the General Fund Capital Strategy and expenditure covering new development (building) activity at Stevenage Borough Council.

**16. MAJOR PROJECT BRAGBURY END**

The report seeks to provide Members with an update on the progression and design development of a new neighbourhood for Stevenage - The Bragbury End Garden Village project that will deliver new housing, infrastructure and connections for up to 500-700 new homes as part of the land identified in HO4 of the Approved Local Plan 2011-2031

**17. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

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

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## **CABINET MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

**Present:** Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice Chair), 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**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Sandra Barr and Lloyd Briscoe.

There were no declarations of interest.

At this juncture, Councillor Richard Henry, Leader of the Council wished Councillor Sandra Barr, Cabinet Member for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods well for a speedy recovery. Councillor Henry also sent condolences on behalf of the Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team to Councillor Anne Wells following her husband's recent passing.

### **2 MINUTES - CABINET 15 JANUARY 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 January 2025 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

Cabinet were advised that the work of the Community Select Committee had included receiving updates on damp and mould focussing on the stock condition survey and case management approach within the Decent Homes programme. Additionally, Members considered the revised Housing Antisocial Behaviour Policy. A further meeting of the Committee had been held relating to the Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion activities where Members had received a presentation from the Stevenage Equalities Commission.

The Environment and Economy Select Committee had discussed various topics including the Local Skills Agenda, the Step2Skills programme and had reviewed the final report and recommendations of the Skills Review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had reviewed a number of Cabinet reports and covered several key topics as well as receiving an update on the Council's website improvements which were aimed at enhancing accessibility and user

experience.

The Leader and other Members thanked Scrutiny Councillors for their time, comments and work and advised that there was regular collaboration between Scrutiny and Cabinet on many of these matters had taken place.

Members expressed the importance of including Ward members in any initiatives that the Council was undertaking in their areas.

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

Community Select Committee – 28 November 2024 and 8 January 2025

Environment and Economy Select Committee – 12 December 2024 and 14 January 2025

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17 December 2024 and 21 January 2025

#### 4 **FINAL SOSAFE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Cabinet received the Final SoSafe (Community Safety) Strategy 2025/26 which had been reviewed by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meetings in January with no additional comments.

It was noted that the Strategy would help to deliver meaningful crime reduction outcomes whilst remaining committed to building upon progress achieved in recent years. It was noted that in the last three years SoSafe had introduced initiatives which would support some of the most vulnerable people in the Town.

The Portfolio Holder thanked Matt Partridge the Council's Chief Executive for chairing the SoSafe Partnership during the previous 6 years.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the duty placed on the Council and other responsible authorities to publish and implement a Community Safety Strategy that addresses the reduction of crime and disorder be noted.
2. That the feedback from Cabinet (January 2025) and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (January 2025) be noted and that the Community Safety Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities and the So-Safe partnership, to agree and publish an annual Community Safety Action Plan and to make minor amendments to the Strategy.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

#### 5 **FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26**

The Cabinet received the final 2025/26 General Fund Budget report which incorporated the finance settlement for the next year that had been announced on the 3 February 2025.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council had received more national insurance compensation than previously anticipated which had helped to balance the budget without making service reductions and allow the contribution of a small sum to general reserves. She advised that the 2.99% increase on Council Tax for next year which would add an extra £7.15 per year on a band D property. In total, this would result in a 40p per week increase for working age claimants on maximum benefit if they claimed Council Tax Support.

Members were reassured by the Strategic Director and Chief Finance officer that work had begun on next year's budget to identify the required savings of £900k.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 26 February 2026:

1. That the 2024/25 revised net expenditure on the General Fund of **£12,251,910** be approved as set out in paragraph 4.8.1 as summarised in Appendix B be approved;
2. The draft General Fund Budget for 2025/26 of **£10,656,540** be proposed for consultation purposes, with a contribution to balances of **£6,053** and a Band D Council Tax of **£246.41**, (assuming a 2.99% Council Tax increase), as summarised in Appendix B.
3. The updated position on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as summarised in section 4.10 be noted.
4. The minimum level of General Fund reserves of **£3,421,625**, which is in line with the 2025/26 risk assessment of balances, as shown at Appendix C to this report, be approved.
5. The contingency sum of **£500,000** within which the Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2025/26, (reflecting the level of balances available above the minimum amount).
6. The 2025/26 Balancing the Budget options as set out in section 4.5 and Appendix A, totalling **£275,907** and **£29,651** for the General Fund and HRA respectively, be approved.
7. The use of the Business Rate reserve to fund a Graduate and Apprentice scheme as set out in section 4.6 be approved for inclusion in the 2025/26 General Fund (**£202,760**).
8. That a first call on underspends of **£150,000** (in total from the General Fund and HRA) be approved to support the Graduate and Apprentice scheme as set out in section 4.6.
9. That the growth bid for graffiti removal of **£75,000** as set out in section 4.6 be approved.
10. That the pressures identified in sections 4.2 and 4.7 to this report be noted;
11. That the Council Tax Support scheme for 2025/26 as set out in paragraphs 4.3.8-4.3.9 be approved;
12. That the Section 25 Statement on Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserve as set out in Appendix D be approved;
13. That the Equalities Impact Assessment appended to this report for the Council Tax increase (Appendix E) be noted.
14. That the feedback on the budget from Overview and Scrutiny as set out in Para.4.13.1 and public consultation in Para. 4.13.2 onwards be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*  
*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

## 6 **FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2029/30**

Cabinet received a report updating Members on the Capital Strategy for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) including revisions to the 2024/25 programme and the presentation of the final Capital Programme for 2025/26.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation advised that the General Fund Capital proposals had increased since the January 2025 Cabinet report which reflected the Garage Improvement Programme along with works for the new Market in Park Place.

It was noted that commentary from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been included in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following proposals be recommended to Council on 26 February 2025:

1. The final General Fund Capital Budget for 2025/26 of £52Million, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved.
2. Revisions to the 2024/25 General Fund Capital Budget for 2024/25 of £244k, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be approved.
3. Final HRA Capital Budget for 2025/26 of £51.4Million, as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.
4. Forecast of resources and approach to resourcing the capital programme as outlined in the report (General fund Paragraph 4.4 and HRA paragraph 4.10) be approved.
5. Final General Fund growth bids identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy and Appendix A to the report) be approved.
6. To enable the use of Community infrastructure levy of up to £5Million, to fund future infrastructure projects as outlined in paragraph 4.6.3. be approved.
7. The approved capital de-minimis expenditure limit of £10,000 be noted.
8. The approved revenue surplus in any year of up to £500K that can be allocated to the capital reserve to support capital expenditure be noted.
9. That the comments from Council Financial Security Group set out in section 4.14 are noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*  
*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

## 7 **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26**

Cabinet received a report setting out the Council's Annual Investment Strategy and the prudential indicators and agreeing the boundaries for the Council's borrowing



and investments for 2025/26.

Members were pleased to note that there had been no breaches of the Treasury Management Strategy so far this year and that it was in line with the latest CIPFA Treasury Management and Prudential Codes.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation thanked the Strategic Director and her Finance Team for the work undertaken in connection with this and other budget activities throughout this year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2025/26 Treasury Management Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

## 8 **ADOPTION OF THREE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS**

Cabinet received a report relating to three revised Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) covering Parking and Sustainable Transport, Developer Contributions and Design Guidance, which had been updated to reflect changes in policy and national guidance since they had been adopted.

Members were advised that the SPD's had been subject to a round of public consultation and had now been updated and reflected the representations made. The SPD's would support the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and emerging Local Plan Partial Review and Update.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance thanked the Planning Team for their work on these SPD's and the work undertaken on the whole of the Planning framework to ensure that the Council maintains a robust planning infrastructure.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the three revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD be noted; and that the public consultation on the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents, held between 14 October and 24 November 2024 be noted.
2. That the adoption of the three revised Supplementary Planning Documents: Parking Provision SPD, Developer Contributions SPD and Design Guidance SPD, from 28 February 2025 be approved.
3. That delegated powers be granted to the Interim Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD documents prior to adoption.
4. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee on the content of this Report be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

## 9 **VULNERABILITY POLICY**

Cabinet received a report detailing how the Council would consider vulnerability in line with expectations from the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman.

Members agreed the importance for the Council as a landlord to be able to recognise and respond to challenges and to anticipate the need for reasonable adjustments in how services were provided in a non-judgemental way. It was noted that a further round of consultation would be undertaken with tenants and prospective tenants on the Policy.

In response to a question, it was agreed that the issue of residents who had experienced the care system also had special vulnerability and should be considered as part of this policy. Officers advised that a Joint Housing Protocol with Herts County Council was in place in relation to care leavers to ensure additional support was available. Following further discussion, the Leader of the Council asked that further consideration be given by the Assistant Director and the Portfolio Holder for Housing to the suggestion of suspending the local connection criteria for those who had left the care system but had also left the area.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the duty placed on the Council under the Equality Act 2010, The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code for landlords to recognise and respond to vulnerability and to approve the Housing Services Vulnerability Policy at Appendix A be noted.
2. That it be approved that the Vulnerability Policy be consulted on with tenants and prospective tenants for no less than four weeks and that following, the Strategic Director (RP), in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to approve the Policy and to implement minor updates and changes arising from new legislation or best practice.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

## 10 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part 1 business.

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

It was **RESOLVED**:

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

described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

12     **PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORT CONTRACTORS FOR THE REPAIRS AND VOIDS SERVICE**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of the Procurement of Support Contractors for the Repairs and Voids Service.

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

*Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in the report.*

13     **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part 2 business.

**CHAIR**

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 29 January 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice Chair), Stephen Booth, Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Mason Humberstone and Jade Woods

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.40pm

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members, Councillors Kamal Choudhury and Lynda Guy.

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

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

### 3 CONTINUATION OF THE REVIEW INTO EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The Committee meeting focused on gathering information from guest contributors regarding the Equality Act (2010) and its protected characteristics of Age and Disability. The main emphasis was on listening to real-life evidence from guests and community members.

The Chair invited Lorna Scardifield, who represented Age Concern, to address the Committee. She provided insights into the support available for older people and discussed the provision of benefit advice and housing options, highlighting the importance of face-to-face interactions. Lorna identified a number of key priorities for older individuals, such as the need for more benches in the town due to the relocation of the bus interchange. Additionally, she mentioned that Age Concern was in the process of moving to a new location, managed by Hertfordshire County Council, and they were awaiting further updates on the transition but would remain open from Wednesday to Saturday.

In response to a question from the Chair, Lorna advised that a current concern related to the impact of the recent cut to the Winter Fuel Payment, which had caused significant worry among older residents. Before Christmas, Age Concern had experienced a surge in residents seeking advice about the changes. A major barrier

was that many older people were unable to access online services, leading them to seek in-person support.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns around digital exclusion and mobility issues. It was suggested that these issues be noted as a recommendation for consideration by the Environment and Economy Select Committee.

Lorna informed the Committee that there had been plans to provide a mobility scooter hire service from the bus station, with a designated storage facility proposed at the side of the station. However, due to changes in Council staff supporting the project, the plans had not moved forward.

A member expressed concern upon discovering these plans had not moved forward and suggested that this should be recorded as a specific recommendation for the review. Subject to funding being available to support such a project, officers would investigate what would be required to create a mobility buggy storage and hire options from the bus interchange.

At this juncture, discussions took place regarding the number of mobility scooters available at Age Concern. It was noted that they previously had nine scooters when based in Swingate but now had five due to a reduction in space. It was also noted the main need was for suitable locations, rather than acquiring additional scooters.

The Committee commended the efforts of the Age Concern team, particularly highlighting the opportunity for people to test different types of scooters and walkers. A question was raised regarding restrictions on selling second-hand mobility scooters. It was clarified that due to the organisation's public liability insurance policy, they were only able to purchase new mobility scooters.

The Chair introduced Lahaina Sutherland, the Stevenage Youth Mayor, who addressed matters concerning young people of Stevenage. She invited open questions from the group, focusing on topics such as education and equality. The Youth Mayor shared her experiences as a young person in Stevenage studying while also working part-time.

The Committee heard that Stevenage offered strong part-time job opportunities for young people, with a well-established network for employment access. However, a key barrier to employment was the lack of preparation for entering the workforce, particularly in interview skills and workplace expectations. The Youth Mayor suggested that schools should allocate more time to developing these skills and recommended that workshops be held to support students in this area.

Regarding mental health support, the Youth Mayor praised the resources available in Stevenage, particularly the Young People's Healthy Hub. She highlighted that mental health coordinators in schools were well-informed about available support programs, making it easier for students to access help when needed.

The Chair questioned the level of engagement that young people had with the Council and the services it provided. It was noted that a perceived gap existed between younger people and the Council, which the Youth Mayor aimed to address

during her term. The Youth Mayor advised that she had already visited primary schools across the town and planned further visits before the next Youth Mayor's inauguration in May 2025. She believed it was important for young people to understand that they could have their voices heard at the Council level and proposed holding assemblies or workshops in schools to raise awareness of Council services and improve accessibility.

In response to a question regarding the most effective way for the Council to engage with young residents, the Youth Mayor highlighted the importance of a strong social media presence, as it was a primary communication platform for young people. However, she also emphasised the value of face-to-face interactions, such as guest speakers at school events, which could offer more meaningful engagements.

When asked about what was most lacking for young people in Stevenage, the Youth Mayor identified the need for greater access to extracurricular activities, particularly sports clubs, to encourage social interaction and personal development. She also emphasised the importance of employment opportunities to help young people gain experience, build confidence, and prepare for future careers.

Responding to a question about cost barriers for young people, the Youth Mayor acknowledged that financial constraints were a significant factor. The importance of supporting economically disadvantaged young people was emphasised to ensure equal opportunities. The Chair also highlighted the role of support within the home in encouraging and championing young people.

A Member asked the Youth Mayor about the biggest change she had experienced growing up in Stevenage and what improvements she would like to see. A discussion followed regarding the rise in antisocial behaviour (ASB), attributed to increased social media use and a lack of community cohesion. It was suggested that greater access to extracurricular activities could help address this issue by providing a sense of inclusion and belonging.

When asked about the biggest pressures on young people, the Youth Mayor identified two key concerns. The first was the impact of social media, particularly regarding body image stigma, which could negatively affect mental health. The second was academic pressure, especially the lack of support for young people not pursuing university education. However, it was noted that exam-related pressures had improved through adjustments to exam conditions for those who needed additional support.

The Committee then received a presentation from the Council's Community Development Officer on Age Friendly Communities in Stevenage. The initiative aimed to streamline services, improve support for older residents and create funding and knowledge sharing opportunities with other Age-Friendly Communities (AFC).

The Committee was informed that achieving Age Friendly Community status involved collaboration with the Centre for Better Aging (CFBA) to understand the criteria and benefits. Stevenage was awarded AFC status in February 2024 and was working with Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK on implementation. An Age Friendly Survey had been conducted, with results expected by the end of March

2025.

The Community Development Officer outlined the Take a Seat campaign, which aimed to increase seating in Stevenage to promote rest and community engagement. The initiative would include making street furniture more accessible, such as benches with backs and arms for support. A task and finish group would also be formed to lead specific age friendly projects, replacing the Older People's Network. Additionally, the work would include collaboration with Dementia-Friendly Stevenage to address age-related issues, including dementia care.

The Chair invited Sharn Tomlinson, CEO of Mind in Mid Herts to address the committee.

The Committee was informed about the connection between mental health, disability, and neurodivergent communities. It was highlighted that individuals on the autistic spectrum were nine times more likely to take their own life. Many people without a formal diagnosis of autism or learning difficulties faced social isolation, which significantly impacted their mental health. In addition to dementia-friendly initiatives, the need for a more inclusive, neurodivergent-friendly community was emphasised.

The Committee acknowledged that greater collaboration between the Council and external mental health experts would improve service delivery and noted this as an area for development.

The Chair invited Alison MacDougall, a volunteer for Hertfordshire Vision Loss, to address the meeting. Alison introduced herself and outlined her role in establishing the Stevenage Sight-Life. She highlighted the challenges faced by individuals with sight loss, particularly regarding transport accessibility. She emphasised the importance of public transport, especially the bus services and station, in maintaining independence.

Paula McGuinness shared her personal experience of living with a sight impairment and the difficulties of navigating public spaces, particularly uneven pavements. Concerns were raised about the safety of electric bikes and scooters on pavements, and members requested that the issue be addressed in collaboration with community policing to improve regulation and enforcement. A request was also made for high-visibility markings on bollards to enhance safety visually impaired residents. The accessibility of council leaflets was also discussed, with a recommendation to use high-contrast text and background. Additionally, poor street lighting was identified as a barrier to mobility.

It was noted that Stevenage Sight-Life had met with a representative from the Thomas Pocklington Trust, which had been conducting accessibility assessments at local train stations, including Stevenage and Luton Parkway. Several accessibility improvements were identified, such as the introduction of an audio descriptive guide and enhanced safety measures, including CCTV monitoring for vulnerable passengers.

Laura, a member of the Stevenage Sight-Life group, raised concerns about the



accessibility and communication challenges faced by sight-impaired passengers at Stevenage Bus Station. She suggested implementing a tannoy system to announce bus arrivals and bay changes. Laura also acknowledged the assistance she had received from residents during her travels on public transport in Stevenage. Additionally, concerns were raised about poor signage between the train and bus stations, making it difficult for visually impaired passengers to read signs and identify buses.

The importance of these discussions was highlighted, with reference for the need for an officer as a point of contact. The Community Development Officer also discussed connecting the group with the Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE).

At this juncture, the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Diversity shared their experience of visiting the town centre with a wheelchair user from Invis-Ability to assess the area's accessibility. A suggestion was made for a walkabout with councillors alongside representatives of the Sight-Life group to help them better understand the challenges faced by people with sight loss. It was acknowledged that such an initiative could be possible but would depend on the specific needs of the participants. It was suggested that sighted guides be present to assist during the walkabout.

The item concluded with the Chair clarifying that while the Council could advocate for improvements and would ask for an update from the Environment and Economy Select Committee on the issues regarding the bus interchange that Hertfordshire Vision Loss had originally raised with the Committee, and would communicate concerns to relevant transport bodies, it did not directly manage or commission bus services, so had limited influence over the bus operators.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked all attendees for their contributions to the meeting.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

**CHAIR**

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 5 February 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

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

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members Councillor (Vice Chair), Kamal Choudhury and Mason Humberstone.

There were no declarations of interest.

**2 AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT ITEM**

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Aids and Adaptation Project Manager, who introduced the Aids and Adaptations team. It was explained that the current policy, approved in March 2020, outlined the scope of adaptations, council responsibilities and service expectations. Tenants were eligible for adaptations based on health conditions such as sight, hearing, speech impairment, mental or physical disabilities. It was noted that adaptations had to be necessary, appropriate, reasonable, and practical to be approved by the Council, in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 and the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

The Aids and Adaptation Project Manager outlined the range of adaptations available, from minor adaptations such as grab rails and ramps to major adaptations including stairlifts or bathroom adaptations. The Committee was informed that the Aids and Adaptations Policy had been reviewed in June 2024, with no significant changes proposed. The outcome of the review is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in March 2025.

Members raised concerns about the reasons for refusal of adaptations and the lack of transparency within the policy. They requested a detailed list of refusal criteria to be included. Officers stated that decisions were decided on a case-by-case basis, allowing for individual assessments based on the tenant's needs and the suitability of the property. Members suggested that housing policy should prioritise individuals rather than properties, despite ongoing pressures from the housing list. Members also expressed concerns that tenants should not feel forced to relocate rather than completing adaptations to their current property.

Officers reassured Members that the Aids and Adaptation team work closely with other Council departments to provide support and suitable alternatives, such as Independent Living Schemes where additional support for tenants is available, without enforcing relocation. They clarified that while incentives for downsizing were available, no tenant would be forced to move. If a tenant chose to remain in the property, the Council would assess what reasonable adaptations could be made.

Further discussion focused on the interpretation of 'reasonable' adaptations, with Members seeking greater clarity on which types were more likely to be approved. Officers explained that each case was assessed individually based on the tenant's needs and the suitability of the property. The principle of reasonableness needed to underpin any decision that is reached about whether an adaptation could be carried out.

It was noted that Council officers worked alongside Occupational Therapists (OT's) to assess properties and recommend necessary adaptations. However, it was acknowledged that some recommendations might not be structurally or logistically feasible and would need a surveyor assessment regarding the feasibility of OT's recommendation. Members were informed that OT's recommendations are not standardised which makes it challenging to establish requirements for the tenant, and careful consideration is needed on a case-by-case basis.

Members raised concerns that the policy did not fully consider tenants' disabilities when assessing under-occupation. Members sought clarification on this issue, highlighting the potential negative impact of relocation on residents' safety, security and independence. In response, Officers confirmed that following guidance from the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), section 6.10.1 of the Aids and Adaptations Policy would be removed. They assured Members that cases would be assessed individually, and work would not be refused outright. Instead, support would be provided through supported accommodation, downsizing options, or the resident liaison team. If relocation was not in the resident's best interest, necessary adaptations would proceed where possible.

The Committee was informed about the Aids and Adaptation Consultation, which took place from December 2024 to mid-January 2025. The consultation aimed to gather feedback from residents and health professionals on the proposed policy updates. Of the 600 people invited to participate, 131 responses were received, equating to a 22% return rate, which exceeded the 15% deemed a good response by Housemark. Additionally, 38 individuals expressed interest in joining a focus group.

The presentation also addressed the budget and expenditure for Aids and Adaptations. The average annual cost of referrals estimated at £1.4 million, although actual expenditure typically amounted to 60% of this figure due to factors such as lower costs for groundworks against projected. While projected costs for 2024/25 referrals stood at £1.3 million, the actual value of work was £810,000 due to policy implementation and evolving needs. Officers emphasised that earlier review of referrals would improve cost forecasting and ensure more accurate projections.

A question was raised regarding the budget allocation and expenditure. Officers explained that a framework agreement had been under evaluation to streamline work and improve efficiency. Additionally, it was clarified that the budget allocation is from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and rental income, with no external grants available. An example was provided of a case recommendation which was estimated at £30,000, however following a survey of the property the work was not feasible. Through negotiations and surveyor involvement, a more practical and affordable solution was agreed with the OT which would cost approx. £400 plus labour. Additionally, a stairlift contract will be procured in 2025/26 to reduce the need for tendering work through procurements. As part of this contract, options for renting equipment were being explored, along with potential strategies for reusing existing equipment.

A Committee Member asked about the referral process for aids and adaptations. Officers explained that referrals were made through Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Adult Care or Children's Services, where an assessment was conducted on both the individual and their property. These referrals could be initiated through self-submission or made on behalf of an individual. It was noted that assessment waiting times were often long, however once completed referrals were forwarded to Stevenage Borough Council, who then liaised with OTs. Efforts were underway to improve this process, as the level of detail and clarity in referrals varied.

The Committee were presented with case study examples, including a family of five living in a three-bedroom property, where all three children had mobility issues and one required a wheelchair. Due to the limited space within the property, it was determined that extending the property was the most reasonable solution to meet their needs. It was noted that the possibility of relocating the family had been explored but was not feasible due to the lack of suitably sized properties.

Members suggested that as a way of helping the environment and saving resources, officers explore ways to potentially reuse equipment, whether through private or council provided equipment.

The Aids and Adaptations project manager outlined the challenges faced within the team which included:

- A backlog of cases due to resourcing issues, with recruitment efforts underway.
- Budgetary pressures being managed through framework contracts.
- IT systems under review to enhance efficiency.
- Improved collaboration with HCC OTs and healthcare professionals to enhance service delivery.
- Limited availability of suitable accommodation, downsizing incentives, and appropriate development properties to meet future needs.

At this juncture, Officers provided an overview of the improvements being implemented within the Aids and Adaptations service including:

- Data cleansing to identify and address backlog cases.
- Framework agreements reducing procurement demands.
- A task and finish group established between Stevenage Borough Council and HCC to improve information sharing.

- Increased collaboration between the Aids and Adaptations team and other departments across the council to better match tenants with suitable properties.
- Acknowledgement of the need for more bungalows and larger properties to meet demand.

A question was raised regarding the current waiting list, which stood at approximately 380 live cases, with around 70-80 in progress, including minor works. It was noted that minor works were typically completed within 20 working days, whereas major works could take up to 18 months due to the backlog. To improve efficiency, framework contracts were being procured to accelerate completion times.

3 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business

4 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

5 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

**CHAIR**

**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Resources and Transformation  
**Date** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025



## REVIEW OF THE CO-OPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2025-2028

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Lisa Baldock  
**Lead Officer** Clare Fletcher | 2933  
Brian Moldon  
**Contact Officer** Lisa Baldock | 2083

### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To gain approval from Cabinet to delegate authority to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation to sign off the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 following further consultation with the community and stakeholders.

### 3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council first approved a Corporate Procurement Strategy in 2001; it has been reviewed on a regular basis during this period, the last revision was in 2021. The strategy has now been revised to align with the Council's Making Stevenage Better Corporate Plan for 2024-2027 and the new Procurement Act 2023. There has been a delay in bringing the Draft Co-operative Procurement

Strategy to Cabinet due to the delay by the Government in the implementation date of the Procurement Act 2023. The Act was pushed back from October 2024 to February 2025.

- 3.2 The procurement function plays an important role in achieving value for money, helping to support the economy, driving sustainability, social value and community wealth building and mitigating the risk of legal challenge and fraud.
- 3.3 The Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 forms part of the Council's policy framework

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

- 4.1 The Council could adopt the National Procurement Strategy 2022; it would offer procurement direction but not direct alignment with the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better 2024-2027 Corporate Plan and would not focus specifically on the themes that are important to Stevenage Borough Council. For this reason, it is therefore recommended that the Council adopts its own Co-operative Procurement Strategy to support the strategic direction of the Council.
- 4.2 The Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 has been written around the principle of five 'Foundations'. Each 'Foundation' is a building block of the considerations that need to underpin the procurement process and will be embedded into the way the Council procures goods, works and service contracts to support the Council's strategic priorities.
- Community Wealth Building – This focuses on keeping money reinvested in Stevenage to promote opportunities for SME's, Employee Owned Businesses, Social Enterprises and other Community based or Owned Businesses within the Borough which will support the aim of locally recirculating wealth in the area.
  - Sustainability – Tackling climate change and improving sustainability must be a key foundation for all procurement activity. By harnessing purchasing power the Council will help combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce waste; save resources; improve air quality; and enhance green space and promote biodiversity.
  - Social Value and Ethical Procurement – Social Value involves looking beyond prices of each individual contract and looking at what the collective benefit to a community is, when a public body chooses to award a contract. Social Value asks the question 'If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?'
  - Commercial and Insourcing – The Council will continue with its commitment to use in-house services to deliver council operations, and insourcing will be the council's default position, other than when there is sufficient evidence that this is not an option. All services



provided to, or on behalf of the council by external suppliers or third parties will be reviewed to establish if an opportunity exists to enhance service delivery or achieve better value by delivering services directly.

- Pro-active Procurement – The Council’s Corporate Procurement team provide support that delivers better procurements to develop knowledge and intelligence, supporting the delivery of the Council’s strategic priorities. The procurement process spans from the pre-market engagement, preparation, the tender and award and through to the final stage of contract management. The Council expects to form a pro-active approach at all stages in the procurement cycle taking stock and considering options to best meet the needs of the town.

- 4.3 The Council spent approximately £70 million on the procurement of goods, works and services in 2023/2024. Procurement is a key part to managing costs across the Council; with decreasing resources it has a greater importance to play. Doing more for less is essential for driving efficiencies across the Council.
- 4.4 The Council acknowledges through the strategy that procurement has a major role to play in delivering efficient, effective and high-quality front-line services. It also endorses the potential of partnership working with other public bodies and voluntary organisations to deliver services, as such will actively seek to work in partnership and promote partnership where it is feasible; it offers the Council value for money and aligns with the strategic priorities.
- 4.5 There are delivery outcomes with dates for each of the five foundations set within the Strategy. The foundations were present in the previous Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 and have been updated to reflect the strategic direction and outcomes for the period 2025-2028. The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Contracts and Procurement Group to update on the progress of the delivery outcomes and to ensure that the strategy continues to reflect the Council’s strategic priorities.
- 4.6 In the development of the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 there has been consultation internally across the Council through the Contracts and Procurement Group and in addition feedback has been requested from the Head of Climate Action, Head of Commercial and the Business Relationship Manager. There still needs to be wider consultation with the community and other stakeholders which would take place in March 2025.
- 4.7 Following the consultation period any recommendations would be taken on board to update the Strategy delivering procurement delivery outcomes for the benefit of our town. Following consultation officers recommend any changes to the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 are delegated to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 It is anticipated that following best practice through the revised Procurement Strategy will improve the Council's financial standing by adopting value for money procurement, efficiency gains and the mitigation of risk. The Commercial and Insourcing Principle Foundation of the Strategy encourages commercialism including maximising value for money from contractual relationships, including the consideration of insourcing services.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.2 The Council must follow the relevant procurement legislation or risk being subject to a legal procurement challenge. The implications of a procurement challenge before a contract has been entered into might include prevention of the contract award, rectifying the alleged breaches in the procurement process, requiring an award to the claimant, damages to be paid for arising from the breaches such as wasted tendering costs. If a contract has been awarded there are two main types of claim, those being damages or a claim for a declaration of ineffectiveness. If a contract is declared ineffective by the courts, it must be terminated.
- 5.3 The Procurement Act 2023 has established a new Procurement Review Unit (PRU) to enhance public sector procurement practice by ensuring adherence to the Procurement Act and safeguarding public procurement from suppliers deemed to pose risk. The PRU will maintain and build upon the existing Public Procurement Review Service where you can address concerns regarding public procurement practices relating to a specific procurement procedure and late payment matters. The PRU will comprise of three services: the existing Public Procurement Review Service, a new Procurement Compliance Service and a new Debarment Review Service.
- 5.4 The Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 will be reviewed in light of changes that may arise as a result of updated procurement legislation passed during the term of this Strategy.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.5 Without a Co-operative Procurement Strategy, the Council could be at risk of failure in terms of delivering the strategic priorities in the Making Stevenage Better Corporate Plan 2024-2027. The Council recognises the importance of improving the standards of corporate governance and compliance with rules and regulations, and as such, strengthening the Council's procurement arrangements through an up-to-date strategy mitigates the risk of poor practice and legal challenge.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.6 Tackling climate change and improving sustainability is a key foundation for all procurement activity and is embedded in the Sustainability foundation of the Strategy, which will help combat climate change, reduce greenhouse gas

emissions, reduce waste, save resources, improve air quality, enhance green space and promote biodiversity in the supply chain.

### **Human Resources Implications**

- 5.7 It is anticipated that the outcomes and deliverables of this Strategy will be absorbed in the current workload of both the Corporate Procurement team and Procuring Officers across the Council. As procurement occasionally involves outsourcing of services, workforce matters involving the transfer of staff in line with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 is an area that procuring officers may need to consider.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.8 The Council has committed itself to providing high quality services that are relevant to the needs and responsive to the views of all sections of the local community, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status. The General Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of its functions. These considerations are the duty of decision makers. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of this strategy review to aid decision makers in their consideration of the Equality Duty (see Appendix B).

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 Co-operative Corporate Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 – Building Wealth in Our Community
- BD2 Making Stevenage Even Better 2024-2027 Corporate Plan

### **APPENDICES**

- A Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 – Buying to Transform Our Town
- B Equality Impact Assessment of Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028

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# Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028

*“Building Wealth in our Community”*



# Foreword

In February 2025 we welcome in the Procurement Act 2023, this revision of the Co-operative Procurement Strategy for 2025-2028 has been shaped by the new regulations and the Councils Making Stevenage Better Corporate Plan for 2024-2027.

Stevenage Borough Council spent around £70 million on goods, works and services in 2023/2024. We have a duty to provide value for money for our residents and customers through effective and efficient procurement policies and practices.

It's an exciting time to be launching our strategy with the new Procurement Act 2023 bringing reform to the existing procurement rules focussing on cutting red tape and supporting innovation, improving transparency meaning everyone has access to public procurement data, it also simplifies the process of working with the public sector, supporting more SMEs to bid for contracts.

The Council has a Co-operative Inclusive Economy Charter encouraging communities, organisations and businesses to work together to help shape the economy and share the benefits of growth. Procurement plays its part in encouraging our local suppliers to bid for our contracts and help to grow and connect our town's residents and organisations and to support wealth building within Stevenage. Community wealth building will work through the supply chain to help our town grow with opportunities that procurement gives.

We will look to insource procurement opportunities as our default position; we will review our contracts to establish if we are able to enhance service delivery or better value by delivering services directly. We will consider procurement in commercial opportunities where concessions are relevant to the process.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, confirming its commitment to battling climate change. In September 2020, the Council released the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy, identifying the strategic themes that lead its climate action plan, we want and need to do more to achieve net zero emissions in Stevenage by 2030. We consider the supply chain an important part of helping us to achieve this goal. Social value benefits in procurement will bring together positive sustainable and economic solutions driving down our carbon usage.

We signed the Co-operative Party Modern Slavery Charter in September 2018 as a frontline stand against modern slavery. We have trained our corporate procurement team to support challenging any low-cost tenders and report any contractors that they feel may be of concern. We actively check our supply chains to ensure that exploitation has no place across our Council.

Successful implementation of this strategy ensures that every pound spent is at the heart of achieving value for money and supporting the residents, communities and businesses of Stevenage.



Councillor Jeanette Thomas  
**Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation**

DRAFT

## Progress since our last strategy.....

We have created and implemented a procurement sustainability check list for use on all future procurements

We have identified our local suppliers and how much we spend with them

We have attended Stevenage Meet the Buyer Events to help SMEs to bid for contracts

We are using the Social Value Portal for long term Covered Procurements and can report on the Themes Outcomes and Measures data

We have embedded a review process to consider insourcing/commercial options on contracts coming up for renewal

We have continued to pro-actively manage up and coming opportunities and publish the procurement pipeline on our website

We have delivered procurement training to staff on a regular basis to promote the strategy and processes

We have worked with departments to ensure all contracts over £5,000 are recorded on the central contracts register and published on our website



# Making Stevenage Even Better

The delivery of the Council's strategic priorities in the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024-2027 will be central to every procurement exercise. It is also important for the Council to ensure that the organisations and individuals it does business with have culture and values that align with the Council's.

Procurement is a function which works alongside many other areas of the Council. There is a requirement for awareness and adherence to UK Law and other Council policies and strategies. For example, Health and Safety Acts and regulations, Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity, Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, Confidentiality and Publicity, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, the Modern Slavery Act, Anti-terrorism, Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Commercial and Co-operative Insourcing Strategy, Co-operative and Inclusive Economy Charter and Climate Change Strategy.

Stevenage will promote effective procurement across the Borough with a long-term focus on its strategic priorities as pictured below.



We care passionately about our town and are committed to making a real difference to the lives of all our residents now, and into the future. The Council will contribute to facilitating economic growth, including the transformation of the town and high-quality housing. Procuring officers are committed to encouraging and working with a diverse and competitive supply chain including working with small businesses, social enterprises, ethnic minority businesses, voluntary and community sector suppliers and encouraging apprenticeship schemes.

# Five Principle Foundations of the Stevenage Procurement Strategy

The Procurement Strategy for 2025-2028 is made up of five principle foundations.

Each foundation is a building block of the considerations that need to underpin the procurement process and will be embedded in the way we procure our goods, works and services contracts to support the Council's Strategic Priorities.

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# 1. Community Wealth Building

Community Wealth Building focuses on how much money is held and reinvested into an area for the benefit of local communities. Stevenage Borough Council is well positioned to promote opportunities for SMEs, Employee Owned Businesses, Social Enterprises and other Community Based or Owned Businesses within the Borough which will support the aim of locally re-circulating wealth in the area. Community wealth building promotes the progressive procurement of goods and services, as this spending power can be a means through which greater economic, social and environmental benefits can be achieved. Procuring from local businesses can shorten supply chains, thus reducing transportation emissions and the environmental impacts associated with long-distance goods and services supporting the sustainability pillar of this strategy.

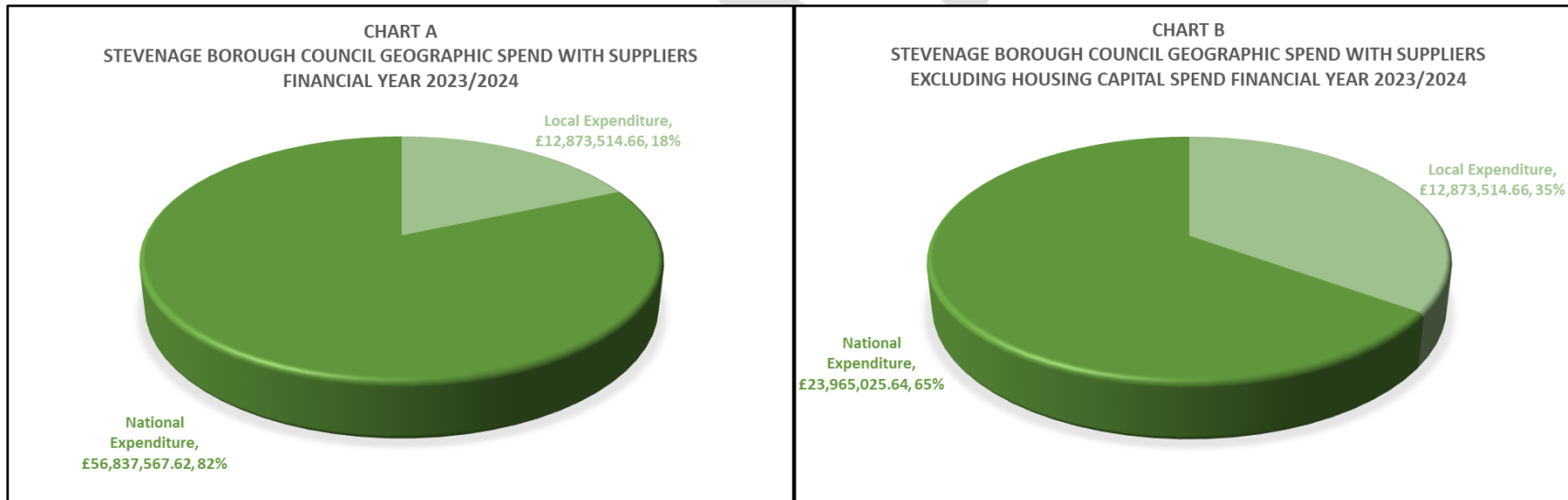
This Strategy will encourage the development of Community Wealth Building as part of our foundations. We will embed Community Wealth Building into our procurement process, into the supply chain and the community. We will engage with other anchor institutions to include relevant departments from Hertfordshire County Council, the NHS, North Herts College and the University of Hertfordshire in addition to larger businesses. The success that comes from Stevenage Borough Council will be used as a means to explore and incorporate this agenda within other anchor institutions thus creating economies of scale to lever our collective spend. By adapting their procurement processes and decision making, anchor institutions can create dense local supply chains and ecosystems of local enterprises, SMEs, Employee Owned Businesses, Social Enterprises, Cooperatives and other forms of Community Ownership. This is important because these types of businesses are more likely to support local employment and have a greater tendency to recirculate wealth and surplus locally.

Community Wealth Building works with the other four principle foundations forming this strategy by helping to address the various inequalities experienced by our residents by focussing on generating economic growth and supporting financial resilience within our local community.

Stevenage Borough Council is a member of the Cooperative Council's Innovation Network which recognises the need to define a new model for local government built on civic leadership, with councils working in equal partnership with local people to shape and strengthen communities. This means a new role for local authorities that replaces traditional models of top-down governance and service delivery with local leadership, genuine co-operation, and a new approach built on the founding traditions of the co-operative movement: collective action, co-operation, empowerment and enterprise.

The Cooperative and Inclusive Economy Charter, passed by the Council in 2020 aims to prevent money leaving the area. Ways of doing this include making contracts more accessible to small and medium sized local companies and connecting local people to good jobs. The council identified two main benefits when developing the charter – bringing about a fairer society, as people become more connected to their economy, and a more resilient economy as people and businesses cooperate to create sustainable growth.

In 2023/2024 Stevenage Borough Council (“The Council”) spent approximately £70 million on the procurement of goods, works and services. Chart A below maps the geographical area this expenditure has been made in. We can see from the spend that 18% of the overall spend goes to suppliers locally. We have defined local as all suppliers that are based in Hertfordshire, Luton and Central Bedfordshire. Chart B has had projects relating to capital and one-off expenditure removed for example housing construction projects. These projects are to the value of £32.8m and were spent with national suppliers so have distorted the local spend on Chart A. Chart B shows local spend at 35% which is a clearer representation of ongoing contractual expenditure at the Council.



## 2. Sustainability

Stevenage Borough Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed its commitment to battling climate change by setting a target to ensure Stevenage has net-zero emissions by 2030. In September 2020, the Council published the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy, identifying eight strategic themes that lead the action plan towards net-zero, including supporting our local businesses as one of them. Tackling climate change and improving sustainability must be a key foundation for all procurement activity. By harnessing our purchasing power, we will: help combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; reduce waste; save resources; improve air quality; and enhance green space and promote biodiversity. The Council, following Hertfordshire County Council, is approaching the climate emergency through three specific themes: Enable, Lead, and Inspire. While Stevenage Borough Council is fully committed to being net zero carbon itself by 2030, it is also committed to achieving that for all within Stevenage. The Council can only do this in partnership and with the support of the town. Through identifying these 3 approaches and effective engagement it is possible to empower everyone to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, including the supply chain.

We will drive sustainability into our procurement process in the following ways:

- As a minimum comply with all relevant environmental, social and procurement legislation.
- Support our goal of net-zero emissions by 2030 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from contracted services.
- Wherever possible, the Council will specify products which are made from recycled products, can be recycled or re-used; so long as the requirements for value for money and quality are met.
- We will adopt Circular Economy principles, wherever possible engaging with suppliers that design products for longevity, repairability, and recyclability to minimise waste and resource depletion, and ensuring value for money and quality are met.
- We will where possible support products that can be operated in an energy efficient manner and cause minimal damage to the environment in their production, distribution, use, and disposal.
- Lessen environmental impacts across design, construction and operation, as well as services and goods provision.
- Ensure that waste is reduced, reused, and recycled wherever possible.
- Reduce all plastic waste and encourage sustainable packaging, supporting suppliers that minimise packaging waste and use biodegradable, compostable, or recyclable materials for packaging.

- Integrate environmental considerations throughout the procurement process, from options appraisal to contract completion, applying appropriate significance.
- Reduce energy consumption and maximise the use of zero and low carbon energy sources.
- Reduce the energy consumption and subsequent contribution to the Council's carbon footprint from ICT equipment and electrical appliances.
- Support services that help generate improved air quality within the town.
- Reduce transport impacts through sustainable logistics options and encourage greener vehicles to be used both within the Council's fleet and for contracted services.
- Avoid the unnecessary use of chemicals and prevent the use of hazardous chemicals wherever possible on our estate and within our contracted services.
- Support options that encourage green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- When procuring infrastructure and services consider climate adaptation and resilience, such as flood-resistant materials and nature-based solutions.
- Consider ways to reduce water consumption and promote the use of water-efficient appliances, rainwater harvesting systems, water recycling schemes, and drought-resistant landscaping where possible in the procurement process.



### 3. Social Value and Ethical Procurement

'Social Value' is a way of thinking about how scarce resources are allocated and used. It involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract and looking at what the collective benefit to a community is, when a public body chooses to award a contract. Social value asks the question 'If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?' The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before they start the procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

Stevenage Borough Council has chosen to use the Social Value Portal to manage social value within its covered contracts (those over the Procurement Act 2023 thresholds) – <https://socialvalueportal.com/> evaluating social value comprises of themes, outcomes and measures. The themes which are being used in procurement at Stevenage are:

- Work: Providing opportunities
- Economy: Driving inclusive growth
- Community: Empowering communities
- Planet: Environmental stewardship

We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and to ensure better local social and economic outcomes. Where contracts are for short term works and under threshold supplies and services we will evaluate Social Value in-house.

Stevenage Borough Council is proud have created Stevenage Works which is the partnership between Stevenage Borough Council, North Herts College and the Hertfordshire Job Centre Plus (JCP) to provide an efficient approach to delivering social value. In this context, social value refers to the aspiration to streamline opportunities for local people into jobs, apprenticeships, and work experience. By providing a single point of contact for enquiries and engagement, the partnership works with the community and employers to match their needs. This is carried out by holding regular sessions to consolidate shared learning with stakeholders, as well as a user friendly and joined-up approach to recruitment and work experience. Stevenage Works also covers work with the

Stevenage Borough Council Planning Department to ensure that Developers and Contractors fulfil the Section 106 Obligations set out in Employment Skills plans. They also work with Developers and Contractors to provide regular updates on their agreed social value commitments relating to job opportunities, apprenticeships, work experience, work placements, data on local supply chain, local labour, educational work in schools and community engagement activities.

As a member of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network, Stevenage Borough Council is a local authority committed to reforming the way it works through building an equal partnership with local people, based on the values and principles of the International Co-operative Alliance. We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and to ensure better local social and economic outcomes.

Social Value can help support Community Wealth Building aims to revive local economies, renew trust in local services and deliver a renaissance of local government; by giving businesses and communities a bigger stake in the local economy.

The council is committed to ensuring a high standard of ethical trade practices, across its commissioning and procurement activities. The council expects its suppliers, service providers and contractors to act with integrity and transparency in their dealings and practices, adhering to the laws of the countries where they operate. These are not normally included explicitly in the subject matter of the contracts as most are governed by legal requirements which if breached would be grounds for excluding the supplier from further contracts for non-compliance.

Stevenage Borough Council has signed up to the Co-operative Party Charter against Modern Slavery which aims to establish ethical labour sourcing practices in our supply chain and establish robust recruitment processes. We require all of our contractors to comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies, with contract termination as a potential sanction for non-compliance.

Procurement can be the target of anti-competitive, fraudulent and corrupt activities. The Council will take steps to minimise the opportunity for these and use clear policy statements and codes of conduct which are easily accessible by members, staff and the public.



## 4. Commercial & Insourcing

Stevenage Borough Council recognises that it is operating in a rapidly changing environment, with increasing financial challenges which are expected to become more demanding in future years. Since 2010, £14m of ongoing savings have been made. In addition, the council have made investments in regeneration, building new homes, improving council homes, supporting neighbourhoods and improving services for customers which will continue with the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan for 2024-2027.

In August 2020 the Council launched its Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy which was updated in 2023. The Strategy harnesses greater innovation, financial flexibility, commercial awareness, prudent risk management and the effective use of new technologies. Commercialisation is embraced and delivered throughout the organisation, with opportunities identified and realised universally wherever possible. The Council is focused on resilience and where possible conducts commercial activity that has minimal upfront cost (such as for example through the procurement of concessions contracts). As a Co-operative Council, the focus is on cooperative solutions and where possible work is undertaken through the Co-operative Council Innovation Network. The Council defines commercialism as the ability to manage services well and efficiently and be innovative in generating vital funds to be able to protect vital services and deliver the best value for our communities and customers. This includes maximising value for money from contractual relationships, including the consideration of insourcing services.

The council continues with its commitment to use in-house and shared services to deliver council operations, and insourcing is the council's default position, other than when there is sufficient evidence that this is not an option. All services provided to, or on behalf of the council by external suppliers or third parties are reviewed to establish if an opportunity exists to enhance service delivery or achieve better value by delivering services directly. Officers are provided with guidance on considerations around insourcing and where possible, business units are developed to deliver work that is currently contracted out to others. Attention is given to whether opportunities exist to join up work streams across the council and break down silo approaches when procuring services and managing contracts. Insourcing roadmaps are used to list known contracts and potential insourcing opportunities and details timescales for their consideration.

## 5. Pro-active Procurement

High quality, professional procurement support is essential to deliver better procurements and also for developing a knowledge and intelligence base to support the delivery of the Council's ambitions. The procurement process spans from the pre-market engagement, preparation, the tender and award and through to the final stage of contract management, contract renewal or termination. We expect to form a pro-active approach at all stages in the procurement cycle taking stock and considering our options to best meet the needs of our town.

### **Pro-active Communication**

- Generating opportunities to engage with our stakeholders, developing a knowledge base of up and coming procurements and understanding how they translate into the Council's strategic priorities. This will include the quarterly contracts and procurement group.
- Reaching out to establish opportunities to engage with the community, local businesses, the voluntary sector through meet the buyer events and by utilising technology to offer webinars on how to do business with the Council.
- Through this process, building a repository of intelligence and using it to enable us to be best placed to provide appropriate guidance, developing a consultative pro-active approach across the Council to all our procurements.

### **Pro-active Learning**

- From the procurements we have undertaken, wherever possible we will follow up with a lessons learnt plan to ensure that we are making the most effective use of public money and looking for opportunities to develop our local supply base.
- The Corporate Procurement team will ensure that they are appropriately trained and guided, with suitable tools and data to pro-actively move the procurement strategy forward.
- Providing opportunities to develop skills and knowledge, as well as creating career pathways that will enable the Council to attract and retain the best talent.
- The Council will continually review how its procurement teams are resourced to pro-actively support and deliver the challenges of the Procurement Strategy.

- The Corporate Procurement team will deliver training to procuring staff across the Council to promote the five principle foundations of the Procurement Strategy.

### **Pro-active Analysis**

- Data integrity and intelligence is beneficial to good pro-active procurement. We will use the Council's financial data to assist with our decision making.
- Have the ability to generate reports that provide a complete understanding of our contractual spend and supplier make up, including local versus non local spend.

### **Pro-active Contract Management**

- Meeting the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 by capturing all contracts over £5,000 on a central contracts register to support effective contract management.
- Procuring Officers will confirm procurements for major and operational contracts have appropriate KPI's and outcome measures included and will work with Corporate Procurement to publish contract performance notices where required.
- Learning from suppliers and stakeholders to understand how performance and outcomes have been delivered and can be improved, along with lessons learnt to build into future procurements.
- Undertaking benchmarking exercises of pre-agreed services and continually reviewing the contracts to ensure maximum value is being achieved. Where appropriate review any possible insourcing or commercial opportunities.
- Delivering training on a regular basis to support officers that are pro-actively managing contracts.

### **Pro-actively Moving Forward**

- Reviewing progress across the five principle foundations of the Procurement Strategy.

- Taking on board feedback from all stakeholders (internal and external) and constantly striving through our procurements to deliver maximum social, environmental and economic benefits for our local communities.
- Providing guidance through spend and contract information on where our focus should be in supporting the strategic priorities of Making Stevenage Even Better 2024-2027 while balancing the need to make efficiencies.

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# Moving Forward – The Five Principle Foundations

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# Community Wealth Building

The Council is a key anchor institution in Stevenage and can lead by example to encourage and support Community Wealth Building. To create community wealth from a procurement perspective we need to understand the local supplier base.

<b>Outcome Delivery – Increase the number of local suppliers we use within Stevenage year on year from our current baseline</b>
<b>Indicators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of contracts awarded to local suppliers</li> <li>➤ Amount spent with the local supply chain</li> </ul>

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1.	Understand the local supplier base	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Conduct research, identify supplier engagement activities, and work with key local supplier representatives to understand more of what our local supplier base comprises of.
- Conduct a gap analysis to show what we are looking to procure across our programmes of work versus the types of local suppliers.

2.	Understand opportunities for local suppliers	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Through supplier events and by improving our online offer specific to local suppliers, enabling them to learn more about the support available, future opportunities and how to register on the procurement portal – [www.supplyhertfordshire.uk](http://www.supplyhertfordshire.uk) and the Find a Tender Service <https://www.gov.uk/find-tender>

3.	Targeting procurements for the local supply base	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Identify the number of social enterprises, for example, Mutual, Co-operatives, Community Interest Companies etc. in the local community.
- Understand what services they can provide and look to conduct preferred contract procurements targeted to social enterprises in line with current legislation.
- Through our procurements, create links for larger suppliers to use our local supply chain in delivery of the required project, capturing the number of suppliers and amount spent within the local economy.
- Work with key departments to encourage the creation of more social enterprises that will support community wealth building.

4.	Broadening our scope to bring in other Anchor organisations	Target: to commence April 2025
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- To engage with other anchor institutions and large businesses in Stevenage and Hertfordshire such as the NHS, Hertfordshire County Council, North Herts College and The University of Hertfordshire to work collaboratively on procurements embedding wealth building.
- Specifically looking to identify opportunities where leveraging spend will enable all involved to provide more opportunities for the local economy.
- Using an evidence based approach to demonstrate the journey, intelligence around the local supply base and social enterprises, as well as successes with regard to increases in the amount we have been able to spend within the community.

# Sustainability

The Council's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2030 and leading work to establish Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport and the enhancement of Stevenage's biodiversity will be supported through the procurement process.

<b>Outcome Delivery – Reduce waste through greener procurement</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ How many of our suppliers have strategies in place to reduce carbon in the supply chain. This will be tested through the evaluation of the procurement process and contract management.</li> <li>➤ Reduction of Greenhouse Gas in contracts</li> </ul>	

1.	Using the Procurement Sustainability check list for use on all future procurements	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Updates to the intranet and training material to guide procuring officers to use the Council's Procurement Sustainability Checklist for all new procurements to ensure sustainability is embedded into the procurement process
- Link into the Social Value Portal theme of Planet: Environmental Stewardship

2.	Reducing Greenhouse gas in Contracts	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Contract management required to monitor current suppliers carbon reduction plans and strategies and where possible collect data to show the reduction of greenhouse gas in contracts.
- Where the Social Value Portal is used, data to be reported on the theme of Planet: Environmental Stewardship



# Social Value and Ethical Procurement

Stevenage Borough Council is firmly committed to social value and will be embedding the Social Value Portal into long term covered procurements.

<b>Outcome Delivery – Measure the delivery of social value</b>
<b>Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The individual TOM's (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) will be reported on from the Social Value Portal.</li> <li>➤ For short term works contracts and contracts under the Procurement Act 2023 threshold, social value will be reported on from individual contracts</li> </ul>

1.	To report on the TOM's data for Stevenage and individual contract data where applicable	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Use the available data to report on the Social Value being created by the supply chain in Stevenage.

2.	Modern Slavery Statement	Target: to commence April 2025
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- To review and update the Council's Modern Slavery Statement on an annual basis.

# Commercial & Insourcing

The Council will identify commercial options and insourcing opportunities which will support the Council's financial position.

<b>Outcome Delivery – to increase the number of insourced contracts or where there is commercial opportunity</b>
<b>Indicators</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of contracts insourced</li> <li>➤ Number of contracts insourced and then scaled up for services to be sold externally</li> <li>➤ Savings realised through the insourcing of contracts</li> <li>➤ Number of contracts with income generation</li> </ul>

1.	Embed a review process 18-24 months prior to end of contract to consider insourcing/commercial options	Target: to commence April 2025
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- As part of the contract management process at around 24 months prior to the end of a contract a process is to be implemented to review whether the contract is suitable to bring in house and what the financial and resource implications would be.

2.	Case Studies	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Where successful insourcing has taken place, encourage the departments responsible to produce a case study to showcase the positives and any problems with the process as a learning tool.
- Case studies are also to be encouraged for procurement projects where successful commercial opportunities have been implemented and executed.

# Pro-active Procurement

Corporate Procurement will support the delivery of savings by identifying further budget options through the transformation programme, through better communication and contract management.

<b>Outcome Delivery – Provide commercial intelligence to ensure we are achieving value for money</b>	
<b>Indicators</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain the contracts register and identify opportunities to collaborate on internal contracts</li> <li>➤ Work with the contracts and procurement group to understand opportunities and risks of up and coming projects and contract management</li> <li>➤ Developing supplier relationships</li> <li>➤ Savings/cost avoidance</li> </ul>	
1.	<b>Pro-active Communication</b>
	<b>Target: to commence April 2025</b>

- Continue to pro-actively manage up and coming opportunities and publish the procurement pipeline on the Council’s website.
- Support local and small businesses by offering webinars, participating at meet the buyer events and updating the Selling to the Council guide on the internet.
- Update and build a repository of new guidance and web links relevant to procuring officers as and when required on the internal intranet, to include for example information on the National Procurement Policy Statement and the Procurement Act 2023.

2.	Pro-active Learning	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Set up a process to enable a debrief and lessons learned plan after all tendered procurements.
- Continually review how the Council's procurement function is resourced in order to ensure it is equipped to support and deliver the challenges of the Corporate Procurement Strategy.
- To deliver training to procuring staff across the Council to promote the five principle foundations of the Corporate Procurement Strategy including the Procurement Act 2023.

3.	Pro-active Analysis	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Working with departments to ensure there is a full awareness of data requirements and how this feeds into supporting the Council's strategic priorities.
- Generate reports to provide a complete understanding of our contractual spend and supplier make up including local versus non local spend.

4.	Pro-active Contract Management	Target: to commence April 2025
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- All contracts over £5,000 are to be recorded on the central contacts register and published online.

- Procuring Officers to ensure all contracts have appropriate KPI's and outcome measures included, and contract performance notices are published where required.
- Work with departments and offer guidance and training to ensure contract management and performance is achieving contractual commitments.
- Undertake benchmarking exercises of pre-agreed services and continually review the contracts to ensure maximum value is being achieved. Where appropriate review any possible insourcing opportunities.

5.	Pro-actively Moving Forward	Target: to commence April 2025
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- Building in the milestones set out across all of the five principle foundations in the Corporate Procurement Strategy and reviewing regularly to make sure we are on track.

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## Review of Co-operative Procurement Strategy

# Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

April 2025- March 2028

<b>Date created</b>	January 2025
<b>Approved by</b>	Executive
<b>Owner</b>	Brian Moldon
<b>Version</b>	2
<b>Author</b>	Lisa Baldock Corporate Procurement Manager
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Corporate Procurement – Finance

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).

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Review of the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028</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>	
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>		<b>Review of Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028</b>			
Lead Assessor	Lisa Baldock			Assessment team	Contracts and Procurement Group
Start date	January 2025	End date	March 2028		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		March 2027			

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Staff procuring across the Council, local stakeholders and contractors.
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Strategy has been written around five principle foundations of Community Wealth Building, Sustainability, Social Value &amp; Ethical Procurement, Commercial and Insourcing and Pro-active Procurement.</li> <li>It has been revised and rewritten to align with the Council's Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024-2027 strategic priorities.</li> </ul> <p>The Strategy manages the Council's duty to provide value for money for our residents and customers through effective procurement policies and practices.</p>

<b>What positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Procurement is conducted fairly and transparently opening	Promote equal opportunities	Procurement is conducted fairly and transparently opening	Encourage good relations	Procurement is conducted fairly and transparently opening

	<p>opportunities for all types of organisation to do business with the Council. Procurements undertaken will ensure suppliers are committed to following the Equalities Act 2010 through signed terms and conditions and good contract management.</p>		<p>opportunities for all types of organisation to do business with the Council. Procurements undertaken will ensure suppliers are committed to following the Equalities Act 2010 through signed terms and conditions and good contract management.</p>		<p>opportunities for all types of organisation to do business with the Council. Procurements undertaken will ensure suppliers are committed to following the Equalities Act 2010 through signed terms and conditions and good contract management.</p>
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<p>What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Procurement Act 2023</li> <li>• The Councils Contract Procedure Rules (formally known as the Contract Standing Orders)</li> <li>• Other Council Policies and Strategies that link into procurement i.e. Data Protection, the Modern Slavery Act, Climate Change Strategy, Commercial and Insourcing Strategy &amp; Safeguarding.</li> </ul> <p>Data used in the Strategy to show how much is spent locally and nationally - £12,873,514.66 (local) &amp; £56,837,567.60 (national)</p>
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>Under the foundation of Community Wealth Building the Council will be identifying the number of social enterprises, for example Mutual, Co-operatives, Community Interest Companies etc. in the local community. We will understand what services they can provide and look to conduct pre-market engagement targeted to social enterprises.</p> <p>The consideration of completing an EQIA is given in the guidance on the intranet for officers undertaking a procurement process to ensure that individual needs are met for differing procurement projects.</p>
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# Evidence and Impact Assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are age specific such as independent living schemes additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are disability related for example stair lift installations additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to gender assignment additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.

<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b>					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are		

	advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.		met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to marriage or civil partnership additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.
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**Pregnancy & Maternity**

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Pregnancy & Maternity					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to pregnancy and maternity for example healthy hub initiatives then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.		

### Race

Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to race for then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.		

### Religion or Belief

Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to religion or belief then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.

Sex					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are		



	advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.		met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to sex for example male/female only health initiatives then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.
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<b>Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual</b>					
Positive impact	The Procurement Strategy refers to the Equality Act 2010.	Negative impact	The mitigation of any negative impact will be achieved through training and advising Officers on equalities in procurement.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Council must have due regard to the requirements of the public sector equalities duty under the Equalities Act 2010, which must be taken into account when procuring goods, work or services from external providers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The Council encourages all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. All contracts over £100,000 are advertised through Supply Hertfordshire and the central Digital Platform (Find a Tender Service) to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to sexual orientation then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.		

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

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

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<p>Positive impact</p>	<p>Holding webinars and meet the buyer events to support all organisations that want to do business with the Council and updating the Selling to the Council guide. Using the Social Value portal to embed social value in all covered procurements over the PA 2023 threshold. Promoting the Supply Hertfordshire website and the Central Digital Platform for all organisations to see opportunities that exist and to ensure they are registered to be selected for</p>	<p>Negative impact</p>	<p>Some complex covered procurements (those over the Procurement Act 2023 thresholds) may deter local and small suppliers from bidding, however the procurement strategy encourages links for larger suppliers to use our local supply chain for the delivery of required projects and encourages the consideration of lots.</p>	<p>Unequal impact</p>	<p>Where some suppliers/individuals have difficulty using technology they may find it hard to read the strategy or find it hard to access opportunities to supply the Council.</p>
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<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.

	under threshold procurements.				
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The Contract Procedure Rules state that the Social Value Act requires commissioners to consider securing economic, social or environmental benefits when buying services above the Procurement Act 2023 threshold.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	We advertise our procurement opportunities over £100,000 electronically through Supply Hertfordshire and through the Find a Tender Service to ensure maximum accessibility and ability to participate. We encourage all suppliers to register on the Supply Hertfordshire portal. Procuring Officers are required to carry out pre-market engagement prior to procuring goods/works/services. Procuring Officers should consider carefully the procurement thresholds for each opportunity so as not to exclude smaller suppliers unnecessarily. Procuring Officers are reminded to embed policy requirements only when strictly needed and to try not to overcomplicate the procurement process.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	The consideration of an Equalities Impact Assessment for all procurement exercises to ensure that individual needs are met for differing projects. Where procurements are related to socio-economic factors then additional due diligence on suppliers may need to be undertaken in these individual procurements.		

# Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

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<p>Staff?</p>	<p>The findings of the consultation include making a strong bid to show diversity and inclusivity by attracting all suppliers. This will be managed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-market engagement</li> <li>• Webinars to help encourage and simplify the process</li> <li>• Promoting the Supply Hertfordshire/Find a Tender website</li> <li>• Only embedding policy requirements where needed</li> </ul> <p>There will also be training and guidance offered to procuring staff to remind Officers of the five principle foundations of the revised strategy.</p>	<p>Residents?</p>	<p>Residents did not respond as part of the consultation.</p>
<p>Voluntary &amp; community sector?</p>	<p>The actions have already been inserted into the opportunities to promote equality and inclusion and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-market engagement</li> <li>• Webinars to help encourage and simplify the process</li> <li>• Promoting the Supply Hertfordshire website</li> <li>• Only embedding policy requirements where needed</li> </ul>	<p>Partners?</p>	<p>The actions have already been inserted into the opportunities to promote equality and inclusion and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-market engagement</li> <li>• Webinars to help encourage and simplify the process</li> <li>• Promoting the Supply Hertfordshire website</li> <li>• Only embedding policy requirements where needed</li> </ul>
<p>Other stakeholders?</p>	<p>The actions have already been inserted into the opportunities to promote equality and inclusion and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-market engagement</li> <li>• Webinars to help encourage and simplify the process</li> <li>• Promoting the Supply Hertfordshire website</li> <li>• Only embedding policy requirements where needed</li> </ul>		

## 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	Adjustments have been identified and will be used to promote equality and inclusion.
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

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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?
Incorporate equalities training as part of corporate procurement training suite.	This will help to promote equal opportunities and raise the awareness in the procurement process.	Corporate Procurement Manager	Ongoing	By asking Procuring Officers to check that appropriate Equalities clauses are included in the procurement process and that they are being fair and transparent with their process.
Ensure that all contracts comply with the Equalities Act 2010	Corporate Procurement is to train and advise as appropriate on the Equalities Act 2010. Departments are to check that	Corporate Procurement Manager/Procuring	Ongoing	By reminding the Procuring Officers about contracts and Equalities and ensuring that they embedding the

	<p>the Equalities Act 2010 is covered in any procurement documents issued (latest versions on the intranet will contain up to date clauses)</p> <p>Legal Services to ensure that Equalities clauses are inserted into contract terms and conditions.</p>	Officers/Shared Legal Services		<p>appropriate clauses in contracts</p> <p>Through good contract management to ensure that the continuation of compliance with the Act continues throughout the contract duration.</p>
<p>By encouraging local, and diverse suppliers to participate in the Council's contract opportunities</p>	<p>Through internal training supporting the requirement for pre-market engagement</p> <p>By working with the Council's Business Relationship Manager to support smaller, unusual or less culturally embedded suppliers to register on Supply Hertfordshire and Find a Tender Service</p> <p>By updating Selling to the Council Guide to help small and local businesses understand the procurement process</p> <p>By delivering webinars to help encourage and simplify the process</p> <p>By advertising contracts through the Council's Social Media accounts</p>	Corporate Procurement Manager/Procuring Officers	Ongoing	<p>By reminding the Contracts and Procurement Group and Procuring Officers about encouraging and enabling local and diverse suppliers to participate in contract opportunities.</p>

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

**Date: 10/02/25**

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.

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**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Environment & Performance  
**Date** 12 March 2025



## CONFIRMATION OF AN AMENDMENT TO TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E(g)(i) (OFFICES) AND CLASS E(g)(iii) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Lewis Claridge | 2158  
**Lead Officer** James Chettleburgh | 2266  
**Contact Officer** Lewis Claridge | 2158

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval of the confirming of two revised Article 4 Directions to remove the permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from office and light industrial uses to residential use in Gunnels Wood and Pin Green.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the responses from consultation, 22 January to 18 February 2025, on the serving of the notice of the revised Article 4 Directions.
- 2.2 Approve the confirmation of the revised Article 4 Directions under Article 4 (l) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), to remove permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and County Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)).

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In 2020 and 2021, the Government made revisions to the Use Classes Order and to Permitted Development Rights [BD1].
- 3.2 The Use Class Order created a new Use Class (Use Class E) which combined different commercial, business and service uses that were previously contained in separate use classes.
- 3.3 The Government stated that:  
*‘Combining separate use classes into a single use class means that, as of September 2020, planning permission is no longer required to make changes between them’. Bringing these uses together and allowing movement between them will give businesses greater freedom to adapt to changing circumstances and to respond more quickly to the needs of their communities.’*
- 3.4 Following approval by Cabinet (as Executive) in September 2022 [BD2], with effect from 16 December 2022, the Council confirmed a number of Article 4 Directions under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, as amended.
- 3.5 The Directions included protection to existing employment uses within the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas. They removed permitted development rights currently in place, or due to come into force, relating to the following changes of uses [BD3] and [BD4]:
  - E(g)(i) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses)
  - E(g)(iii) (light industrial) to C3 (dwellinghouses)

**Figure 1. Summary of Use Classes Order Changes (September 2020)**

Use	Use Class (until 31 August 2020)	Use Class (from 1 September 2020)
Shops	A1	E
Financial & Professional Services	A2	E
Food & Drink (mainly on the premises)	A3	E
<b>Business (office, research &amp; development and light industrial process)</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>E</b>
Non-residential institutions (medical or health services, crèches, day nurseries and centres)	D1	E
Assembly and Leisure (indoor sport, recreation or fitness, gyms)	D2	E
Non-residential institutions (education, art gallery, museum, public library, public exhibition hall, places of worship, law courts)	D1	F1
Shop no larger than 280 sq. m (Selling mostly essential goods and at least 1km from another similar shop); community hall, outdoor sport / recreation area, indoor or outdoor swimming pool, skating rink	A2	F2
Public House, wine bar, drinking establishment	A4	Sui Generis (or unique uses)
Hot Food Takeaway	A5	Sui Generis (or unique uses)
Cinema, Concert Hall, Bingo Hall, Dance Hall, Live music venue	D2	Sui Generis (or unique uses)

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

**Recommendation 2.1: That Cabinet note the responses from consultation, 22 January to 18 February 2025, on the serving of the notice of the revised Article 4 Directions.**

- 4.1 Following approval from Cabinet in January 2025 [BD5], public consultation commenced on 22 January 2025 and ran for 28 days, until 18 February 2025. <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/planning-policy-consultations>
- 4.2 The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 sets out the statutory requirements for introducing an Article 4 Direction. In line with this, notice of the Directions were;
- Published in the local newspaper [BD6];
  - Displayed by two site notices in each employment area, two within Gunnels Wood and two within Pin Green [BD7];
  - Sent to the occupiers and owners of all affected businesses within Gunnels Wood and Pin Green [BD8];
  - Made available to view at the Customer Service Centre, the town's two libraries and the Council's website (along with a copy of the Directions);
  - Sent to both the Secretary of State and Hertfordshire County Council (along with a copy of the Directions) [BD9].
- 4.3 The notices of Directions are available in BD10 and BD11, with an original planned confirmation date of 19 March 2025. A copy of the Directions is contained within Appendix A and B.
- 4.4 A summary of all consultation comments and responses is provided in Appendix C to this report.
- 4.5 No significant objections were raised to the revised Directions during the consultation period. Where comments and objections were raised, officers have provided a detailed response.
- 4.6 The Council received a number of comments of support for the revised Directions, including that the Directions ensure that any change of use of property has to be subject to strict planning approval to prevent uncontrolled and inappropriate development. Gunnels Wood and Pin Green employment areas do not have the relevant infrastructure that would allow employment space including office and industrial units, from being converted to residential use.
- 4.7 No objections or comments were received from the Secretary of State during the consultation period. Council officers have been in contact with the Article 4 team at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), who have confirmed that the Council does not need to re-submit the previous submission evidence that justifies the December 2022 Article 4 Directions.

**Recommendation 2.2: That Cabinet approve the confirmation of the revised Article 4 Directions under Article 4 (I) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), to remove permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)).**

*Proposed Wording Changes to Class MA*

- 4.8 It is proposed that the wording on both Article 4 Directions, to remove permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3, is amended to state Class MA rather than Class PA, to be factually correct. This is proposed as per Appendix A and B (replacing the current Article 4 Directions as per BD3 and BD4).
- 4.9 The principle aim of these Directions is to ensure local planning policies can be applied to proposals for changes of use from office and light industrial to residential dwellings, to ensure employment uses are protected across the town.
- 4.10 Until the Use Classes Order 1987 was reformed in 2020, Class O of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development 2015 allowed for offices to be converted to residential use without planning permission, subject to certain restriction and prior approval regarding certain impacts.
- 4.11 Class PA of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development 2015 allowed for light industrial buildings to be converted to residential use without planning permission, subject to certain restriction and prior approval regarding certain impacts.
- 4.12 Use Class O and PA (prior to August 2021) of the General Permitted Development 2015 were replaced by a new Class MA which allows for the change of use from light industrial to residential.
- 4.13 As part of the 2021 revisions, the new Class MA was expanded to Permitted Development Rights to allow for the change of use of any Class E building into a C3 (residential).
- 4.14 Amendments to the General Permitted Development Order (2021) are as follows:
- Class MA – Development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E(g)(i) (offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions); and Class E(g)(iii) (industrial processes), of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order to a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling houses) of Schedule 1 to that Order.***
- 4.15 This means both offices and light industrial use fall within the new Use Class E and Class MA of the General Permitted Development Order (GDPO).
- 4.16 The Council is therefore required to amend the existing Article 4 Directions to reflect Class MA Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development 2015 to disapply changes of use from Class E to residential (Class C3) use.
- 4.17 Further changes to Class MA were introduced in March 2024. For any application submitted on or after 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024, there is now no limit to the floor

space that can be converted under Class MA and there is no requirement for the building to be vacant for 3 months.

*Confirming the revised Article 4 Directions*

- 4.18 If confirmed, the revised Article 4 Directions would cover individual buildings in the Employment Areas of Gunnels Wood and Pin Green, as identified in Appendix A and B.
- 4.19 A minimum 28-day notice period is required when implementing Article 4 Directions.
- 4.20 A 12-month notification period was used on the previous Article 4 Directions in 2017 and was designed to ensure that the impact of any financial challenge is mitigated. Being as these Directions will apply to premises already covered by the previous Directions, it is unlikely that there will be any financial implications on owners or occupiers.
- 4.21 As such, the Article 4 Directions, if confirmed, would come into effect on 21 January 2026. The Directions were legally sealed prior to the consultation period and are required to be legally sealed again prior to confirmation.
- 4.22 There is a risk that proposals before 21 January 2026 will be subject to planning or prior approval applications for change of use on sites identified. Officers within the Planning Policy and Development Management teams in the Planning & Regulation unit have been fully briefed on the proposed revised sites to which the Directions will apply.
- 4.23 On the assumption that the Council confirms the Direction to have effect from 21 January 2026, the Direction as confirmed will apply to the same area in the Direction as made, despite the single prior approval application which has been made. The Direction will not have effect in relation to that land by reason of Article 4(2)(a) of the GPDO.
- 4.24 Officers have been in contact with and will update the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Article 4 team and the Secretary of State, once the new Direction has been confirmed.

*Immediate and Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions*

- 4.25 Article 4 Directions, under the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) can be made to have:
- Option 1: Immediate effect. This applies when the development to which the Direction relates would be prejudicial to the proper planning of their area or constitute a threat to the amenities of their area. The Direction withdraws permitted development rights with immediate effect once notice of the direction is published. However, a local planning authority may be liable to pay compensation to a landowner when permitted development rights are removed by an immediate Article 4 Direction. All claims for compensation must be made within 12 months of the date on which the planning application for development formerly permitted is refused or approved subject to conditions that go beyond those in the GPDO, or;

- Option 2: Non-immediate effect. This can require a 12-month interval after notice of the direction is published before the Direction comes into force. A non-immediate Article 4 Direction is therefore used to reduce the likelihood of any compensation claims against the Council.

4.26 Since we sought to update the Article 4 Directions with a planned confirmation date of 19 March 2025 (as per the notices of Directions in BD10 and BD11), we have received a prior approval application, as there are currently no restrictions in place under the existing Directions. Therefore, if we were to refuse this prior approval application because the Council is considering having the Article 4 Direction come into force with immediate effect, the Council is at risk in having to issue compensation to the applicant in question. As such, our recommendation will be to undertake a non-immediate Article 4 Direction under Option 2.

#### *Confirming Non-Immediate Article 4 Directions*

4.27 The process for making a non-immediate Article 4 Direction is as follows:

- Stage 1: The Council decides whether to go ahead and make a Direction setting a date in the Notice for when the Direction will come into force which must be at least 28 days and no more than 2 years after the first date of the period for making representations in response to statutory consultation undertaken.
- Stage 2: Publication / Consultation stage (22 January to 18 February 2025).
- Stage 3: On the same day that notice is first published or displayed in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 3 of the Order, the Council has to send a copy of the Direction and the notice including any map defining the area to which it relates or the site to which it relates to the Secretary of State who has wide powers to modify or cancel a Direction.
- Stage 4: Confirmation Stage. The Council considers any representations received after a period of at least 21 days from publication / service of the Notice and decides whether to confirm the Direction. A Direction cannot be confirmed until the expiration of a period of at least 28 days following the latest date on which any notice relating to the direction was served or published or such longer period as may be specified by the Secretary of State of the direction. In the case of Stevenage, the two amended Article 4 Directions would come into force 12 months after the notice of Directions was served on 22 January 2025, meaning they would come into force on 21 January 2026. The date 21 January 2026 will replace the date 19 March 2025, on the final versions of the two Directions (Appendix A and B).

4.28 Once a Direction has been confirmed, the Council must give notice of confirmation as soon as practicable after it has been confirmed in the same way as it gave notice of the initial Direction, and must specify the date the Direction comes into force. The Council must also send a copy of the direction to the Secretary of State.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Assuming that there is 28 days notification of the Direction and the 12-month notice period is served, there should be little opportunity for challenge resulting in any financial compensation.
- 5.2 Other than staff costs in terms on both consulting upon and reporting the Direction, the principal cost will be staff time processing the any planning applications for these changes of use, which will be un-chargeable. The expected number can be met within existing resources within Planning.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.3 Once confirmed, the Article 4 Direction will remove the permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Class MA Use Class E(g)(I) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and Country Planning [Use Classes] Order 1987, as amended).
- 5.4 Legal advice has been sought and will continue to be sought, as necessary, regarding Article 4 Directions in Stevenage.
- 5.5 The Directions were legally sealed prior to the consultation period in January 2025 and are required to be legally sealed again prior to confirmation.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.6 The principle aim of these Directions is to ensure local planning policies can be applied to proposals for changes of use from office and light industrial to residential dwellings, to ensure employment uses are protected across the town.
- 5.7 There is a risk that proposals before 21 January 2026 will be subject to planning applications for change of use on identified sites; officers within the Planning Policy and Development Management teams in the Planning & Regulation unit have been fully briefed on the proposed revised sites to which the Directions will apply.
- 5.8 There are potential risks of not having Article 4 Directions in place, that have been highlighted within this report and in the previous reports to Executive on this subject. These include:
- Constraining growth.
  - Forcing businesses to relocate.
  - Limiting overall performance and productivity of businesses.
  - Limiting the attractiveness of Stevenage as a place to invest.
  - A risk of creating towns that lack in local shops, facilities and services.
  - Local Plan targets for affordable housing not being met as well as loss of important revenue to reinvest in Stevenage.



### **Environmental Implications**

- 5.9 The consequences of not maintaining the existing Article 4 Directions in Stevenage include an increased need for longer journeys, contrary to the objectives of sustainable development, climate change and the wider aspirations of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.10 Once confirmed, the amended Article 4 Direction will remove the permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and Country Planning [Use Classes] Order 1987, as amended). Instead, planning permission will be required for these changes of use. Local planning policies will be used to assess any resulting planning applications.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 Use Classes Order (September 2020)  
[https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/9/change\\_of\\_use](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use)
- BD2 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 6: Confirmation of Two Article 4 Directions to require Changes of Use from Class E(g)(i) (Offices) and Class E(g)(iii) (Light Industrial) to Class C3 (Residential) to obtain Planning Permission (September 2022)  
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s32501/Article%204%20Directions%20Exec%20Report.pdf>
- BD3 Current Article 4 Direction for change of use from Office to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas)
- BD4 Current Article 4 Direction for change of use from Light Industrial to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas)
- BD5 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 7: Consultation on an amendment to two Article 4 Directions to require Changes of Use from Class E(g)(i) (Offices) and Class E(g)(iii) (Light Industrial) to Class C3 (Residential) to obtain Planning Permission (January 2025)  
[https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s38145/7%20Final%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20Art4%20January%202025%20LC\\_SM%20231224.pdf](https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s38145/7%20Final%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20Art4%20January%202025%20LC_SM%20231224.pdf)
- BD6 Article 4 Directions: Comet Newspaper Notice (January 2025)
- BD7 Copy of Site Notices (January 2025)
- BD8 Copy of Letter to Landowners / Occupiers regarding consultation on Article 4 Directions (January 2025)
- BD9 Copy of Letter to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Hertfordshire County Council regarding consultation on Article 4 Directions (January 2025)
- BD10 Notice of Revised Article 4 Direction for change of use from Office to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas) (January 2025)
- BD11 Notice of Revised Article 4 Direction for change of use from Light Industrial to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas) (January 2025)

## **APPENDICES**

- A Revised Article 4 Direction for change of use from Office to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas)
- B Revised Article 4 Direction for change of use from Light Industrial to Residential (Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas)
- C Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses to Article 4 Directions Consultation, 22 January – 18 February 2025

## Stevenage Borough Council

### Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

#### Direction made under Article 4(1) to which Schedule 3 applies

**WHEREAS** Stevenage Borough Council (“the Council”) being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of article 4(5) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (“the Order”) (as amended) is satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in the First Schedule of this Direction should not be carried out on land described in the Second Schedule of this Direction unless planning permission is granted by the local planning authority on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

**NOW THEREFORE** the Council in pursuance of the power conferred on it by Article 4(1) of the Order hereby directs that permitted development granted by Article 3 of the Order shall not apply to development specified in the First Schedule of this Direction on the land described in the Second Schedule of this Direction and shown outlined in red on the attached plan.

#### **FIRST SCHEDULE**

Development comprising the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E(g)(i) (an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions) of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule, being development comprised within Class MA – commercial, business and service uses to dwellinghouses of Part 3 (Changes of Use) of Schedule 2 of the Order and not being development comprised within any other Class.

#### **SECOND SCHEDULE**

This Direction shall apply only to the land outlined in red, as defined by the attached map.

The Article 4 Direction will come into effect on 19 March 2025.

Made under the Common seal of Stevenage Borough Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Day of January 2025. The Common Seal of the Council was affixed to this Direction in the presence of:

.....  
[Redacted]

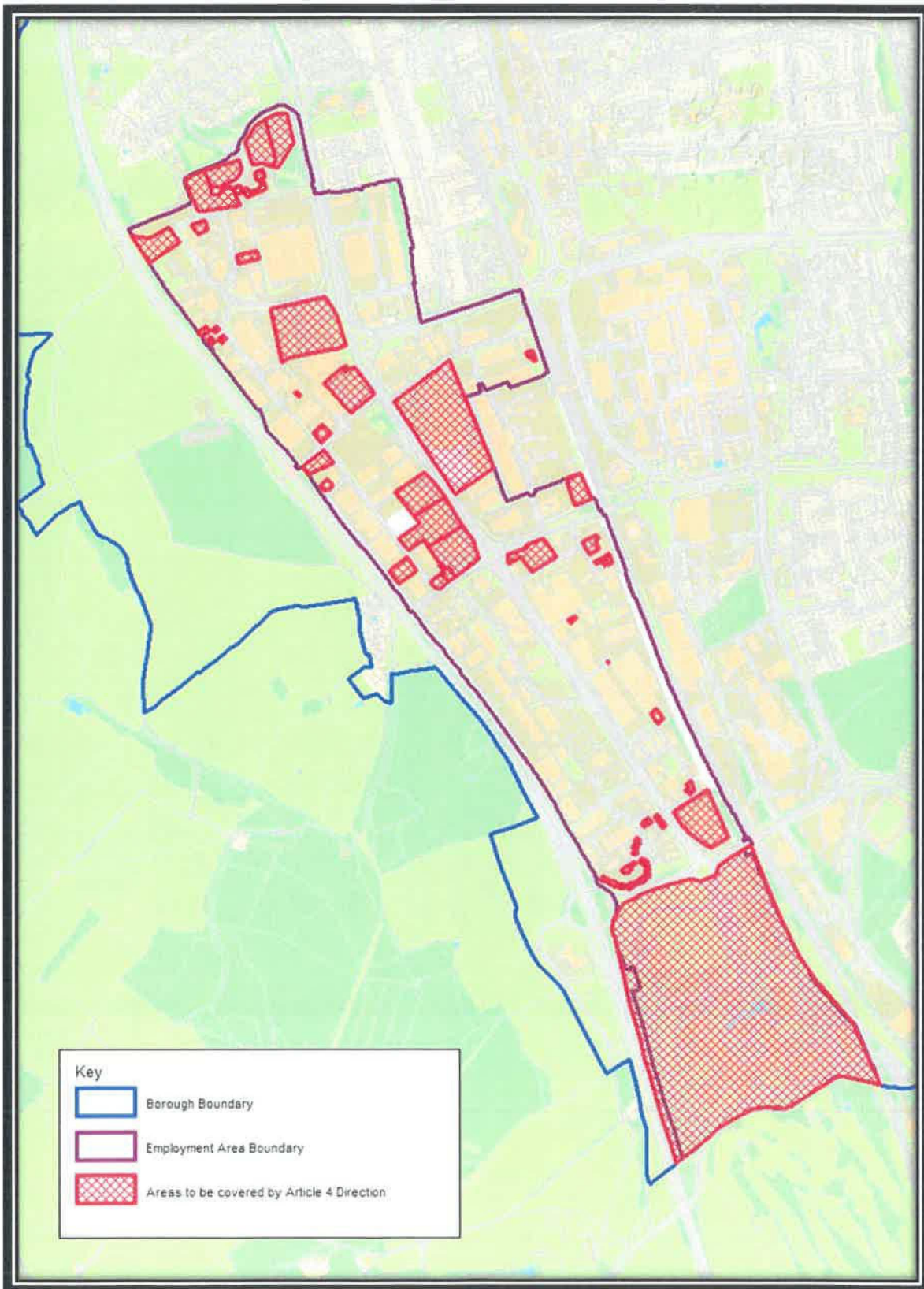


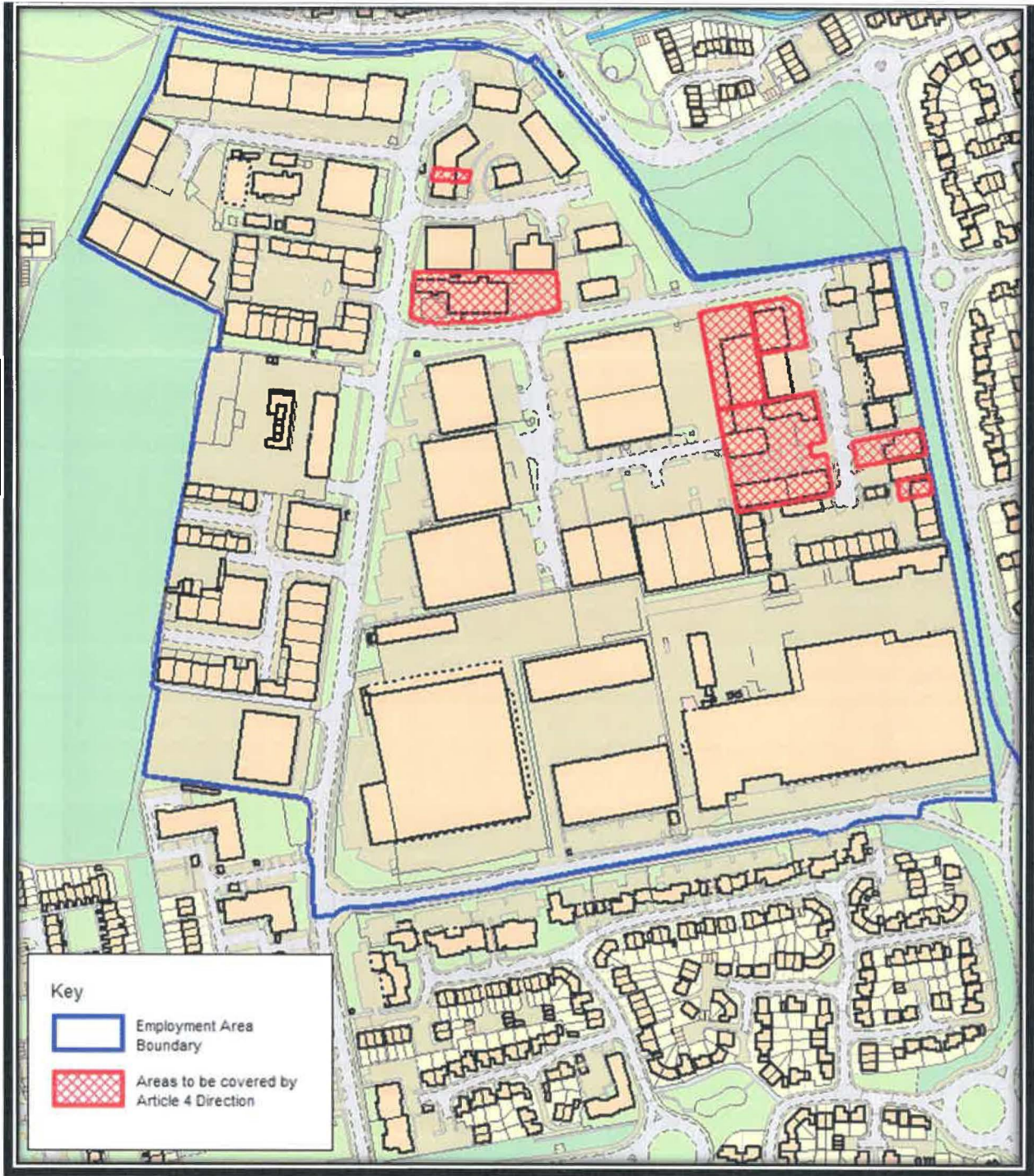
Confirmed under the Common seal of Stevenage Borough Council on the ..... Day of ..... 2025. The Common Seal of the Council was affixed to this Direction in the presence of:

.....  
[Redacted]



**Article 4 Direction of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended): Change of use from E(g)(i) (an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions) to C3 (dwellinghouses)**





## **Stevenage Borough Council**

### **Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015**

#### **Direction made under Article 4(1) to which Schedule 3 applies**

**WHEREAS** Stevenage Borough Council (“the Council”) being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of Article 4(5) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (“the Order”) (as amended) is satisfied that it is expedient that development of the description set out in the First Schedule of this Direction should not be carried out on land described in the Second Schedule of this Direction unless planning permission is granted by the local planning authority on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

**NOW THEREFORE** the Council in pursuance of the power conferred on it by Article 4(1) of the Order hereby directs that permitted development granted by Article 3 of the Order shall not apply to development specified in the First Schedule of this Direction on the land described in the Second Schedule of this Direction and shown outlined in red on the attached plan.

#### **FIRST SCHEDULE**

Development comprising the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E(g)(iii) (any industrial process) of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule, being development comprised within Class MA – commercial, business and service uses to dwellinghouses of Part 3 (Changes of Use) of Schedule 2 of the Order and not being development comprised within any other Class.

#### **SECOND SCHEDULE**

This Direction shall apply only to the land edged and hatched in red shown on the attached plans.

The Article 4 Direction will come into effect on 19 March 2025.

Made under the Common seal of Stevenage Borough Council on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Day of January 2025. The Common Seal of the Council was affixed to this Direction in the presence of:

.....



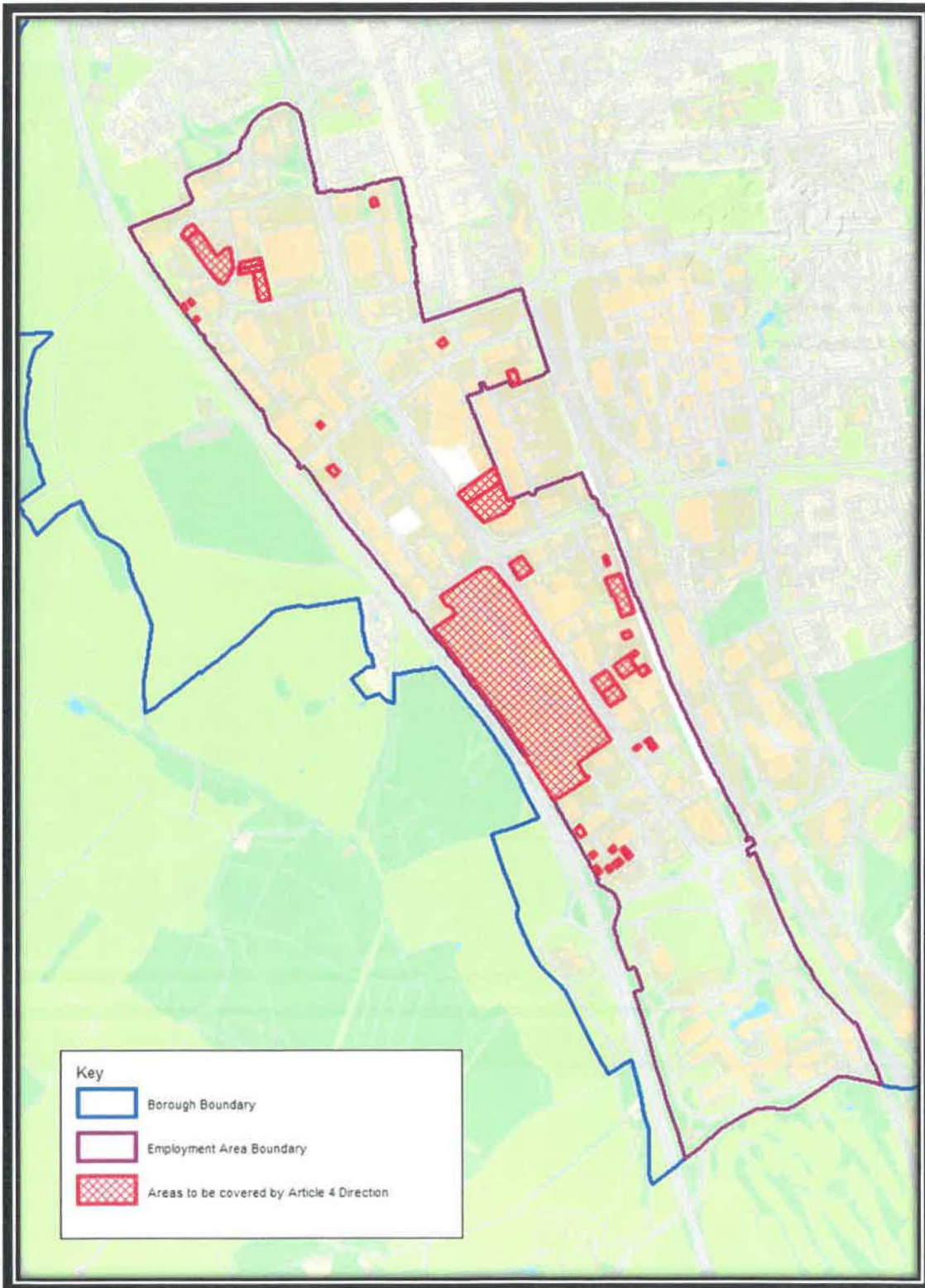
Confirmed under the Common seal of Stevenage Borough Council on the ..... Day of ..... 2025. The Common Seal of the Council was affixed to this Direction in the presence of:

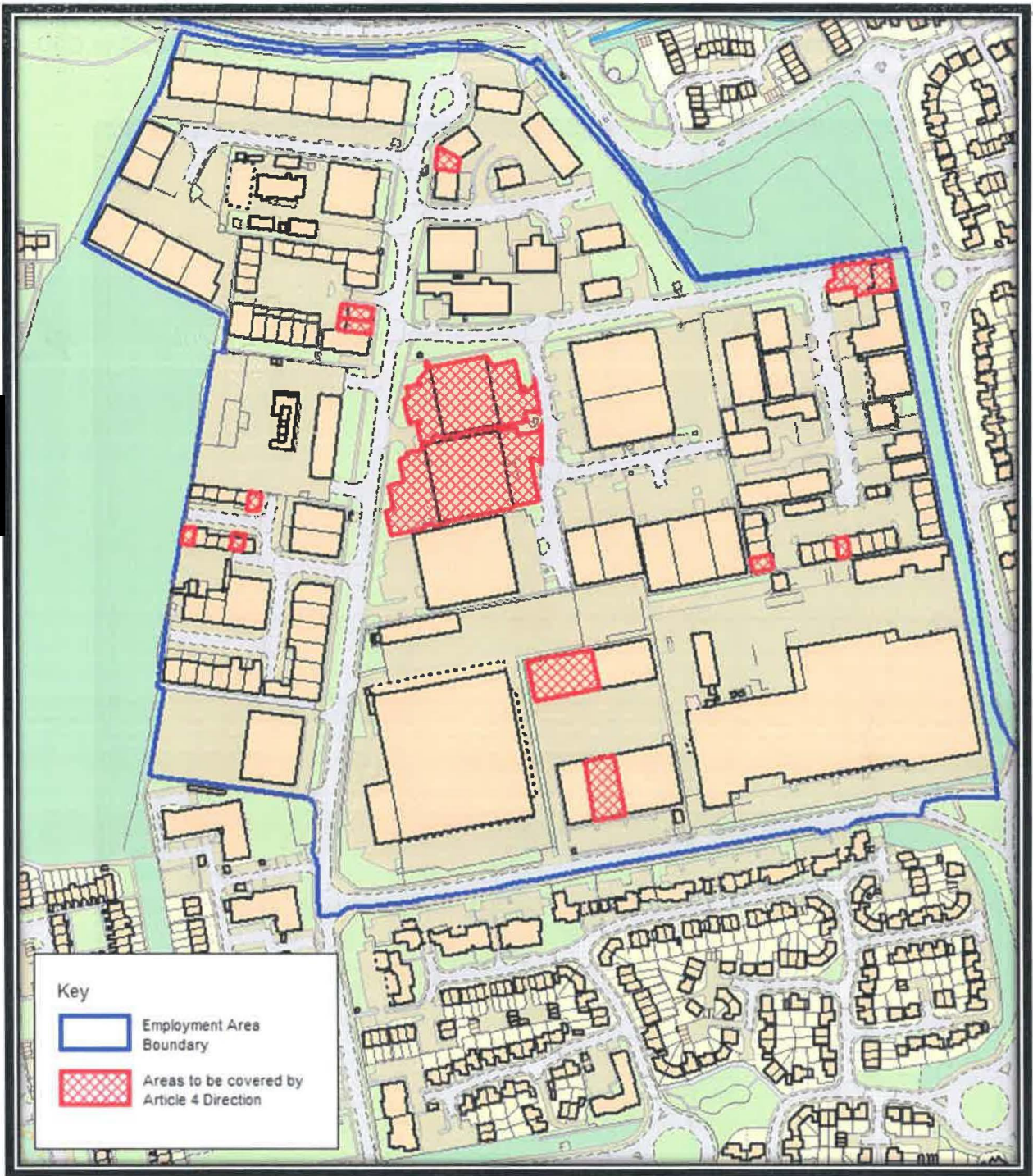
.....





**Article 4 Direction of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended): Change of use from E(g)(iii) (any industrial process) to C3 (dwellinghouses)**





**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
1	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>Support for the revised Article 4 Directions.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Support noted.</i></p>
2	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Whilst I agree that empty buildings could be converted to residential and indeed some plots have stood empty for years waiting for an 'ideal' business to move in what this change does is to remove employment opportunities in the town for businesses looking to locate to Stevenage. The net result will be more housing but less work.</p> </div> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>The Article 4 Direction is not a ban on changes of use to residential; it is a requirement that such changes of use must have planning permission from the Council.</i></p> <p><i>The Council fully appreciates the demand for housing and has allowed for significant levels of housing growth to meet objectively assessed housing need, in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 as well as the Housing Land Supply Position Statement and Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, all available on the Council website.</i></p> <p><i>The Stevenage Borough Local Plan already identifies sufficient sites to meet the Borough’s housing needs within the plan period, in sites it considers are suitable and sustainable for residential. As such, allowing these unrestricted changes of use to take place could upset the balance between homes and jobs.</i></p>

**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
		<p><i>The Local Plan also identifies the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas as significant employment areas in the town and where offices and light industrial uses, for example, as well as important industries to the town and wider region, are clustered. Residential uses are still permitted in this area, outside of the designated protected sites, as long as they confirm with policies of the Local Plan.</i></p> <p><i>If we were to leave our existing Article 4 Directions to expire and therefore cease to exist, the consequences for Stevenage would potentially include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• A risk of creating towns that lack in local shops, facilities and services;</i></li> <li><i>• An increased need for longer journeys, contrary to the objectives of sustainable development and the aspirations of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan; and</i></li> <li><i>• Large scale units such as supermarkets or office blocks could be converted to residential use, without securing Section 106 contributions and therefore more affordable homes. This would mean the Local Plan targets for affordable housing not being met as well as loss of important revenue to reinvest in Stevenage.</i></li> </ul>
3	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>Gunnels Wood Road and the Pin Green employment areas are the towns designated industrial areas , they do not have the infrastructure that would allow industrial units to be converted to residential so I support SBC Article 4 (as amended) to remove permitted development rights</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Support noted and welcomed.</i></p>

**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
4	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>This industrial area has a lot of HGV vehicles and other vehicles so would not be the environment or area for residential dwellings. This area also offers employment to Stevenage and surrounding area so could cause companies to move further afield resulting in job losses.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Comments noted. By protecting key office and light industrial sites in the town, this will aim to attract new businesses seeking to locate in the area of wider region and therefore further employment opportunities ahead.</i></p> <p><i>The Local Plan identifies the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas as significant employment areas in the town and where offices and light industrial uses, for example, as well as important industries to the town and wider region, are clustered and the benefits of clustering and agglomeration can be enjoyed, in line with the wider regeneration plan for the Town Centre.</i></p> <p><i>The amenity of residents of these new homes would likely be affected by the issues that arise from employment uses such as noise, lighting, HGV access and adverse visual impacts. Complaints could lead to businesses being subject to tighter environmental or operational, thus making the Employment Areas a less attractive option for existing and new occupiers, potentially resulting in a domino effect of businesses vacating the area. If we were to leave our existing Article 4 Directions to expire and therefore cease to exist, the consequences for Stevenage would potentially include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• A risk of creating towns that lack in local shops, facilities and services;</i></li> <li><i>• An increased need for longer journeys, contrary to the objectives of sustainable development and the aspirations of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan; and</i></li> <li><i>• Large scale units such as supermarkets or office blocks could be converted to residential use, without securing Section 106 contributions and therefore more affordable homes. This would mean the Local Plan targets for affordable housing not being met as well as loss of important revenue to reinvest in Stevenage.</i></li> </ul>

**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
5	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>Increased traffic which is already excessive in the area.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Comments noted.</i></p>
6	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>I strongly support restricting permitted development by use of the Article 4 Direction across all of Stevenage, to ensure that any change of use of property has to be subject to strict Planning Approval, to prevent uncontrolled and inappropriate development.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Support noted and welcomed.</i></p>
7	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>Support due to potential implications on infrastructure which should be considered.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Support noted and welcomed.</i></p>

**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
8	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>Support due to potential implications on infrastructure which should be considered.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Support noted and welcomed.</i></p>
9	Anonymous	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>As a freehold owner on the estate, it is important that owners remain able to sell their property to developers should circumstances change on the estate. For example, if businesses close down and are not replaced, then demand (driven by traffic flow into the estate) will reduce further meaning it becomes unsustainable to run a business in the area. With the current demand for new homes to be built, this seems unjust on the business/freehold owners and also goes against the government's direction regarding the building of new homes. This seems a short-sighted change.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Comments noted. By protecting key office and light industrial sites in the town, this will aim to attract new businesses seeking to locate in the area of wider region and therefore further employment opportunities ahead.</i></p> <p><i>The Article 4 Direction is not a ban on changes of use to residential; it is a requirement that such changes of use must have planning permission from the Council.</i></p> <p><i>The Stevenage Borough Local Plan already identifies sufficient sites to meet the Borough's housing needs within the plan period, in sites it considers are suitable and sustainable for residential. As such, allowing these unrestricted changes of use to take place could upset the balance between homes and jobs.</i></p>

**Stevenage Amended Article 4 Directions: Consultation 22 January – 18 February 2025**  
**Summary of Consultation Comments and Council Responses**

ID	Name	Responses
		<p><i>The Local Plan identifies the Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas as significant employment areas in the town and where offices and light industrial uses, for example, as well as important industries to the town and wider region, are clustered and the benefits of clustering and agglomeration can be enjoyed, in line with the wider regeneration plan for the Town Centre.</i></p> <p><i>The amenity of residents of these new homes would likely be affected by the issues that arise from employment uses such as noise, lighting, HGV access and adverse visual impacts. Complaints could lead to businesses being subject to tighter environmental or operational, thus making the Employment Areas a less attractive option for existing and new occupiers, potentially resulting in a domino effect of businesses vacating the area. If we were to leave our existing Article 4 Directions to expire and therefore cease to exist, the consequences for Stevenage would potentially include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• A risk of creating towns that lack in local shops, facilities and services;</i></li> <li><i>• An increased need for longer journeys, contrary to the objectives of sustainable development and the aspirations of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan; and</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Large scale units such as supermarkets or office blocks could be converted to residential use, without securing Section 106 contributions and therefore more affordable homes. This would mean the Local Plan targets for affordable housing not being met as well as loss of important revenue to reinvest in Stevenage.</i></p>
10	Hertfordshire County Council	<p><b>Comment:</b></p> <p>HCC have no comments to make in regards to this consultation.</p> <p><b>Stevenage Borough Council Response:</b></p> <p><i>Representation noted.</i></p>



**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 12 March 2025



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER THREE 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 3 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 3 performance data.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the service performance against 52 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 3 2024/25 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.
- 2.2 That the current status of Electrical Certification be noted (section 4.3.2).
- 2.3 That the issues with Garage Voids and planned improvements are noted (section 4.34).

- 2.4 That the Regulator of Social Housing Provider Improvement Plan be noted (section 4.6).
- 2.5 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.8) 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.

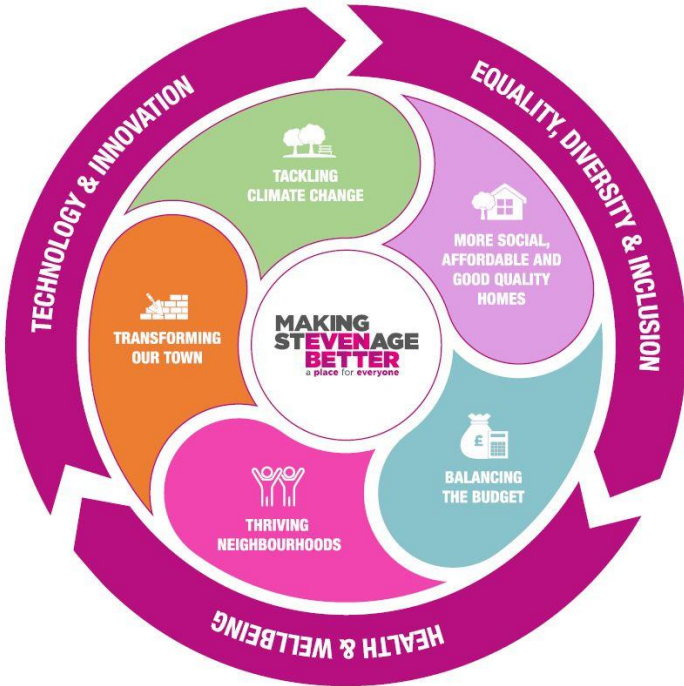


Fig 1.

- 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 were also 13 measures relating to the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) which will be reported annually. OFLOG closed in December 2024 the data for these measures will still be collated, however considerations will be taken as to what happens with these in 2025/26. 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 were added in Quarter 2 'RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Actions (High, Medium and Low)' and one 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 Council's Corporate Risk Group.
- 3.6 There are 23 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 THREE 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

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.

Q3 2024/25 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW						
MSEB Programme	Baseline measure for 2024-25	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data	Milestones Reported Qtr. 3
More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (25 measures)	13	7	4	1	0	17
Transforming Our Town (3 measures)	0	3	0	0	0	8
Thriving Neighbourhoods (11 measures)	5	5*	0	1	0	1
	*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					
Tackling Climate Change (1 measures)	0	1	0	0	0	7
Balancing the Budget (13 measures)	5	8	0	0	0	10
<b>TOTAL (53)</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>

Fig 2.

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

- The percentage of repairs fixed first time remains high with 95.83% (4690 of 4894) being fixed on the initial visit.
- 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 93.1%, the highest in the last five quarters. 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 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 3 highlights including:

- A new Allocations policy was implemented which ensures the Council meets statutory duties and makes best use of housing stock.
- New park equipment has been installed at Brent Court Garages and will likely be open to the public by the end of January 2024.
- A contractor has been appointed for the Ellis Avenue housing development and the demolition of existing buildings has been scheduled. The scheme will include seven two bedroom and four one bedroom flats.
- A contractor has been appointed for Phase 2 of the Kenilworth Close scheme, start on site is taking place beginning with the demolition of Walpole Court.
- Planning permission was granted to build 38 homes at the former Cartref site in Symonds Green.
- The Regeneration team have completed a successful tender process for the arts and heritage trail. The company, Landmark, have begun scoping works and are starting to conduct site visits to gather information for the design phase.
- Phase one of a development of a new Enterprise Centre within the town is on site and scheduled to completed in Quarter 4. A full options appraisal for Phase 2 has been conducted, coinciding with SITEC development partners. The team are working through the outcome with a view to progress these projects in tandem.
- Delivery of the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) continues to make good progress. Junction 7 have now completed the painting of 14 telecom boxes across the town centre and old town, with 6 more planned, pending approval from telecom companies. The government has announced an extension to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the 2025/26 financial year. This is a reduced allocation from what the council received in 2024/25 and plans are being drawn together, ahead of approval from cabinet.
- The procurement of new recycling and refuse receptacles has been completed and will be delivered by the end of Quarter 4.
- 260 of 286 garages that contain asbestos are now back in the Council's control. The last garages are due to be taken back by way of repossession. The garages team are also awaiting completed forms from licence holders who have requested their items back.
- The garages team are proactively marketing commercial garages. There are currently just 3 voids – 2 are awaiting repair and 1 is on digital lettings.

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 two measures that are red this quarter, 'VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate' and 'CNM2g: Garage voids as a percentage of stock'. 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 3.

<u>MEASURE NAME</u>	<u>BUSINESS UNIT</u>	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD
<b>More Social, Affordable, Good Quality Homes</b>								
<b>VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate</b>	Building Safety & Housing Property Services	99.78%	99.78%	99.58%	99.14%	98.41%	100%	100%
<b>Thriving Neighbourhoods</b>								
<b>CNM2g: Garage voids as a percentage of stock</b>	Stevenage Direct Services	11.07%	11.07%	6.99%	7.50%	8.04%	6.67%	6.47%

Fig.3

**VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate**

- 4.3.2 The percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate at the end of December 2024 is 98.41% against a target of 100%. 7744 out of 7869 dwellings have a valid EICR Electrical certificate leaving 125 outstanding.
- 4.3.3 The current shortfall on EICR satisfactory certification is down to no access properties and SBC having a "zero" tolerance approach to not being 100% compliant. SBC are 98% compliant in this area which compares very favourably with other organisations performance for electrical certification. A process is in place to address non-access issues and ensure electrical checks can be completed.

**CNM2g: Garage voids as a percentage of stock**

- 4.3.4 The residential garage void rate at the end of December 2024 is 8.04% against a target of 6.67%.
- 4.3.5 In Quarter 3 terminations were lower than Quarter 2 (96 in comparison to 120), however the number of offers fell by 20% to 153 for the quarter with demand for garages declining.
- 4.3.6 The drop in demand for garages is thought to be due to:
- continued cost of living pressures (reduced spend on discretionary items)
  - competition from local storage solutions who are offering very attractive introductory rates.
  - less attractive garages being available and a natural plateauing (there are only c.375 voids across the whole stock and some have poor access)

- 4.3.7 Despite a high number of garages being available, December 2024 had the lowest number of bids since digital lettings was introduced in 2022. The acceptance rate was also low as many garages could not be offered due to existing debts on prospective tenant accounts. In total 59 bids were refused due to existing debts. This equated to 41 applicants as some made multiple bids.
- 4.3.8 Garage services will continue with a proactive marketing strategy which includes working with local housing associations and issuing surveys to license holders who live outside the town to better understand their needs.
- 4.3.9 Further improvements to the online digital service including a mapping feature are anticipated to be implemented by April 2025.

**4.4 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (TSM)**

- 4.4.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced in 2023/24 as a regulatory requirement for all Registered Social Landlords in England. There are 22 TSMs – of which 12 are sourced from a tenant perception surveys. The Council has commissioned Housemark 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 3 for 2024/25, 261 surveys were completed, 200 over the phone and 61 online. This brings the total number of surveys completed to date for 2024/25 to 770. The Q3 satisfaction results can be seen in the table below:

Ref	Question	Previous year (2023/24)	Cumulative (2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP01	Overall satisfaction	56.0%	65.8%	+9.8%
TP02	Repairs service overall	62.7%	68.7%	+6.0%
TP03	Speed of repairs	52.4%	64.8%	+12.4%
TP04	Home is well-maintained	59.2%	66.6%	+7.4%
TP05	Home is safe	69.9%	74.7%	+4.8%
TP06	Listens to views and acts	44.9%	52.8%	+7.9%
TP07	Keeps tenants informed	50.9%	60.2%	+9.3%
TP08	Treats tenants fairly and with respect	70.2%	72.0%	+1.8%
TP09	Complaint handling	22.8%	34.2%	+11.4%
TP10	Communal areas are clean and well-maintained	53.3%	61.2%	+7.9%
TP11	Contribution to neighbourhood	47.7%	60.8%	+13.1%
TP12	ASB handling	49.5%	56.5%	+7.0%

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 65.8% representing an increase of 9.8%. The highest increase relates to satisfaction with speed of repairs which is now 64.8% an increase of 12.4%. Tenants are most satisfied with being provided with a home that is safe at 74.3% representing an increase of 4.8%.
- 4.4.4 It should be noted that the Quarter 3 scores were achieved with 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 3 stands at 47.5% for tenants who completed the online survey and 78% for telephone responses.
- 4.4.5 In addition to the twelve standard questions, the Council has opted to ask two additional questions which will vary each quarter. For Quarter 1, 2 and 3 tenants were asked to set out the reason for their initial overall satisfaction score. For Quarter 3 tenants were also asked whether they have experienced ASB within the last 12 months and if so, how long it lasted. Of the 19.5% of tenants that reported they had experienced ASB in the last 12 months, 72.5% of these highlighted that the issue is still ongoing.
- 4.4.6 As part of the survey tenants are able to use free text to provide additional detail. Feedback from the surveys is being used to help inform and implement a new Resident Engagement Strategy along with specific development and improvement work across service areas. Of the tenants that provided a reason for overall satisfaction and have given permission for their responses to be shared, 33% of these have been reported to individual teams for further contact to be made. 51% of the follow ups requested are in relation to repairs (including damp and mould).
- 4.4.7 Quarter 4 surveys commenced in January 2025 and 100% of these surveys will be carried out over the phone.

## **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 Quarter 2 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 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 third quarter, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman reached determinations in respect of two complaints. Both cases are being resolved following formal interventions.
- 4.5.5 With regards to the Housing Ombudsman, 4 cases were considered in quarter 3, 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 root 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 34.2% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the handling of their complaint which represents an improvement of 11% 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 REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDER IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

- 4.6.1 In November 2024 the Council was notified by the Regulator of Social Housing that it has been awarded a C2 grade following on-site inspection against the Consumer Standards. Cabinet was notified of the inspection outcome in December 2024 and approved the recommendation that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to develop and approve a Provider Improvement Plan (PIP) with the Regulator of Social Housing. Cabinet also approved the recommendation that the PIP would be reported to Cabinet as part of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Framework.
- 4.6.2 The Council met with the Regulator in January 2025 to open dialogue on what the PIP should include, and a draft version is attached at Appendix C, also detailing progress made since the inspection took place and the judgement was confirmed.
- 4.6.3 The Council met with the Regulator again at the end of February to ratify the PIP and submitted supporting evidence of the progress that the council has made. The Regulator has also requested that root causes of any weaknesses be identified and included in the PIP to ensure that learnings are embedded into future service delivery.
- 4.6.4 The Executive Housing Working Group will receive progress updates on the planned improvements on a bi-monthly basis and the Council will meet with the

Regulator of Social Housing on a monthly basis, moving to quarterly, once strong assurance is gained that the Council is making sufficient progress.

#### **4.7 COST OF LIVING**

- 4.7.1 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.
- 4.7.2 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.
- 4.7.3 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. Funding for the cafes is to be distributed to enable them to continue until September 2025.
- 4.7.4 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 the Council is yet to hear if there will be further tranches distributed in April 2025.
- 4.7.5 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. For the September 2024 – March 2025 allocation £6000 energy and £44,000 food poverty and has been distributed within these guidelines.

#### **4.8 STRATEGIC RISK**

- 4.8.1 The strategic risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 5 February 2025, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 4 March 2025 and will be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 25 March 2025.
- 4.8.2 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**

- 4.8.3 This quarter the risk score for the HRA Business Plan has been increased. There has been a revision to the current risk description with specific reference to cost pressures. This change to description has meant the risk score has increased from high to very high. 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 Three 2024/25
- Appendix B: Ombudsman Determinations Quarter Three 2024/25
- Appendix C: RSH Improvement Plan
- Appendix D: Housing Ombudsman Annual Report 2023/24

**Corporate Performance Report 2024/25**  
**Quarter 3 (October, November, December)**



**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 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
<p><b>Page 109</b></p> <p>% of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage two (Housing)</p>			0.00%	0.00%	27.00%			<p>31/12/2024</p> <p>11 Surveys completed</p> <p>Fairly Satisfied - 3</p> <p>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - 3</p> <p>Very dissatisfied - 5</p> <p>As part of the roll out of the Councils new Complaints Handling System, the approach to these transactional surveys will be changing, this will now move to a full automated process which will be undertaken through the Govmetric system with all complainants being given the opportunity to provide feedback through the system.</p>
<p>% of Damp and Mould cases completed on time</p>			64.00%	73.06%	79.00%			<p>31/12/2024</p> <p>Contractors have been facing challenges due to limited access to properties, which has resulted in work orders being recorded outside of the target on the NEC system. The team is actively working with the resident liaison team to reduce the impact of no-access. Additionally, the influx of work stemming from the backlog of (HHSRS) assessments, coupled with the seasonal demands typical for this time of year, has put further pressure on the service. Further, vacancies that have arisen within the team during Q3 reduced staffing capacity at one of the busiest times of the year for this service, impacting ability to manage new and existing cases effectively, and balance workloads. Interim agency staffing arrangements have been put in place to increase capacity whilst a recruitment campaign is undertaken in Q4 in respect of vacant and agency filled roles.</p>

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
% of Damp and Mould inspections completed on time			72.00%	82.22%	85.69%			31/12/2024  This quarter's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for inspections were once again negatively impacted by several properties where access was not granted, leading to missed target times being recorded on the NEC system. In response, the team continues to collaborate closely with the resident liaison team to address no-access issues. The increased volume of work resulting from the backlog of HHSRS assessments and typical seasonal pressures have exacerbated the situation. Vacancies that have arisen within the team during Q3 reduced staffing capacity at one of the busiest times of the year for this service, impacting ability to manage new and existing cases effectively, and balance workloads. Interim agency staffing arrangements have been put in place to increase capacity whilst a recruitment campaign is undertaken in Q4 in respect of vacant and agency filled roles.
% of tenants satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage one (Housing)			36.00%	47.00%	55.00%			31/12/2024 40 Surveys completed Very satisfied - 6 Fairly satisfied - 16 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied - 6 Fairly dissatisfied - 1 Very dissatisfied - 11 As part of the roll out of the Councils new Complaints Handling System, the approach to these transactional surveys will be changing, this will now move to a full automated process which will be undertaken through the Govmetric system with all complainants being given the opportunity to provide feedback through the system.
Average time taken to relet a routine void (GN). key to key			100.00	89.00	85.00			31/12/2024 The target for GN Std / Major and SH std have not been achieved during Q3. A new process for keys being returned to the empty homes team is in place and there have been no delays between keys received and the voids process beginning – no current issues with terminating tenancies causing delays. Delays in void works stage relate to inherited backlog, procurement restrictions and lack of permanent contracts. New procurement/tender process is in place now but the initial delay did not outweigh the volume of new void properties being returned and the value of orders that can be placed during each contractor round. Q3 has seen a high volume of family homes being returned as void due to the new SH development (Brodie Ct) making use of the downsizing scheme. During Q3 the new allocations policy has been implemented with a hold on any new tenancies starting for a number of weeks during November – this has shown an increase in the time between properties being ready to let and let.

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
BV213: Homelessness preventions	156.00	206.00	37.00	58.00	82.00	90.00	120.00	31/12/2024 The ongoing lack of affordable private rented accommodation and the financial challenges faced by applicants continue to drive high demand for the service, seeing a reduction in the number that have been successful prevented.
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	401.00	495.00	497.00	497.00	498.00	489.00	490.00	
Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time		94.96%	96.79%	97.19%	95.83%	90.00%	90.00%	
RP01a: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	84.77%	94.00%	95.40%	95.97%	92.22%	96.00%	87.00%	31/12/2024 The performance for the end of Q3 is lower than originally projected but the projected performance for the full year remains on target. The performance figures for Decent Homes are complicated at the end of the calendar year due to the impact of components becoming a year older on 1 Jan 2025 and as a result becoming Non-Decent. The number of homes Decent at the end of 2024/25 is managed by both making homes Decent and preventing homes becoming Non-Decent. As a result of the measures taken the team will be reducing the number of homes originally projected as becoming Non-Decent in 2025. In effect the split between homes made decent & homes prevented from becoming non decent will be different form the original projections but the result at year end will be the same. The projections this year have been particularly difficult to forecast across the year due to a number of changes both in the way Decency is calculated and the number of stock condition surveys the team have carried out which change the data used for the calculations.
RSH BS01: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
















	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
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%	
RSH BS04: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspections certificate	100.00%	96.65%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS05: Percentage of domestic passenger lifts with an in date LOLER inspection	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH CH01 (part 2): Number of stage two complaints made by tenants	67	88	21	36	57			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH CH01 (part1): Number of stage one complaints made by tenants	655	818	214	357	516			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE At the end of Quarter 3 95.54% (493 of 516) of stage one 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	483	631	199	337	493			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH CH02 (part2): Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants and responded to within CH Timescale	42	61	19	30	51			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE At the end of Quarter 3 89.47% (51 of 57) of stage two complaints made by tenants were responded to within complaint handling timescales.
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial High Risk Actions				0	0			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Low Risk Actions				312	215			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Medium Risk Actions				286	159			
RSH Number of Overdue Water Remedial Actions					71			





	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
RSH Rep1: Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale	84%	88%	96%	96%	91%	98%	98%	31/12/2024 The reasons for performance being below target in Q3 is subject to further investigation but it is likely that a contributory factor has been capacity issues in the in-house team with vacancies for both Carpenters and Plumbers, for which recruitment was undertaken during Q3 although some new starters were not in post until January/February 2025. Interim cover is sought where possible but there have been issues with sourcing good quality candidates from agencies. A further recruitment campaign may be required in Q4. More positively having recruited to vacant Maintenance Operative roles this should enable fencing repairs to be undertaken in-house from Q4 onwards reducing reliance on contractor support.
RSH Rep2: Proportion of non-emergency (Routine and Urgent) responsive repairs completed within target	91.02%	91.98%	95.34%	95.29%	85.82%	95.00%	95.00%	31/12/2024 The reasons for performance being below target in Q3 is subject to further investigation but it is likely that a contributory factor has been capacity issues in the in-house team with vacancies for both Carpenters and Plumbers, for which recruitment was undertaken during Q3 although some new starters were not in post until January/February 2025. Interim cover is sought where possible but there have been issues with sourcing good quality candidates from agencies. A further recruitment campaign may be required in Q4. More positively having recruited to vacant Maintenance Operative roles this should enable fencing repairs to be undertaken in-house from Q4 onwards reducing reliance on contractor support.
VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	99.78%		99.58%	99.14%	98.41%	100.00%	100.00%	31/12/2024 The current shortfall on EICR satisfactory certification is down to no access properties and SBC having a "zero" tolerance approach to not being 100% compliant. SBC are 98% compliant in this discipline which compares very favourably with other organisations performance for electrical certification. A process is in place to address non-access issues and ensure electrical checks can be completed.

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		31 Dec 2024 The new Allocations Policy was implemented successfully and went live on the 5th December
 Brent Court Garages - Park improvements		31 Dec 2024 New equipment has been installed, and expected to be open to the public in mid-Jan once new turf has had an opportunity to establish.
 Brent Court Garages - Start on site for new build of 96 home Independent Living Scheme		31 Dec 2024 New contractor appointed and contracts have been signed. Survey works underway ahead of demolition of the site and expansion of existing parking infrastructure.
 Burwell Phase 2 - Topping out of 20 homes for affordable rent		31 Dec 2024 Following the delays reported last quarter, progress is now taking place at site, with piling underway meaning topping out in September 2025 is on track.
 Caretaking Improvement Plan - Project plan agreed following Ridge		
 Cartref - Start on site		31 Dec 2024 The scheme is currently out to tender with a start on site expected in Q4.
 Courtlands - Handover of 17 homes for private sale within the WOC		31 Dec 2024 Following the diversion works, the contractor will carry out external works to the principal access road meaning units will begin delivering from March 2025.
 Dunn Close - Handover of 27 home supported housing scheme		31 Dec 2024 Final external works are taking place with handover expected imminently.









	Performance	Comments
 Ellis Avenue - Start on site		31 Dec 2024 Contractor has been appointed allowing a start on site to begin, with demolition of existing buildings scheduled.
 Establish client and contractor functions		31 Dec 2024 Client function established for the voids function but further work required to fully establish for the repairs function. Around 70% complete for repairs with policies function now sitting with the client and draft protocols in place. For Repairs the client and contractor split is partially established with Housing Asset Management leading on policy but to fully establish respective roles vacant management roles need to be successfully recruited to which is in progress but unlikely to be concluded before end of Q4.
 Housing Tenant Engagement & Performance - Finalise the public facing Housing Engagement Strategy		31 Dec 2024 With AD for sign off before comms completion
 Kenilworth Close (Phase 2) - Start on site		31 Dec 2024 Procurement has completed an contractor appointed allowing start on site to take place, beginning with demolition of Walpole Court.
 Responsive Repairs Improvement Plan - Award Contract		31 Dec 2024 The procurement of support contractors for Repairs and Voids went live in early December and a report seeking delegated approval to award contracts is included on the Cabinet agenda for Feb 2025. Subject to approval contract mobilisation is expected to be in March and April 2025.
 Responsive Repairs Improvement Plan - Update and implement policy		31 Dec 2024 Completed – new Repairs and Maintenance Policy approved by Cabinet in Dec 2024.
 Social Housing Decarbonisation - Stock modelling to establish high emission stock & required actions		31 Dec 2024 Modelling exercise complete with Sava to inform future decarbonisation requirements for the housing stock.
 Social Housing Decarbonisation - Write/submit bid for SHDF Wave 3		31 Dec 2024 Bid submitted for SHF Wave 3. Winning bids due to be awarded in Spring 2025.

	Performance	Comments
 The Oval - Appoint contractor		31 Dec 2024 Procurement has been delayed pending the outcomes of Homes England funding application. The most recent update from Homes England expected and outcome to be given on 17th January. Procurement route will vary significantly dependent on funding outcome.

## TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target Quarter 4 2024/25 ytd	Comments
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in thirteen	76.9%	83.3%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	60.0%	
Ni157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in eight weeks	98.0%	98.5%	100.0%	97.1%	98.5%	70.0%	70.0%	
NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined in eight weeks	95.1%	96.3%	98.2%	96.1%	97.1%	70.0%	70.0%	

## TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
 Cycling & Pedestrian Improvements Arts and Heritage trail-Procurement of works for routes, new art		31 Dec 2024 The winning bidder for the arts and heritage trail tender is Landmark, with the contract between them and SBC finalised and signed off during this period. Following a kick off meeting, Landmark are underway with the scoping work and in the coming weeks will be conducting site visits and audits to gather information for the design phase.
 Enterprise centre - Options appraisal		31 Dec 2024 Phase 1 of this project is on site and scheduled to complete in February. A full options appraisal for Phase 2 has been conducted for this project, coinciding with SITEC, with developer partners. The team are working through the outcome with view to progress these projects in tandem.
 Generation Stevenage - Event to support young people with employment opportunities in Stevenage		
 Mission 44: Phase 2 Proposal - Approval of Phase 2 of Pioneering Young Stem Futures programme		31 Dec 2024 An initial draft of the P2 Pioneering Young STEM Futures proposal has now been shared with Mission44. We are awaiting their feedback to see whether it will be presented to their board.


	Performance	Comments
 SG1 Public Sector Hub - Business case creation		31 Dec 2024 This has been complete under the funding bid reported on separately.
 SITEC - Options appraisal		31 Dec 2024 A full options appraisal has been conducted for this project, coinciding with Enterprise Centre, with developer partners. The team are working through the outcome with view to progress these projects in tandem.
 Sports and Leisure Hub Design - Design to RIBA 3 complete		31 Dec 2024 The project entered RIBA 3 within this period, work continues on the design with the team evaluating and incorporating the public consultation and co-production feedback.
 UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Submit mid year figures for Communities & Place UKSPF funding		31 Dec 2024 Now complete, returns signed off by central government. Only one return remains from the initial 2022-25 allocation. However, the government has announced an extension of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the 2025-26 calendar year. This allocation is only 50% of 2023/24 allocation and as such does not allow us to continue the programme at the same level of delivery.

## THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
ASB6: Percentage of ASB cases resulting in successful enforcement action	77.00%	95.00%	93.00%	96.00%	92.00%	80.00%	80.00%	
CD1 Number of people engaged in Cooperative Neighbourhood 'Community & Place' initiatives	5,100.00	7,300.00	2,200.00	4,681.00	7,299.00			31/12/2024 Cumulative measure.  Number is lower due to lack of engagement activities taking place in the winter months. A new batch of social media engagement has just launched
RSH NM01(part1): ASB cases opened by or on behalf of the provider during the reporting year	70.00	108.00	21.00	37.00	64.00			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
RSH NM01(part2) ASB cases that involve hate incidents opened by or on behalf of the provider during	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	3.00			31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE
% of Fly Tipping Clearances completed			60.40%	84.00%	95.93%			31/12/2024 Performance is improving with structural changes and dedicated days for fly tip clearance.
% of Graffiti Clearances completed			18.00%	71.00%	81.82%			31/12/2024 The continued resource of a permanent team member tackling graffiti has allowed for increased levels of clearance to be obtained. There is a growth bid for 2025/26 to continue to fund the dedicated graffiti removal efforts within SDS (a team of one). There is also have a growth bid for £40k for contractor support to assist these efforts.
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	11.07%	11.07%	6.99%	7.50%	8.04%	6.67%	6.47%	31/12/2024 The residential garage void rate for Q3 is 8.04% against a target of 6.67%. Terminations were lower for quarter 3 compared to quarter 2 (96 compared to 120), however the number of offers fell by 20% to 153 for the quarter, with demand for garages reducing. Despite a high number of garages being made available, December 2024 saw the lowest number of bids since digital lettings was introduced in 2022 and the acceptance rate was low as many garages could not be offered due to existing debts on prospective tenant accounts. Garage services will continue with a proactive marketing strategy which includes working with local housing associations and issuing surveys to license holders who live outside the town to better understand their needs. Further improvements to the online digital service including a mapping feature are anticipated to be implemented by April 2025.
ES1: Percentage of residential bins collected	99.67%	99.67%	99.64%	99.67%	99.67%	99.00%	99.00%	31/12/2024 Maintaining performance as previously set in earlier Qtrs.
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	360.00	483.49	126.70	248.60		360.00	495.00	31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q3 will not be available until the end of March 2025

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	36.90%	34.00%	42.20%	40.30%		35.00%	32.00%	31/12/2024 CUMULATIVE MEASURE This measure is reported in arrears from an external source. The figure for Q3 will not be available until the end of March 2025.
CWLS1: EvAc - No of under 16 using facilities and outreach prog at least once p/w	15,141.00	20,094.00	26,117.00	19,833.00	17,468.00	15,000.00		

### 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		<p>31 Dec 2024</p> <p>The new format for the Co-operative Neighbourhood meeting launched on October 24, introducing significant changes. The meeting now consists of three parts: a Strategic Board Priority segment where all members receive updates on town-wide priorities and the C&amp;N programme; breakout sessions divided into North, Central, and South groups to discuss local updates and set priorities; and ward walkabouts where officers and members address ward-specific issues. Wards allocated £3k have completed their walkabouts, while those receiving £25k will do so between January and early February. The next Strategic Board Priority meeting is scheduled for early March. During the winter months, the team's events have decreased, but have conducted consultations at St. Nicholas Day and several flat block consultations supporting the Housing team.</p>



## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2024/25 PERFORMANCE

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
CC1: Percentage of homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C or above	57.00%	58.00%	62.33%	64.43%	65.89%	64.00%	65.00%	

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 year local plan Cabinet approval (June) Consultation (July Aug)		31 Dec 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulation 19 consultation: 21 November 2024 to 14 February 2025</li> <li>Submission to Secretary of State: from 6 May 2025</li> <li>Examination in Public: Summer / Autumn 2025</li> <li>Inspector's Report: Autumn 2025</li> <li>Adoption: December 2025</li> </ul>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity Action Plan - Adopt Wilder Stevenage action plan 2024-29		31 Dec 2024 Cabinet approved the Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2029
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change Action Plan - Upgrade platform based on Climate Scorecards feedback		31 Dec 2024 Analysis on Climate Scorecards feedback conducted and Kausal platform updated accordingly aiming to reach best performance in next rounds.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change Annual Report - Approve and publish report		31 Dec 2024 Report approved by SLT and Cabinet, and presented to E&E Select Committee.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy Topic Reference Panel - Objectives and participants of panel agreed		31 Dec 2024 On hold until decision is made from UK Government on the new regulatory landscape for community energy. Currently, we are overseeing the APSE coordinated response to the Call for Evidence from the UK Parliament's Energy Security and Net Zero Select Committee on "Unlocking community energy at scale: call for evidence to new Parliamentary inquiry".
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meadow Grassland Sites - Identify new sites for meadow grasslands		31 Dec 2024 Sites identified.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recycling/Refuse Review -Procure new waste receptacles		31 Dec 2024 Tender completed and awarded. Receptacles to be delivered by March 25



## BALANCING THE BUDGET 2024/25 PERFORMANCE









	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
% of Corporate Building Overall Completed Remedials			84.00%	82.50%	76.54%			31/12/2024 The Facilities Team has made significant progress in addressing remedial works. Out of a total of <b>4,005 remedials</b> , <b>3,065</b> have been completed, accounting for <b>76.54%</b> of the total tasks. However, <b>940 remedials</b> remain outstanding, representing <b>23.46%</b> of the workload. These outstanding remedials are broken down as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>533</b> relate to physical works</li> <li>• <b>33</b> concern policies and procedures</li> <li>• <b>374</b> involve training requirements</li> </ul> The team is actively prioritising these outstanding tasks to ensure all remedials are addressed promptly and effectively.
% of Corporate Building Overall Compliance Inspections completed			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			31/12/2024 Inspections Required - 58 Inspections Completed - 58
% reviews and projects each year completed from the 5 year transformation programme		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%			31/12/2024 Reviews, in the form of business cases and projects (including process reviews) are underway, but no reviews have been completed during Q3 2024/25. The transformation business cases are being finalised and are expected to be completed in Q4 for implementation in 2025/26, with the current focus on Localities Business Case which looks at the Activity Based Model previously agreed with Members, and options for / benefits of bringing common activities together into single / larger teams together with options for how to best achieve Member priorities for key areas of Stevenage Direct Services and Housing & Neighbourhoods Business Units.
CompGF1: % of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	91.90%	87.60%	82.20%	87.00%	90.00%	80.00%	80.00%	31/12/2024 Strong performance in Q3 is really welcome and likely reflects increased focus on this area within the council.
CSC Sat: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	91.60%	91.00%	92.80%	92.10%	93.10%	80.00%	80.00%	31/12/2024 Customer satisfaction with Customer Services this quarter is at its highest since the peak of the pandemic in 2020. While this strong performance reflects the team's efforts, it is also partially influenced by a slightly lower volume of customer surveys conducted, which can artificially boost the results.
Dig2: Number of online payments	87,259.00	115,124.00	29,182.00	59,095.00	88,823.00	90,000.00	121,000.00	31/12/2024 The volume of online payments in Q3 was slightly lower than the previous quarter, however this is reflective of a slight overall reduction in the number of payments in Q3 and the overall proportion of payments made online still increased. A similar pattern was observed in 2023/24, so this is likely a seasonal effect, possibly caused by changes to payment patterns over the Christmas period such as from "rent-free weeks". Further comparison to last year shows payment volumes are also likely to reduce in Q4 so the Dig2 forecast for the final quarter is also reduced in Q4, so Dig2 is 28'500 to 29'000. Now that seasonal variations are becoming better understood these will be included in target setting for 2025/26

	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 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Comments
Finance BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	91.07%	98.99%	38.65%	63.11%	90.00%	89.00%	98.75%	
Finance BV66a: Rent collection rate	95.96%	97.46%	89.44%	97.00%	98.60%	96.70%	98.30%	31/12/2024 At the end of Dec 24, the council was above target for the rent collected as a percentage of rent collectable. 98.60% was collected against Q3 set target of 96.70%. There has been an improvement in collection since Q2 September 2024 of 1.39% and an improvement of 2.65% compared to December 2023 Q3. Rent arrears at the end of Q3 December 24 stood at £1,332,566.76 an improvement compared to £1,367,035.99 at the same time in the previous year Q3 December 23. The number of cases with arrears over 7 weeks has reduced from 443 last years end of Q3 to 386 Q3 December 24.
Finance BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	85.30%	94.30%	32.90%	59.10%	85.50%	86.00%	95.80%	
Garage Commercial/Parking- income raised vs budget for the top 3 income streams of the General Fund			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%			
NEW - CR1: % of commercial rent collected from estates		92%	91%	91%	91%	90%	90%	
NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	6.66	4.72	7.70	6.02	5.88	10.00	10.00	
Tracking delivery of financial benefit of £350,000 GF & HRA transformation savings.		0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%			31/12/2024 Work to enable financial savings through Transformation is underway, but no cashable savings were realised in Q3 2024-25



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### BALANCING THE BUDGET 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Asbestos in Garages - All garages to be back in Council's control		31 Dec 2024 260 out of 286 garages are back in the Council's control. The last garages are due to be taken back by way of repossession, with 3 being due the first week of January 25. The garages team are also awaiting completed forms from licence holders who have requested their items back.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget - Star Chamber events		

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business Process improvements/efficiencies		31 Dec 2024 Work continues on improving business processes and commercialising services. Quarter 3 saw further investigation into customers eligible for commercial waste services and the commercial team were commissioned to do a key piece of work around business models for the CCTV partnership. The Council ceased the 4 and 6 yard skip service on 31st December 2024, with the focus now being on the provision of the larger 20 and 40 yard skips for commercial purposes.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial Garages - Actively advertise commercialgarages & include in trade waste brochure		31 Dec 2024 The commercial garage void rate for Q3 is 7.00% against a target of 5.46%. The garages are being proactively marketed and there are just 3 voids - 2 are awaiting repair and 1 is on digital lettings. The repairs on the 2 garages are anticipated to place in quarter 4 and following that they will be live on Digital Lettings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Debt and Income Stream - Review		31 Dec 2024 A new automated process to send out reminders has been implemented. A review of next stage around decision to be taken on outstanding debt have started with services.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fees & Charges - Present to The Council'sFinancial Security Group		31 Dec 2024 Completed September 2024
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garage Voids - Reduce garage voids		31 Dec 2024 The residential garage void rate for Q3 is 8.04% against a target of 6.67%. Terminations were lower for quarter 3 compared to quarter 2 (96 compared to 120), however the number of offers fell by 20% to 153 for the quarter, with demand for garages reducing. Despite a high number of garages being made available, December 2024 saw the lowest number of bids since digital lettings was introduced in 2022 and the acceptance rate was low as many garages could not be offered due to existing debts on prospective tenant accounts. Garage services will continue with a proactive marketing strategy which includes working with local housing associations and issuing surveys to license holders who live outside the town to better understand their needs. Further improvements to the online digital service including a mapping feature are anticipated to be implemented by April 2025.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased Sustainable Income - report increased income to Commercial and Investment Working Group		31 Dec 2024 Fees and Charges for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account 2025/26 were approved at the October meeting of Cabinet. In Quarter 3 the Council welcomed Inclusive Films to the town for production purposes and started with new commercial marketing methods.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Insourcing Options- review of services provided to or on behalf of the council by external supplier		31 Dec 2024 The Council's Insourcing Roadmap is under regular review as and when contracts come up for review. Officers are working on some benchmarking analysis ahead of one of the largest contracts coming up for review in a years time.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MTFS - Identify update budget gap for MTFS and present to Cabinet		31 Dec 2024 Updated position is going to January Cabinet within the draft GF Budget 2025/26 Report

## CROSS CUTTING 2024/25 MILESTONES

	Performance	Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ICT Restructure - Complete the restructure of ICT		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Server Compute Project - Replace and upgrade existing server hardware		

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APPENDIX B

The table below sets out details of decisions issued with Q3 by both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman which relate to the Councils Housing Services.

In all cases Orders or actions have been completed. No further action is required in respect of any of these cases and this item is for information only.

Complaint No	Council Process Ended	Council Submission to Ombudsman	Ombudsman Decision	Issue	Determination/Outcome	Order/Action	Ombudsman
7	20/07/23	08/05/24	15/11/24	Repairs and Asset Management	Maladministration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation £500</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
				Complaint Handling	Service Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written apology</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
8	23/02/23	08/05/24	21/08/24	Asset Management	Not investigated (no evidence the resident has exhausted the landlords' complaints procedure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
				Asset Management	Out of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
				Health and Safety (building safety)	No maladministration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
				Complaint Handling	No maladministration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
9	23/07/23	17/05/24	28/11/24	Asset Management	Outside of Ombudsman's jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman
				Asset Management	Service Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apology, £50 compensation</li> </ul>	Housing Ombudsman

10		17/05/24	15/11/24	Right to Buy Application	Fault Found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apology, compensation, revised</li> </ul>	£900 process	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
11	15/09/23	17/07/24	23/10/24	Repairs (Level of compensation)	Redress agreed following intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compensation £700</li> </ul>		Housing Ombudsman
12	Panel decision	21/08/24	05/11/24	Allocations	Fault Found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apologise, review homelessness status</li> </ul>		Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
13		29/10/24	13/11/24	Allocations	Insufficient evidence of fault to justify decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not investigated</li> </ul>		Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman



Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
<b>Safety &amp; Quality Fire Risk Assessment oversight, reporting and monitoring</b>					
Update Compliance Scorecard to include FRA remedial actions,	Scorecard updated and used for reporting	Dec 24	AP	Complete	Revised scorecard
Updated Compliance Scorecard to include FRA remedial actions, and block mitigation update reported to EHWG each month and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.	Reported to EHWG from Nov 24 Now included in quarterly performance reporting to Cabinet. Q2 and Q3 reports (Dec 24 & Mar 25), mitigation assessment in development	Mar 25	AP	In progress	Group and Cabinet Agenda and Minutes
Reported as part of Corporate H&S Group	Reported to Corporate Risk Group Feb 25	Feb 25	AP	Complete	H&S agenda and minutes
Purchase and utilise new compliance IT monitoring and reporting system.	System purchased, with data upload currently underway, this will be the sole compliance system	End of Mar 25	AP	In progress	
Outstanding fire actions contract work underway, with work prioritised, this is to include new works and overdue work complete	Contractor Ventro, undertaking work, with monitoring in place	End of Apr 25	AP	In progress	
New FRA works contract procured and works plan underway to deal with identified actions	Procurement to begin in March with plan to have in place for the end of June 2025.	End of Jun 25	AP	To commence in March 2025	
Replacement door programme for high rise flat front and cross corridors completed	Gerda door contract has been awarded. Installation will start as soon as Building Control certification is received from BSR, but this can take up to 21 weeks from submission. However, doors have or are being manufactured and stored ready for installation	Mid 26	AP	In progress	

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
	as soon as possible, this work programme will continue into 2026.				
General fire door repair and replacement programme in place	In procurement with mobilisation in June 2025, again subject to normal caveats	Jun 25	AP	In progress	
Lifesaving equipment service in place	Tender being evaluated	End of March 25	AP	In progress	
New electrical testing and servicing arrangements in place	In procurement	End of March 25	AP	In progress	
High-Rise Resident Engagement strategy published.	The strategy has been developed and published, currently being circulated	March 25	AP	In progress	
Annual Section 9 and 10 letters providing building safety advice to be sent	The section 9&10 letters have been sent to all applicable residents on the 7 <sup>th</sup> February 2025, the letter also included additional general compliance information to the residents. This information will also be promoted online, through social media and within schemes, and included within updated included in lettings packs.	End of Feb 25	AP	Complete	Copies of letters and media posts
<b>Safety and Quality Standard Reporting and monitoring of CO and smoke alarm installation</b>					
Monitoring and information on the installation of CO and smoke alarms to be through new compliance IT system	Data upload to new system underway, this is including data cleansing, matching and allocation.	End of Mar 25	AP	In progress	
Initial new reporting and monitoring data system in place		End of Apr 25	AP	Not started	

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
Data quality and integrity checks and reviews completed to provide improved assurance		Jun 25	AP	Not started	
3rd Party Assurance system in place through EICR and LGSR provision	In place as part of LSGR regime and being updated for EIC	Jun 25	AP	In progress	
<b>Transparency, Influence and Accountability Performance Information for Residents</b>					
Housing Annual Residents Report 24/25 Published	Published and promoted through social media, and online	Jan 25	MG	Complete	Website link
Revise and update Resident area of website	New dedicated Residents Voice area of website, with a wide range of data and information.	Feb 25	MG	Complete	Website link
TSM data published	Data published in Housing Annual Residents Report, online and promoted through social media, quarterly update also published in newsletter and online	Jan 25	MG	Complete	Website link to page, newsletter and Annual Report
High Rise Residents consultation for planned improvement programme	Positive engagement of 22% of residents through meetings, surveys and workshops to help inform work programme and developing approach to management. Detailed consultation plan in place through to go live	Dec 25	AG	In progress	
Repairs and Maintenance Policy development and feedback	Policy adopted by the Council in December 2024. Tenants informed and scrutinised policy development through workshop, and surveys. In all 343 residents involved, with responses used to inform policy and work reported to	Dec 24	AG	Complete	Cabinet papers on website

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
	Cabinet. Feedback and impact details on website and in in the Cabinet Report				
Aids and adaptations Policy development and feedback	Consultation received 131 responses and now being used to inform final policy and will be reported in Cabinet Report and online.	Mar 25	AG	In progress	
Online HRA budget consultation	Online consultation for overall HRA budget undertaken, feedback considered	Jan 25	MG	Complete	Website link
Page 132 Tenants Caretaking Scrutiny Panel	Work is progressing with the support of TPAS, who have provided guidance and support. 3 meetings have taken place and following a break for Christmas they group are next due to consider standard and costing. This work will feed into the wider review from which new service model will be developed.	Mar 25	KC	In progress	
Housing Performance Clinic to improve data quality and awareness	Meeting quarterly to review and ensure clarity of data, prior to publication online	Feb 25	MG	Complete	Latest clinic papers
High-Rise Resident Engagement Strategy in place	Consultation was undertaken including face to face and through delivered surveys on the High-Rise Resident Engagement Strategy. This informed the final strategy which has now been formally adopted.	Dec 24	AP	Complete	Link to posts and website
Quarterly Newsletter published	New Housing Matters quarterly newsletter is promoted on social media, this includes information and advice, along with highlighting opportunities for engagement, a range of performance information and you said we did section.	Feb 25	MG	Complete	Link to website and posts

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
Improved Complaint handling system for residents	New housing complaints system, now live included active tenant engagement and testing of approaches to case management, new system provides real time complainant portal to allow resident monitoring.	Feb 25	MG	Complete	Complaint Clinic Minutes and link to website
<b>Transparency, Influence and Accountability Improving Resident Engagement</b>					
New Resident Engagement Strategy	New Resident Engagement Strategy is in place and formally adopted.	Oct 24	KC	Complete	Cabinet papers and website link
Recruitment of new Resident Engagement Manager	Role being recruited to with interview underway and appoint expected shortly	Mar 25	KC	In progress	
Adopt and implement Housing Communications Plan	Communication Plan in place and adopted by EHWG and being monitored and delivered.	Dec 24	KC	Complete	Updated copy of plan
Resident Engagement Action Plan adopted	Plan has been developed using feedback from TPAS work and is now being delivered.	Dec 24	KC	Complete	EHWG papers
Tenant Scrutiny programme in place	Plan has been adopted and work is underway on the initial review supported by TPAS on caretaking.	Apr 25	KC	In progress	
Inform High Rise Improvement Programme	Resident feedback and engagement is helping inform programme, with workshops, surveys and meetings, this will continue as set out in the agreed plan through the project	Dec 25	AG	In progress	
Strategy and Policy approach informed and influenced by residents	Policies are now being consulted on with opportunities for engagement through surveys, workshops and scrutiny. Those developed as part of this new approach have included Repairs and Maintenance, Fencing, Aids and Adaptations, Resident Engagement.	On going	Various	In progress	

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
<b>Transparency, Influence and Accountability Use of tenant profile information</b>					
Enhancements to Housing Management System, to help with tenant profile data management	Housing Management system migration planned is expected for July 2025, this is to be followed by updating of ways that tenants information can be stored an integrated over an 18mth planned implementation	Sept 26	MG	In progress	
Repairs Booking Hub implemented	Repairs Booking Hub which will be live by April 2025, collects and utilise information on tenants' needs and vulnerability in the planning and booking of repairs.	Apr 25	DL	In progress	
Resident Vulnerability data for Complaint handling	Resident Vulnerability data is collected and reviewed in all complaint cases.	Dec 25	MG	Complete	Complaints Clinic Reports
Introduce rolling programme of Resident Vulnerability data collection and updating	Resident Vulnerability data is being collected through tenancy audits, and customer contact, and as part of high rise improvement programme	Dec 24	KC	Complete	EHWG Papers
Programme of gathering of information through TSM perception Surveys	As part of quarterly TSM Perception Surveys residents are asked additional information which is being utilised to inform service development, and this has included building safety and preferred methods of communication	Jan 25	MG	Complete	EHWG Papers
New Data Manager	New post is currently being recruited.	Apr 25	KC	In progress	
Prioritise Tenancy Audits based on tenants profile	As part of the continued programme of tenancy audits (which are prioritised in part using tenant information) and ongoing customer interactions, we are updating tenant information and profile information as appropriate.	Oct 24	KC	Complete	EHWG paper

Action	Progress	Completion Date	Lead	Status	Evidence and Outcome
Use of Resident Data	Information is used to plan tenant audit, financial and other advice, including targeting support offer and specialist management services.	On going	KC	In progress	
Support Planning process updated	Support Plans are utilised within support housing to help tailor services and support provided.	Nov 24	KC	Complete	EHWG papers

This is an initial draft plan designed to meet the identified issues following Inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing, in a number of cases there are detailed service projects and plans in place which contain additional detail.

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**Housing**  
Ombudsman Service

**LANDLORD  
PERFORMANCE  
REPORT**

**2023/2024**

Stevenage Borough Council

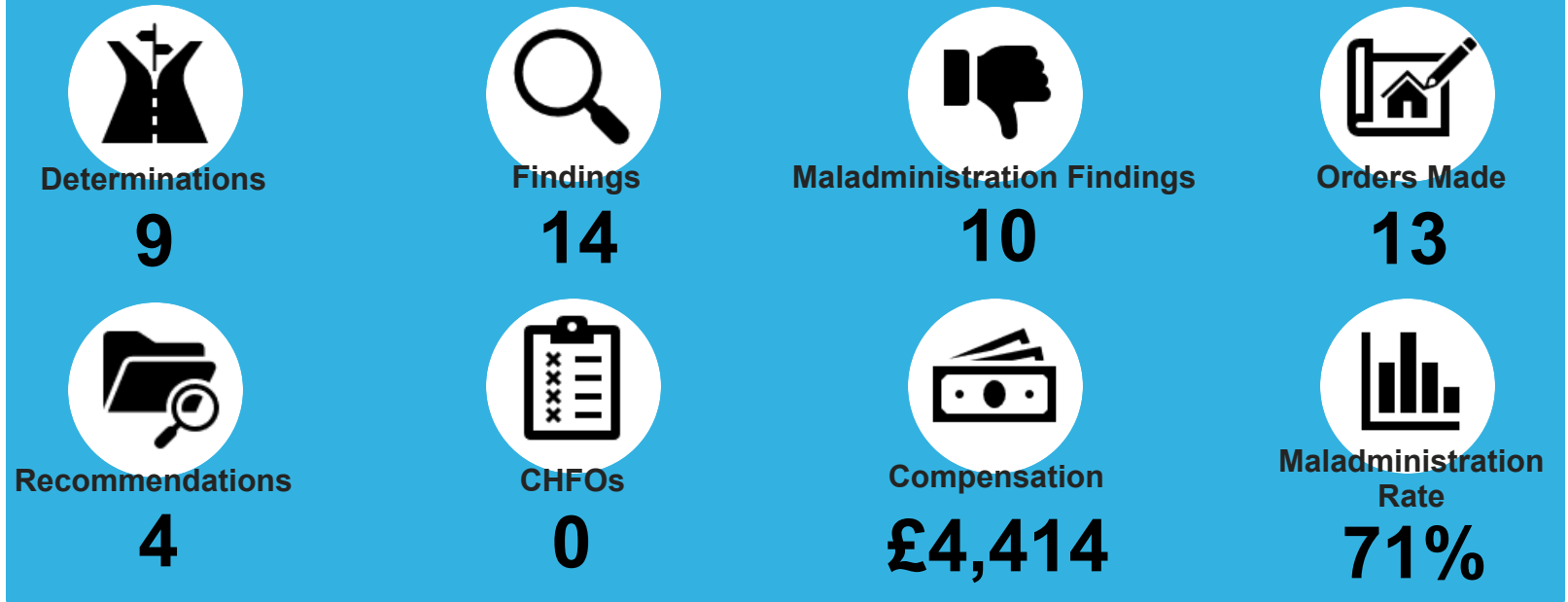
Stevenage Borough Council

Landlord: Stevenage Borough Council

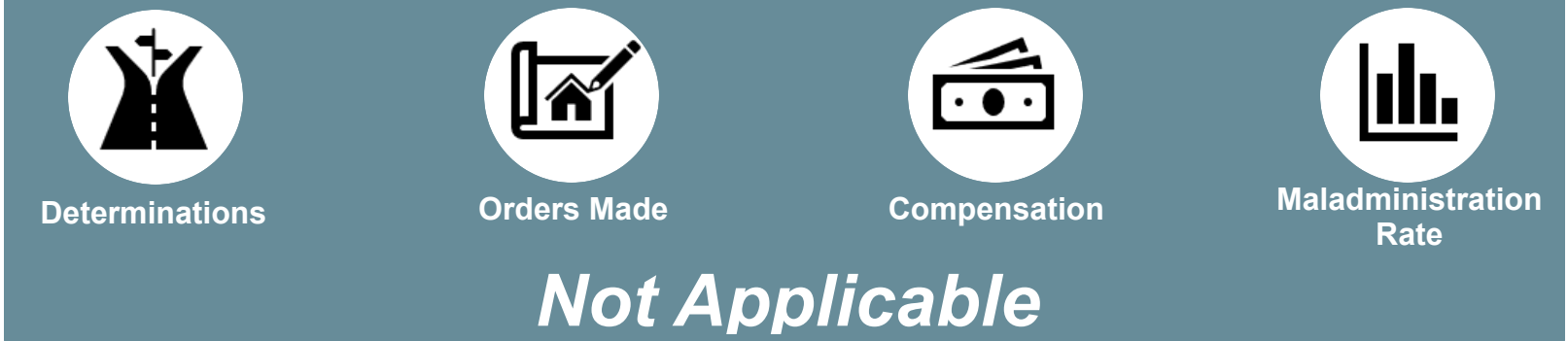
Landlord Homes: 9,356

Landlord Type: Local Authority / ALMO or TMO

**PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE**



**PERFORMANCE 2022-2023**



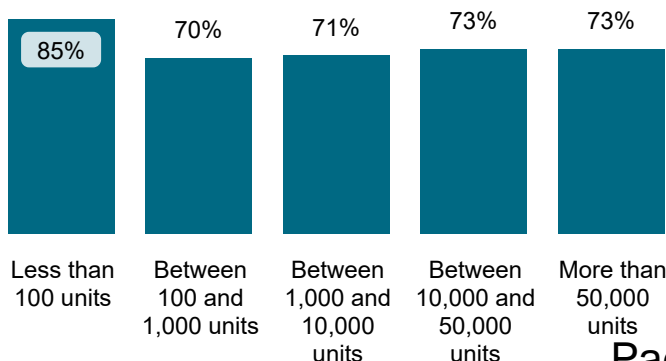
**Maladministration Rate Comparison** | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

**NATIONAL MALADMINISTRATION RATE: 73%**

The landlord performed *similarly* when compared to similar landlords by size and type.

National Mal Rate by Landlord Size: Table 1.1

by Landlord Type: Table 1.2



**Findings Comparison** | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

**National Performance by Landlord Size:** Table 2.1

Outcome	Less than 100 units	Between 100 and 1,000 units	Between 1,000 and 10,000 units	Between 10,000 and 50,000 units	More than 50,000 units	Total
Severe Maladministration	14%	6%	4%	8%	7%	7%
Maladministration	35%	37%	41%	42%	43%	42%
Service failure	18%	19%	20%	18%	19%	19%
Mediation	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Redress	0%	5%	7%	8%	12%	9%
No maladministration	12%	21%	20%	15%	12%	15%
Outside Jurisdiction	22%	11%	8%	7%	5%	7%
Withdrawn	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Stevenage Borough Council	
Outcome	% Findings
Severe Maladministration	7%
Maladministration	57%
Service failure	7%
Mediation	0%
Redress	7%
No maladministration	21%
Outside Jurisdiction	0%
Withdrawn	0%

**National Performance by Landlord Type:** Table 2.2

Outcome	Housing Association	Local Authority / ALMO or TMO	Other	Total
Severe Maladministration	6%	9%	6%	7%
Maladministration	41%	45%	36%	42%
Service failure	19%	18%	21%	19%
Mediation	1%	1%	0%	1%
Redress	12%	4%	5%	9%
No maladministration	15%	15%	21%	15%
Outside Jurisdiction	6%	9%	11%	7%
Withdrawn	0%	0%	0%	0%

Outcome	% Findings
Severe Maladministration	7%
Maladministration	57%
Service failure	7%
Mediation	0%
Redress	7%
No maladministration	21%
Outside Jurisdiction	0%
Withdrawn	0%

**Landlord Findings by Category** | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 2.3

Category	Severe Maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	Mediation	Redress	No maladministration	Outside Jurisdiction	Withdrawn	Total
Complaints Handling	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
Property Condition	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
Anti-Social Behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Information and data management	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

**Findings by Category Comparison** | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

**Top Categories for Stevenage Borough Council**

Table 3.1

Category	# Landlord Findings	% Landlord Maladministration	% National Maladministration
Complaints Handling	5	80%	84%
Property Condition	4	100%	73%
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	3	67%	62%

**National Maladministration Rate by Landlord Size:**

Table 3.2

Category	Less than 100 units	Between 100 and 1,000 units	Between 1,000 and 10,000 units	Between 10,000 and 50,000 units	More than 50,000 units	% Landlord Maladministration
Complaints Handling	100%	87%	87%	86%	81%	80%
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	0%	67%	68%	56%	65%	67%
Property Condition	75%	63%	72%	74%	74%	100%

**National Maladministration Rate by Landlord Type:**

Table 3.3

Category	Housing Association	Local Authority / ALMO or TMO	Other	% Landlord Maladministration
Complaints Handling	82%	91%	91%	80%
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	58%	69%	80%	67%
Property Condition	72%	77%	59%	100%

**Findings by Sub-Category** | Cases Determined between April 2023 - March 2024

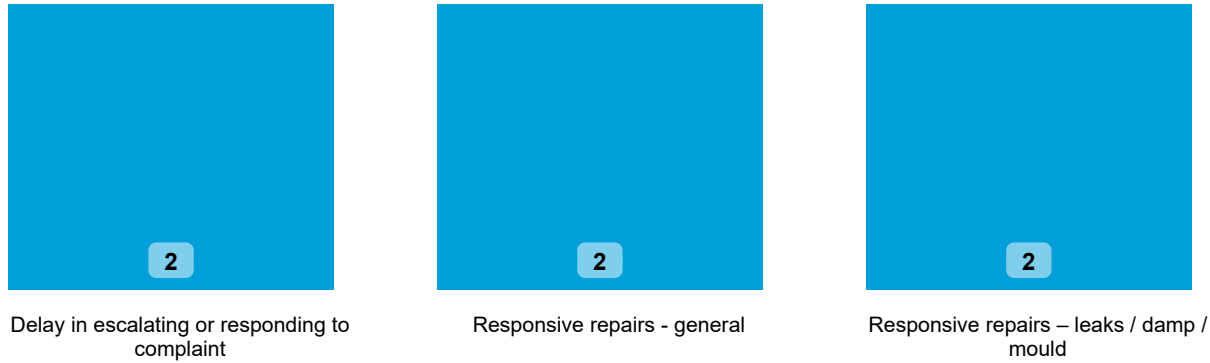
Table 3.4

Highlighted Service Delivery Sub-Categories only:

Sub-Category	Severe Maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	Mediation	Redress	No maladministration	Outside Jurisdiction	Withdrawn	Total
Responsive repairs - general	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Asbestos	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Fire Safety	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Structural safety	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	7

**Top Sub-Categories** | Cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 3.5



**Orders Made by Type** | Orders on cases determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 4.1



**Order Compliance** | Order target dates between April 2023 - March 2024

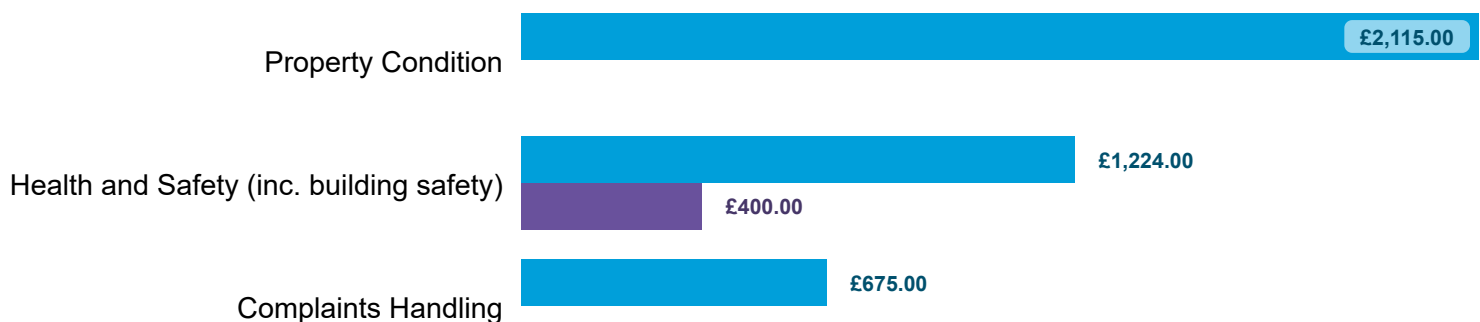
Table 4.2

Order Complete?	Within 3 Months	
	Count	%
Complied	13	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Compensation Ordered** | Cases Determined between April 2023 - March 2024

Table 5.1

● Ordered ● Recommended



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**Meeting:** CABINET

**Agenda Item:**

Portfolio Area: Resources and Transformation



**Date:** 12 MARCH 2025

### 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT – GENERAL FUND AND HRA

#### KEY DECISION

Author – Veronika Mendy/Keith Reynoldson/Rhona Bellis  
Contributor – Brian Moldon, Finance team and budget Managers  
Lead Officers – Brian Moldon  
Contact Officer – Brian Moldon

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2024/25 net expenditure and seek approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.
- 1.2 To recommend to Members the use for the 2025/26 UKSPF funding
- 1.3 To update Members on the reserves and balances available to support revenue expenditure and seek approval for revisions to the allocated reserves.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

##### General Fund

- 2.1 That the 2024/25 third quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £32,480 be approved.
- 2.2 That Members note the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.2.1
- 2.3 That the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) use of £327K is approved as detailed in section 4.4.

**Housing Revenue Account**

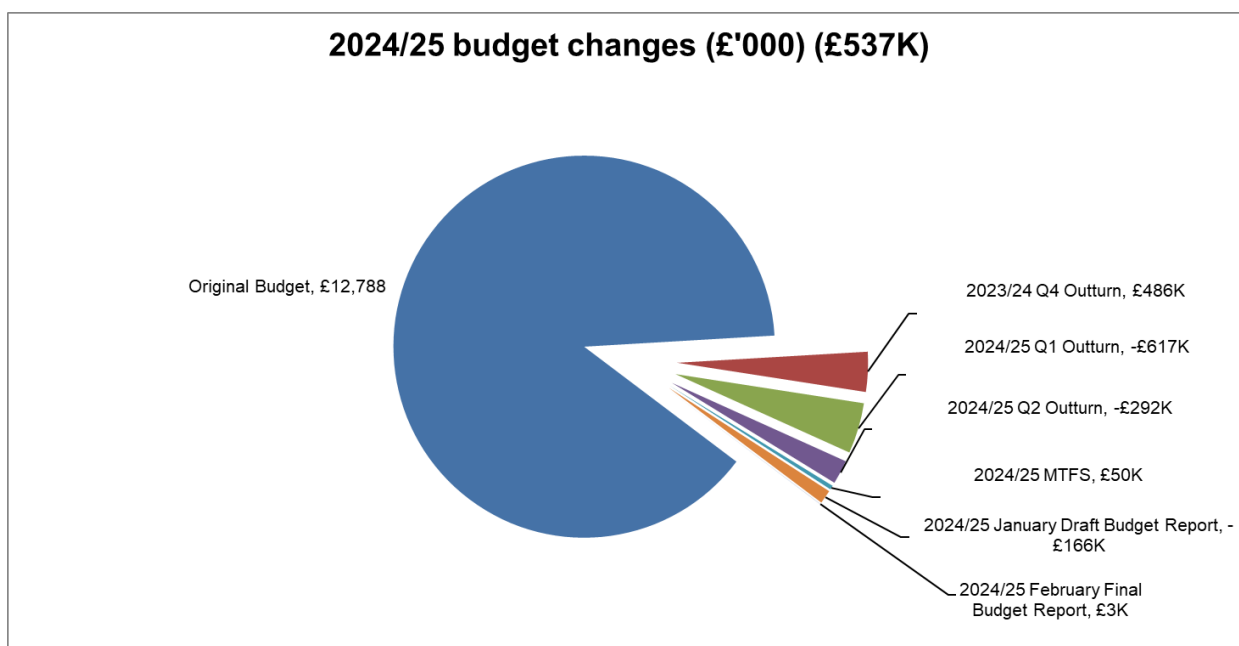
- 2.4 That the 2024/25 third quarter net increase in HRA expenditure of £26,270 be approved.
- 2.5 That a permanent virement of £76,940 is approved for 2025/26 from the repairs and maintenance subcontractor budgets to the salary budgets to enable the audit of payments and ensure the accuracy of contractor claims, as detailed in 4.6.12.

**Capital Programme**

- 2.6. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £5Million from 2024/25 to future years be approved.
- 2.7. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £1Million from 2024/25 to future years be approved.
- 2.8. That net changes to budgets fully grant funded of (£186K) in paragraph 4.8.8 be noted.
- 2.9. That the budget changes of £86k in paragraph 4.7.10 be approved.
- 2.10. That the addition of £60,400 UK Shared Prosperity Funded capital budget 2025/26 in paragraph 4.7.11 be noted.
- 2.11. That General Fund and HRA virements in section 4.8 be approved.
- 2.12. That the proposed changes to the funding of the General Fund and HRA capital budgets in section 4.10 be approved.

**3. BACKGROUND - GENERAL FUND**

- 3.1. Since the General Fund net budget of £12,788,410 was approved at February 2024 Council, Members have approved net budget changes of £536,500 as detailed in the chart below:

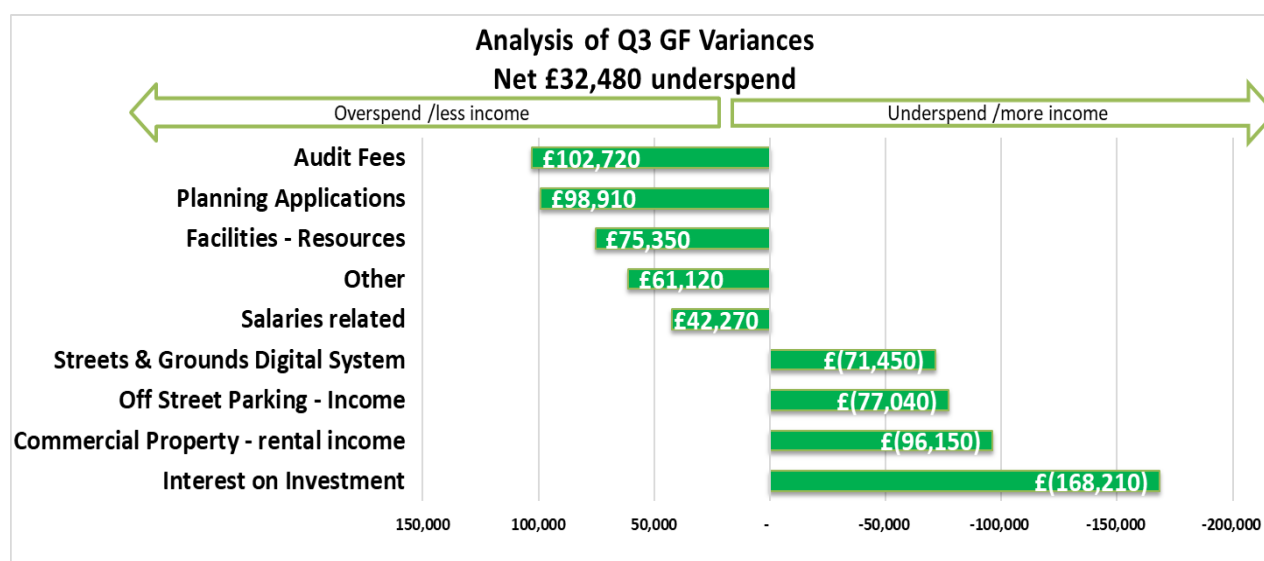




**4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

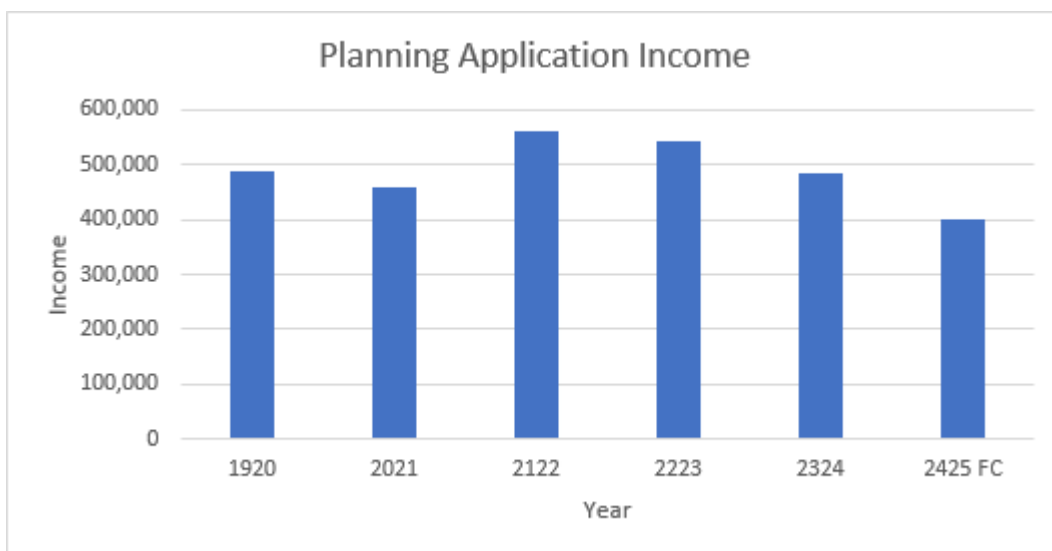
**4.1 General Fund – Budget Review**

4.1.1 Following the third quarter review of the General Fund budgets officers have identified a projected decrease in the forecast budget for the year of £32,480 (which will result in an overall net reduction against Original Budget of £569K for the year).



4.1.2 The primary reasons for the underspend are detailed below, with a full analysis of less significant variances available in Appendix A:

- **Audit Fees £103K** – The Council has concluded the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits as a result of the audit backstop regulations however, audit fees for these years have now been sent by the Council’s current and former auditors. In addition, the 2024/25 audit fee budget requires an increase based on current projections. Part of the additional cost is due to the additional audit work required under the revised auditing standards.
- **Planning Applications £99K** – number of planning applications has reduced from previous years, in particular majors and household applications. Recent government statistics show that applications received across England are down by 7% from 2023. However, new planning fees are coming into force from April 2025 which should help to offset fluctuations in income and help fund the total cost of the service.



- **Facilities - Resources £75K.**
  - **£29K** - A Utilities Manager was appointed in April 2024 to review Council's utility costs which resulted in largely one-off savings for both General Fund and HRA which have been previously reported. This is a one-year temporary appointment.
  - In addition, **£46K** of consultancy costs to support a delivery of the Facility Management Procurement. One of the CIPFA actions and Strategic Asset Management recommendations were to carry out a procurement of new contracts for maintenance, cleaning and soft services – of which:
    - a) £29K** in relation to Hard FM procurement fees (services relating to the physical maintenance of buildings) and covers mechanical, fire safety and electrical workstreams.
    - b) £17K** - Soft FM procurement fees (services relating to the running of buildings – cleaning and security).
- **Other variances £61K** – A breakdown of these smaller variances can be found in Appendix A.
- **Recruitment related £42K** – this relates to targeted recruitment support for a number of senior Leadership roles, including specialist support and national advertising to ensure the Council was able to recruit the right calibre of senior officers.
- **Streets and Grounds Digital System (£71K)** – delay in implementing streets and grounds digital system has identified a one-off cost saving resulting from prior year carry forwards no longer being required to fund the project in 2024/25. Funding has been built into the MTFS for 2025/26 and efficiency savings resulting from implementation of the system will fund the project in future years.

- **Off Street Parking Income (£77K)** – Income has improved as usage was higher than anticipated at third quarter. This may be due to increased construction in the town centre and increased usage over the Christmas period. However, Members should note that income budget has been reduced since COVID and for 2024/25 it was reduced by £300K.
- **Commercial Property - rental Income (£96K)** – additional income has been generated from the recent rent and lease reviews and back dated rent. There was £90K added to the commercial income budget for 2025/26.
- **Interest on Investment (£168K)** – The increase in expected investment interest of £168K is projected due to higher average levels of balances. This is because a number of capital schemes have been reprofiled, resulting in more cash available for investment than initially projected at the beginning of the year and the receipt of some grant funding. Additionally, interest rates have remained higher for longer than forecasted. The investment budget has been revisited for the 2025/26 estimates in line with current forecasts.

4.1.3 The cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget, remain within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Cabinet.

Executive Delegation - General Fund	£'000
<b>Original Net General Fund Budget</b>	<b>12,788</b>
Previously approved Budget Changes	(537)
<b>Revised GF Budget agreed</b>	<b>12,252</b>
Quarterly monitoring Q3	(32)
<b>Updated GF Budget</b>	<b>12,219</b>
<b>Within Executive Delegated Limit</b>	<b>969</b>

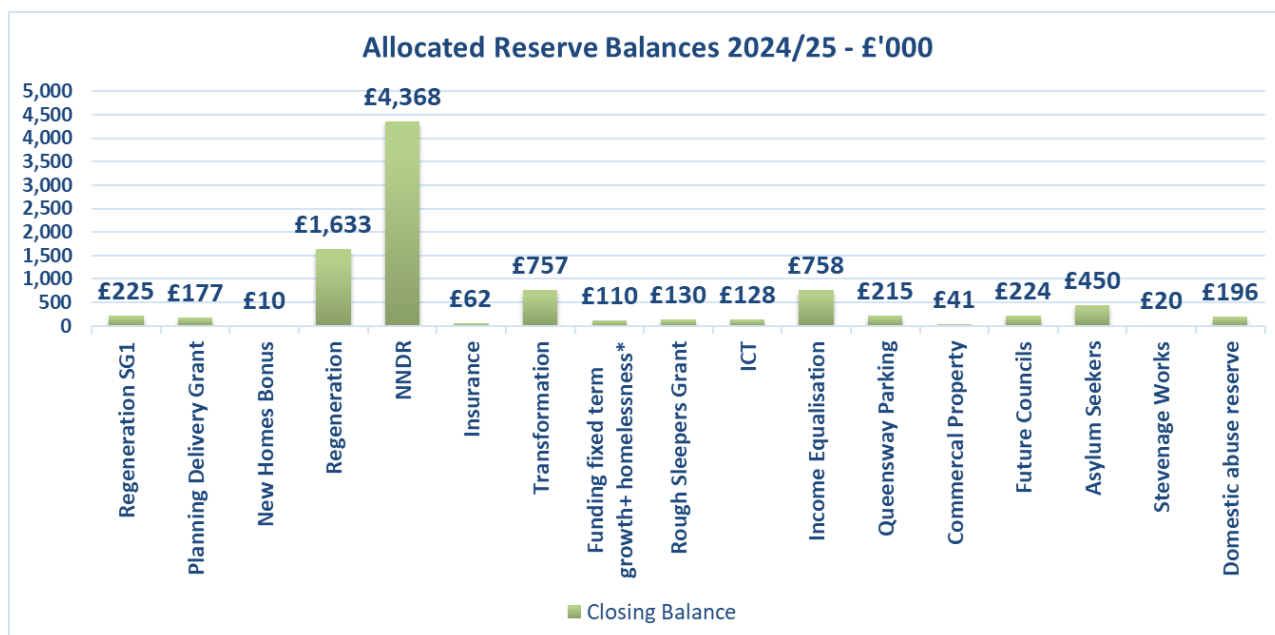
## 4.2 Review of General Fund Balances

4.2.1 **Allocated Reserves** - these balances are ‘ring fenced’ and have been set aside for specific purposes. The estimated total value of (revenue) allocated reserves as at 31 March 2025 is **£9,501,430** (31 March 2024, £8,758,063). During quarter three, the following movement between reserves have been recommended.

Reserves	Q3 To Be Approved
Regeneration	56,710
Transformation	(137,690)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(80,980)</b>

\*( ) represents movement to reserves

- **Regeneration** – The forecast transfer from reserve for the year is based on the latest activity profile for 2024/25:
  - Legal Fees in relation to a real estate advice on the Forum and SG1 projects, are expected to be **£65K** higher than previously projected.
  - In addition, there was **£43K** of expenditure request for Events Island.
  - These cost pressures were offset by a saving of **£51K** from staff vacancies.
- **Transformation** - The transfer to reserves is based on the latest projections for the year.



4.2.2 General Fund Balance – Following the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter review the General Fund balance as at the 31 March 2025 is now forecast to be £5,932,673.

General Fund Balances	Working Budget £'000
<b>Original Net General Fund Budget</b>	<b>12,788</b>
Approved budget changes	(537)
<b>Net Working budget approved to Date</b>	<b>12,252</b>
3rd Quarter Review	(32)
<b>Total Net Expenditure post Q3 review</b>	<b>12,219</b>
Less core resources at Budget Setting Report	(12,849)
<b>Transfer (to)/from General Fund balances</b>	<b>(629)</b>
<b>General Fund balance 31/3/24</b>	<b>(5,303)</b>
Transfer (to)/from General Fund balances	(629)
<b>Projected General Fund balance 31/3/25</b>	<b>(5,933)</b>
Allocated Revenue Reserves (Paragraph 4.2.1)	(9,501)
<b>Total General Fund Revenue balances (estimated 31/3/25)</b>	<b>(15,434)</b>

**4.3 Review of Savings** – As part of the 2024/25 budget setting, the Council agreed savings of £1.224Million. The table below represents the RAG rated delivery of those schemes.

Target	RAG		% of Target
1,223,880	Delivering	1,206,727	99%
	Partially Achieving	2,345	0%
	Not Achieving	14,808	1%
1,223,880		1,223,880	

4.3.1 Based on the Third Quarter expenditure position, the successful delivery of the majority of savings is projected. However, as previously reported a small number of schemes are not expected to meet the saving target totalling £15K.

- The new Billboard advertising locations did not generate expected income of £8K however, potential uptakes are in the pipeline for 2025/26.
- £5K from the reduction in car parking running costs due to unexpected costs for replacing old equipment. Savings are expected to start from 2025/26.
- The income from filming activities is ad hoc in its nature and difficult to predict. There has been reduced interest this year resulting in a shortfall against the target by £2K.

4.3.2 In addition, the increased fees for kennelling as part of the animal control contract has partially achieved its target. These fees have exceeded the budgeted costs, impacting the saving target by £2K.

**4.4 UKSPF Funding Approval For 2025/26**

4.4.1 In the Autumn Budget of October 30, 2024, the Chancellor announced a one-year £902Million extension of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) into the 2025/26 fiscal year. This extension aims to continue providing support across the three central priorities of the fund:

- Community & Place – This pillar focuses on strengthening the social fabric of communities and to enhance public spaces, support cultural initiatives, and promote community-led projects that improve the overall quality of life in local areas.
- Supporting Local Business – This priority is dedicated to nurturing the growth and innovation of local businesses. The goal is to boost productivity and create sustainable employment opportunities within communities.
- People & Skills – This pillar aims to enhance employment opportunities and support individuals in developing the skills needed for the local labour market.

4.4.2 The council's allocation is a total of £327,146, with £60,401 designated for capital projects and £266,745 for revenue initiatives. This is 50% of the amount allocated to the council in 2024/25, which has meant that we are unable to provide a full continuation of funding across all previously funded elements.

4.4.3 The proposed allocation is broken down into three key strands, which respond directly to the three central priorities, as described above. These build on the successes of UK Shared Prosperity Funding and the council's broader work on Enterprise & Skills over the last three years and provide a level of continuity as the council looks to continue to grow its ambitions in these areas:

- Hertfordshire Futures – £120,000 – Continuing the programme of support provided across the county to support local businesses coordinated by Hertfordshire Futures and delivered in partnership with other key local providers such as Wenta and Step2Skills. This approach allows the council The programme is comprised of 6 elements that are a continuation of the programme that was funded as part of the previous tranche of funding. The projects are as follows:
  - Hertfordshire Growth Hub – Serving as the central access point for business support in the county, the Hertfordshire Growth Hub offers tailored advice, training, and mentoring to small and medium-sized enterprises.
  - Get Enterprising – This program provides fully funded specialist support to early-stage businesses in Hertfordshire. It assists start-ups operating for less than five years with guidance in areas such as finance and digital marketing.
  - Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP) – Acting as the premier gateway in Hertfordshire for exploring career opportunities. It serves as a comprehensive resource for both employers and individuals seeking information on employment and skills development.
  - Hertfordshire Film Office – Dedicated to supporting the film and creative industries, the Hertfordshire Film Office offers resources and opportunities for young people interested in creative careers and businesses aiming to join the film and TV sector's supply chain.
  - Inward Investment Programme – This project focuses on attracting and supporting businesses to invest in the county. It emphasizes key sectors such as life sciences, film and media, aerospace, and defence.
  - Pathways to Employment – This initiative aims to connect residents with employment opportunities by providing access to training, skills development, and job placement services.
- Pioneering Young STEM Futures – £151,868 – Providing additional match funding to continue the council's ambitious Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme. The programme represents a partnership not only between the council and Mission44, but also includes the University of Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire College and Hertfordshire Futures as part of the key partnership group. A Phase Two proposal would look to expand the breadth and depth of the Discovery Phase and will potentially unlock significant further investment from the partnership as well as industry. A full report will be provided to cabinet

for approval later in the year, aligned to the approval of the funding from Mission44.

- Neighbourhood Allocation – £55,278 – Aligned with the Community & Place pillar of UKSPF, this builds on the work that has been undertaken in the previous UKSPF allocation and aims to strengthen local communities by enhancing locality budgets and supporting ward-level initiatives. This funding provides flexibility to address emerging needs and priorities within Stevenage’s neighbourhoods. This funding has natural synergy with both Local Community Budgets and the Climate Change Community Fund, both of which also provide funding for elected members at a ward level to unlock local projects in collaboration with the Community.

4.4.4 In the 2025/26 Draft budget report officers committed to confirm the use of the UKSPF funding for 2025/26. The updates to cabinet on the progress of these priorities will be incorporated into the council’s quarterly performance reporting as part of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan.

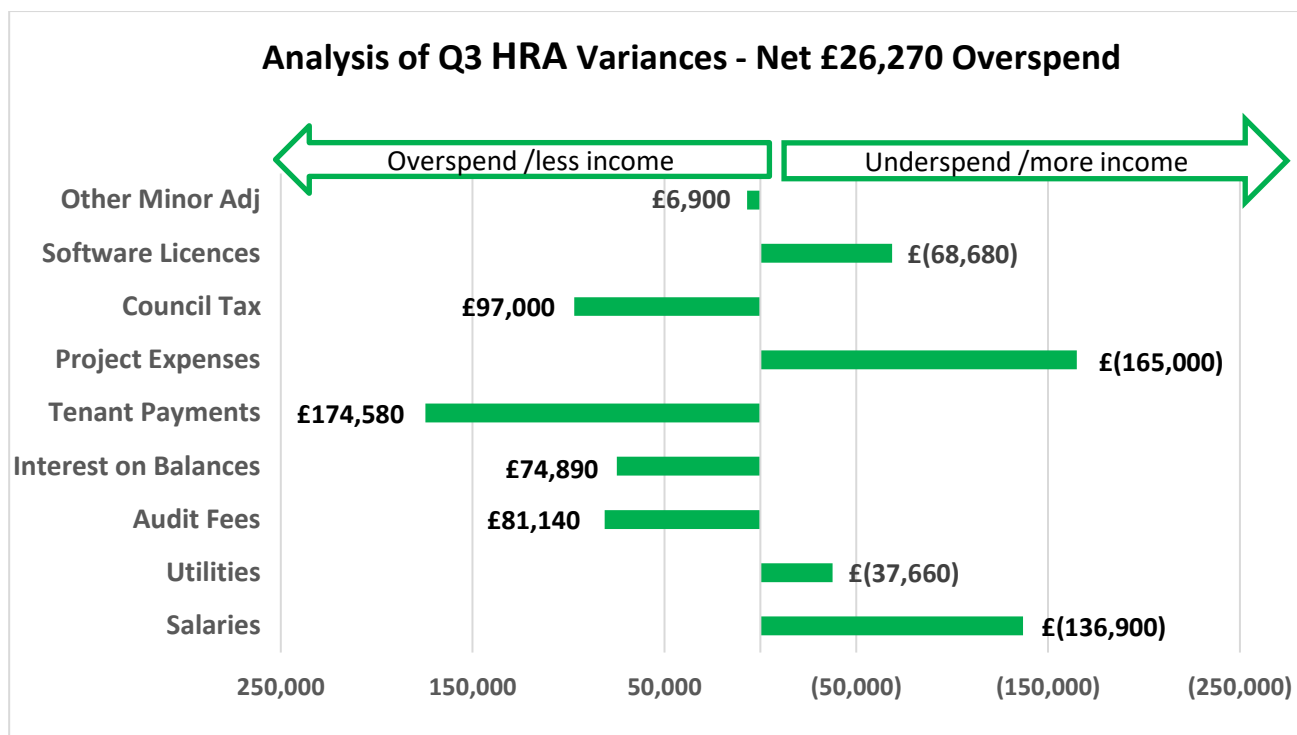
#### **4.5 Housing Revenue Account**

4.5.1 Since the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net budget deficit of £261K was approved at Council in January 2024, Members have further approved net changes of (£494K) shown in the following table.

<b>HRA Working Budget</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Original Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>261</b>
23/24 Q4 Carry Forwards	47
23/24 Q4 New Budget Pressures for 24/25	2,434
24/25 Q1 Review	(970)
24/25 Q2 Review	(4,129)
25/26 HRA Final Budget Report	2,123
<b>Total Working Budget</b>	<b>(233)</b>

#### **4.6 Housing Revenue Account - Budget Review**

4.6.1 Following the third quarter review of revenue budgets officers have identified and projected the following budget movements.



4.6.2 **Salaries (£136K).** The latest projection for employee costs shows an underspend of £136K against a total working budget of £10.7Million. This is due to operational vacancies and the timing differences when recruiting to those posts.

4.6.3 **Utilities (£38K).** The latest projection for gas and electricity costs shows a small saving of £18K and £19K respectively. This is against total budgets of £550K for gas supply and £705K for electricity in 2024/25.

4.6.4 **Audit Fees £81K.** As explained at 4.1.2 the outstanding audit fees have been re-calculated to reflect the impact of the audit backstop regulations work and the latest projection for the 2024/25 audit fees. There has also been an increased cost for completing the outstanding required audits of the Right to Buy receipts pooling arrangements. The Council's original auditors were unable to complete the certification of the 2018/19 return and this work had to be duplicated. The combined impact of these pressures is an increase of £81K on the budget.

4.6.5 **Interest on Balances £75K.** The latest calculation for interest earned from HRA balances held over the financial year has reduced by £75K. This leaves an expected income of £1.1Million in the HRA, but this figure will be confirmed as part of the year end process to reflect actual rates and balances.

4.6.6 **Tenant Payments £174K.** There are three main areas of pressure relating to payments to tenants and these are detailed below.

- **Compensation Payments £42K.** There has been a higher level of compensation payments to tenants in the current financial that has resulted in a projected pressure of £42K. While this is still a very small level compared



to annual rent income of £49Million, this area is being reviewed to minimise the issues leading to payments .

- **Relocation Incentives £70K.** This pressure has been driven by the successful work of officers in encouraging tenants to downsize to more manageable accommodation and the availability of 88 new sheltered accommodation units at the Kenilworth development. While this is an additional cost, it does free up family sized accommodation and helps the Council to discharge its housing duties to homeless applicants, avoiding the use of expensive temporary accommodation. Officers are currently reviewing the opportunities for next financial year, but it is unlikely to be this high again, as property availability is likely to be lower.
- **Decant Costs £62K.** A budget of £47K was rolled forward from last year in this area, specifically relating to the new Kenilworth development. That figure was calculated the known cases at the time. However, due to the success of identify and facilitating downsizing from the wider stock (see point above) this has resulted in more costs. As with the relocation incentives, this area is currently being reviewed, but is not likely to be repeated in the next financial year.

4.6.7 **Project Expenses (£165K) reduction.** The original HRA budget included £200K for Transformation, to meet service improvement targets and deal with new demands. However, due to the time and resources that were required to facilitate the first Housing Regulator inspection and the large project to migrate the housing system to the cloud, which is separately budgeted, this funding has not been fully utilised in the current year.

4.6.8 **Council Tax £97K.** Council tax payments on empty properties totalled £467K last year. The main two reasons for this increase were properties that were being held empty for redevelopment, as many were charged at 150% under the empty homes premium policy, and backlog work on void properties for re-letting. With expected improved void property turn-around times and the demolition of long term empty properties for re-development, the budget for the current year was reduced to £226K. While void turn-around rates have improved and planned demolition works have been completed, or commissioned, this has happened slightly later than originally estimated in the budget and has led to a £97K expected pressure in this year.

4.6.9 **Software Licences (£69K) reduction.** There is an expected underspend of £69K on software licence costs, while the implementation of the project to move the housing system to the cloud. It is expected that, once the system is hosted by the software provider, the Council will be able to implement further software modules to improve services and operational efficiency. However, the move to the cloud is not going to be complete until next financial year and has led to this underspend.

4.6.10 **Other Minor Adjustments £7K.** There were other minor operational variances that net to a £7K overspend that have been included in the projection for Q3.

4.6.11 **Repairs and Voids Costs.** This year significant additional resources have been invested in responsive repairs and void property refurbishment costs. This has enabled quicker turn-around times for empty properties and helped the housing service meet current repairs demands and regulatory requirements. Current projections indicate that there may be a slight budget pressure on both of these services by the year end. However, as they are demand led and the variance is small in comparison to the overall budget this will be reported in the outturn position for Q4.

4.6.12 In addition to the proposed changes to the 2024/25 budget there is also a virement request for the 2025/26 budget to reflect current operational need, detailed in the table below. Sub-contractor costs within repairs and maintenance have increased substantially over the last two years and this has required revised processes to ensure value for money is achieved. Part of these changes has been a dedicated resource to analyse payments and find any over-charging or inaccuracies in submitted invoices. This has been successful in reducing costs and it is proposed to make this a permanent appointment that would be self-financed by reductions in subcontractor costs. Therefore, a virement of £76,940 from the subcontractor to the salary budgets is requested for next financial year, as virements over £50,000 require Cabinet approval.

Budget Description	Original Budget 2025/26	Virement	Working Budget 2025/26	%age Change
Management and Admin Support Salaries	£818,810	£76,940	£895,750	+9%
Responsive Repairs Sub-contractor Costs	£1,497,220	(£76,940)	£1,420,280	-5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,316,030</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£2,316,030</b>	

#### 4.7 Housing Revenue Account Balances

4.7.1 Following the third quarter review, the HRA balance is now forecast to be £10.8Million and is above minimum required balances. The recent budget report to Council in January highlighted ongoing concerns regarding the level of expenditure on repairs and maintenance and these balances will be required in the medium term to support the service, while savings options are identified to re-balance the ring-fenced fund.

Housing Revenue Account Outturn Position	£'000
<b>Working Budget – Council 22nd January 2025</b>	<b>(233)</b>
3rd Quarter Net Projected Overspend	26
<b>Projected net Surplus post 3rd Quarter review</b>	<b>(207)</b>
HRA balance brought forward 1/4/24	<b>(10,584)</b>
Surplus in year	(207)
<b>Projected HRA balance 31/3/2025</b>	<b>(10,791)</b>
<b>Remaining Cabinet Delegated Limit</b>	<b>374</b>

## 4.8 Capital Monitoring

4.8.1 The latest capital strategy (Final Capital Strategy) was approved by Council on 26 February 2025 and includes all member approved changes up to the date of this report. The 2024/25 approved budget for each fund is as follows:

- General Fund £26Million
- Housing Revenue Account £32Million

4.8.2 The table below summarises the Capital programme 2024/25 and the proposed changes including rephasing of capital budgets at Q3 into 2025/26.

£000	2024/25				2025/26	2026/27
	Actual Spend Q3	Final Capital Strategy	Revised Strategy Q3	Variance Final v Q3	Changes Q3	Changes Q3
Total GF Schemes	9,700	26,275	21,062	(5,213)	807	3916
Total HRA Schemes	20,188	31,662	30,708	(954)	954	0
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>29,888</b>	<b>57,937</b>	<b>51,770</b>	<b>(6,167)</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>3,916</b>
<i>Re-phase detail:</i>						
Stevenage Direct Services				(359)	(3,775)	3,916
Housing Development				(1,128)	1,128	0
Finance & Estates				(1,869)	1,820	0
Digital & Transformation				(149)	149	0
Regeneration				(1,100)	1,100	0
Communities & Neighbourhoods				(478)	478	0
Planning and Regulatory				93	157	0
Deferred Works Reserve				(222)	(250)	0
<b>Total GF Re-phasing</b>				<b>(5,213)</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>3,916</b>
New Build (Housing Development)				(862)	862	0
Digital & Transformation				(92)	92	0
<b>Total HRA Re-phasing</b>				<b>(954)</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>0</b>

4.8.3 The movements in the general fund balances are summarised below:

General Fund Capital Programme Movements	£000
Re-phasing into 2025/26 net (including £200k deferred works reserve)	(747)
Re-phasing into 2026/27	(3,916)
Grant funded budget movements	(186)
Other Budget Movements	86
Reduction in deferred works reserve to fund Boston House Refurbishment	(450)
<b>Variance Final v Q3</b>	<b>(5,213)</b>

**Re-phasing**

- 4.8.4 Re-phasing (re-profiling) of budgets are changes regarding the forecast timing of expenditure from the approved programme, between financial years, with no reported increase or decrease in budget requirement.
- 4.8.5 Forecasting spend during the year involves making assumptions about future events that may be out of the control of service managers e.g. Weather, thus re-phasing is a normal part of capital monitoring.
- 4.8.6 General Fund – re-phasing £4.7Million - the main items are explained below:
- Housing Development £1.1Million – the remaining budget for the Kenilworth Community Centre has been re-phased into 2025/26 pending review of the future requirements of the community centre schemes/locality review.
  - Estates £1.8Million - resourcing challenges in the estates team in 2024/25 have resulted in delays to delivery of capital projects across the team. A full review of capital works will be undertaken by officers and the impact of the review on capital budgets will be reported in the next monitoring report (outturn). Projects with no or minimal spend have been re-phased into 2025/26 pending this review.
  - Regeneration £1.1Million – part of the budget for the reconfiguration of Boston House prior to the move of the indoor market to Park Place has been re-phased into 2025/26 to reflect the delivery of this project due to be complete in the summer of 2025.
  - Communities and Neighbourhoods - the fire stopping works at the Stevenage Arts and leisure centre have been re-phased for delivery in 2025/26 - £380K
  - Garage Improvement plan – this long term project was approved at Council on 26 February 2025 and shown in 2025/26 and not as profiled in the GIP, the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter monitoring report shows the 2025/26 spend phasing in line with the garage report and the balance (£4Million) being moved to 2026/27.
- 4.8.7 HRA – re-phasing £1Million from 2024/25 into future years relates to Housing Development budgets only. Planned Housing investment is expected to spend all of the allocated budget by the end of 2024/25.
- The Oval - £800K, spend on this project has been on hold whilst the outcome of a Homes England funding bid is awaited. The funding request will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the scheme, with the potential to fully fund the new Community Facilities on site. Progress will continue on this project at pace once the outcome of the funding ask has been determined.
- 4.8.8 **Changes to Grant funded Schemes £(186)k –**
- Food Collection Vehicles (5) £220K reduction in budget and grant funding - The original budget for the provision of 5 food collection vehicles was estimated at £850K (fully grant funded). The actual cost and funding available have now been fixed at £630K and the budget reduced by £220K to reflect this change.

- The Council holds some legacy Disabled Facility Grant which can be used for relevant expenditure – during 2024/25 £30K was spent and the budget increased to cover this cost.
- A small increase in the Electric Car Charging Points (Grant funded) budget of £4K was made to increase the budget to match both the grant funding available and the expenditure incurred.

#### **4.8.9 Other Budget Movements**

4.8.10 Members are asked to approve the following budget changes £86k net:

- Increase in budget provision for the Automatic number-plate recognition (ANPR) project from £444K to £529K to enable completion of the installation in the Councils car parks (excluding the forum). The overspend of £84.5K is to be funded from ring fenced receipts allocated to the parking service £76.5K and £8k from the deferred works reserve.
- Transformation revenue contribution to Digital system streets and grounds services £9K to complete the funding for this project. The budget has been increased to reflect this additional funding.

4.8.11 Members are asked to note the addition of £60,400 UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital budget to 2025/26. A proportion of this funding will be allocated to each area of Stevenage with wards being divided by North/Central/South. At Co-operative Neighbourhood Strategic Board meetings, members will work with officers to determine allocation and priorities for this spend, taking into account resident engagement activities and data sources.

#### **4.9 Virements for Approval**

4.9.1 Members are asked to approve the following virements:

##### **General Fund:**

- SDS - Digital Systems streets and ground services – to move surplus budgets from KE931- Digital system play area inspections/management £16.5K and KE933 - Asset Management system £10K to KE930 - Digital system streets and grounds services £26.5K to support delivery of this project.
- SDS – Vehicles –
  - To amalgamate the £305K budget in KE599 Refuse Vehicles with KE951 Domestic Recycling Collection vehicles budget to reflect the management of vehicle replacements through KE951.
  - To transfer surplus budget from KE520 Welfare improvements (no longer required) £10K and from KE497 - Trade Waste containers budget £20K to KE930 to cover expected overspend in this budget of £30K in 2024/25.

- To transfer £16.2K to KE936 General Vehicles from savings in KE600 Sweeper Replacement - £4k and £12.2K from KE929 Digital system fleet and workshop operation.
- To Transfer net savings in KE929 Digital system fleet and workshop operation of £7.5K to the deferred works reserve, KR911 to increase capacity in that budget.
- Estates – to move the £50K unspent budget in KS278 New Management Software to the deferred works reserve KR911 to increase capacity in that budget
- Planning and Regulatory –
  - To transfer £78K from the deferred works reserve KR911 to fund
  - £8K of overspend in the APNR budget KE119 and
  - £70k to the same budget to fund a new phase 4 of the scheme investing in APNR at the Forum car park, equipment that will be moved to the new forum car park when it is built in the future.
  - To transfer £15K to KE217 Parking restriction to fund an expected overspend in that budget, from the deferred works reserve £2K, the Workplace Travel Plan KE531 £7K, and the Cashless on street parking transition budget KE569 £6K.

4.9.2 HRA – reallocation of budgets from Schemes Under Development £567K and Kenilworth underspend £203K to specific development site budgets £37K and open market acquisitions £733K. Details can be seen in Appendix B.

**4.10 Deferred Works Reserve –**

4.10.1 Changes to the Deferred Works Reserve budgets including proposals above are summarised below.

Deferred Works Budget Movements	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Final Capital Strategy	387	282
<i>Proposed for approval:</i>		
Re-phasing into 2025/26	(200)	200
ANPR – Forum Car Park	(70)	0
ANPR – Other Car Parks	(8)	0
Parking Restrictions	(2)	0
Savings identified across services	57.5	0
<i>Approved:</i>		
Boston House Reconfiguration	0	(450)
Variance Final v Q3	(222)	(250)
Capital Strategy Q3	165	32

4.10.2 The total Capital Programme, detailing all programmes with relevant approval to spend and proposed changed for approval, is detailed in Appendix A (GF) and B (HRA).

#### 4.11 Capital Financing

4.11.1 The table below sets out the change in the Capital Financing position since quarter 1, as a result of changes to the expenditure phasing and virements discussed above.

	2024/25				2025/26	2026/27
£000	Actual Spend Q3	Final Capital Strategy	Revised Strategy Q3	Variance Final v Q3	Changes Q3	Changes Q3
<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	29,888	57,937	51,770	(6,167)	1,761	3,916
<i>Changes detail:</i>						
Short Term Borrowing				(1,850)	(2,243)	1,756
Capital Receipts				(3,018)	3,030	2,000
Grants and Contributions				(15)	147	42
Reserves and RCCO				(330)	(127)	118
<b>Total GF Financing changes</b>				<b>(5,213)</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>3,916</b>
MRR				(203)	203	0
Capital Receipts				(522)	522	0
Direct Revenue Financing				(229)	229	0
<b>Total HRA Financing changes</b>				<b>(954)</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Capital Financing</b>				<b>(6,167)</b>	<b>1,761</b>	<b>3,196</b>

#### 4.12 Capital Receipts Forecast

4.12.1 A key recommendation from the June 2020 MTFs report was that a pipeline of land disposals be identified from Locality Reviews to help maintain the resilience of General Fund balances. This strategy continues and along with other property sales and housing development receipts support the delivery of capital projects.

4.12.2 The tables below summaries the current capital receipts forecasts for the General Fund.

Table 5: Capital Receipts	Previous Forecast £000	Revised Forecast £000	Variance £000
<b>Capital Receipts (including Locality)</b>			
Year 2024/25 Forecast	7,060	6,704	(1,271)
Year 2025/26 Forecast	1,450	3,045	1,350
Year 2026/27 Forecast	12,240	12,240	0
<b>Grant Total Capital Receipts</b>	<b>21,910</b>	<b>21,989</b>	<b>(216)</b>

<b>Table 5: Capital Receipts</b>	<b>Previous Forecast £000</b>	<b>Revised Forecast £000</b>	<b>Variance £000</b>
Sales Costs 4%	(612)	(634)	(22)
Contingency adjustment	(745)	(145)	600
<b>Total Net Receipts</b>	<b>20,553</b>	<b>21,210</b>	<b>362</b>

4.12.3 Until sold, the value of land sales can fluctuate from the forecast as can be seen. The overall increase in the forecast is mainly due to the inclusion of potential additional land sales of £1.2Million in 2025/26. Proposals for further garage sales will be reported to members separately. Other capital receipts include those associated with housing development and regeneration.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included above. The impact of these changes for future years will be incorporated into the budget setting process.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 The objective of this report is to outline the projected General Fund net expenditure, HRA and Capital Strategy for 2024/25 and the impact on the General Fund and HRA balances. While there are no legal consequences at this stage Members are reminded of their duty to set a balanced budget.

### **5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.3.1 This report summarises external and internal factors that impact on approved budgets and recommends changes to those budgets in year. Budget changes identified for future years that could adversely impact on groups covered by statutory equality duties will be incorporated into the budget setting process which includes Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). None of the budget changes reported will change any existing equalities and diversity policies.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

5.4.1 A risk based assessment of balances is undertaken and reported to Council as part of the General Fund Budget setting process. Both the General Fund and HRA balances are projected to be above minimum levels.

### **5.5 Policy Implications**



5.5.1 The budget framework represents a development of a policy led budgeting approach across Council services and the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## **5.6 Climate Change Implications**

5.6.1 The Budget and Policy setting process prioritised growth for climate change. The process should have due regard for climate change implications based on the Council's Climate Change Strategy. There are no direct climate change implications from the budget changes in this report.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

BD1 – Final Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Report 2024/25 (Council 24 January 2024)

BD2 – Council Tax Setting Report 2024/25 and Final Capital Strategy 2023/24-2028/29 (Council 21 February 2024)

BD3 – 4th Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital, and Group Companies 2023/24 (Cabinet 24 July 2024)

BD4 – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, and Capital 2024/25 (Cabinet 18 September 2024)

BD5 – 2nd Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report - General Fund, and Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 (Cabinet 13 November 2024)

BD6 – Final Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Report 2025/26 (Council 22 January 2025)

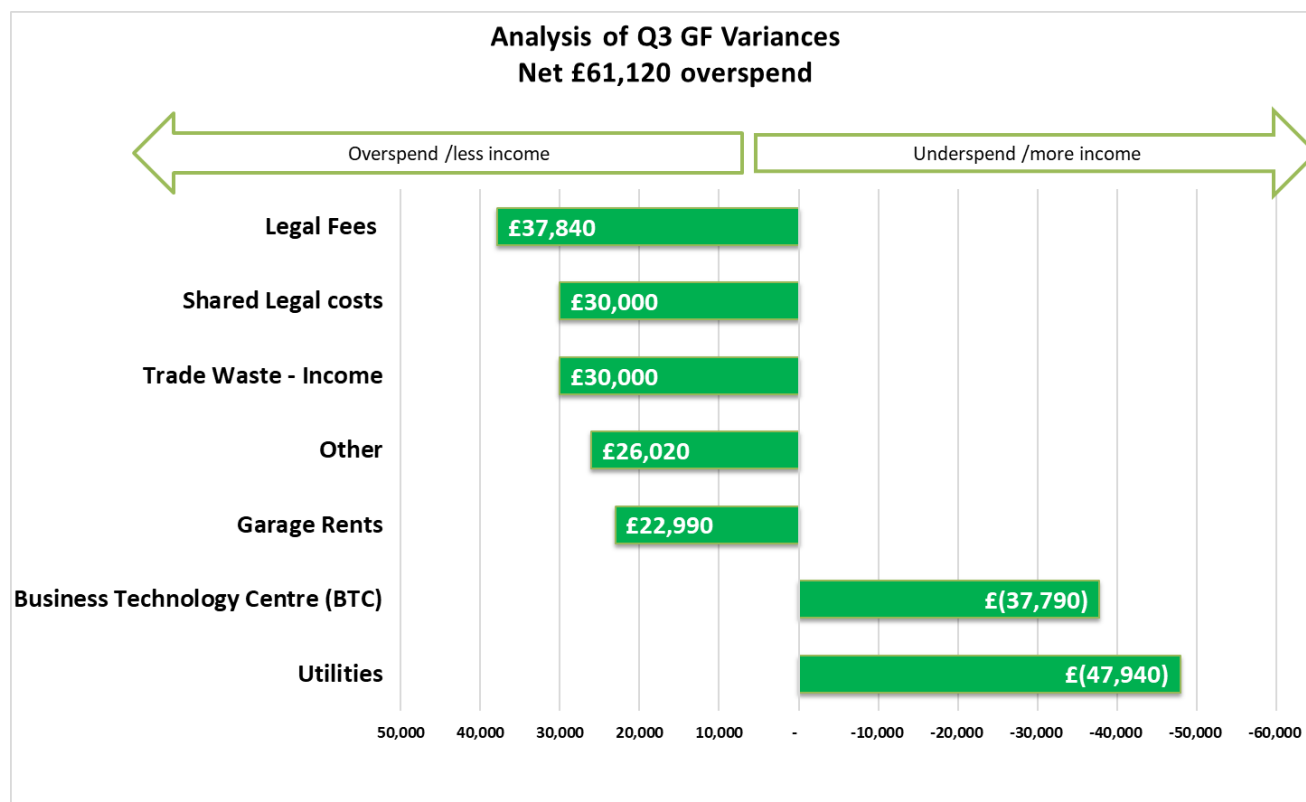
### **Appendices**

- A - GF Revenue Monitor
- B - HRA Capital Strategy (2024/25)
- C - General Fund Capital Strategy (2024/25)

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## Appendix A

Following the third quarter review of the General Fund budgets, officers have identified a projected decrease in the forecast budget for the year of £32,480. The detailed analysis of the primary reasons can be found in the main report, and the analysis of minor variances totalling £61,120 is detailed below:



- **Legal Fees £38K** – Legal fees in relation to the proposed relocation of the indoor market to Park Place.
- **Shared Legal Costs £30K** - Pressure projected based on legal fees incurred to date.
- **Trade Waste Income £30K** – Income is forecast to be in line with 2023/24, however, remain below the 2024/25 budget. This is due in part to reduction in the number of lifts requested by existing customers, as well as other factors. Customers can amend their scheduled collections as required resulting in fluctuating income levels.
- **Other variances £26K** – a combination of small variances across the service.
- **Garage Rents £23K** – The void rate has increased to around 8% against target of 6.6% due to a dip in demand. The service is reviewing and exploring new ways to increase demand in vacant garages.

- **Business Technology Centre (BTC) (£38K)** – A reduction in voids in the last quarter has seen an increase in projected rental income combined with a reduction in business rates associated with these empty units.
- **Utilities (£48K)** – following the recent renewal in October 2024 for gas and electricity sites. The prices came in at a lower rate than forecasted, resulting in a saving.

## HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26	2025/26	Variance Q4 v Q1	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Q3 v Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy		Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£		£	£	£
	<b>SUMMARY</b>										
	Capital Programme Excl New Build (Housing Investment)	16,323,861	24,431,083	24,431,083		23,424,077	23,424,077		19,993,134	21,519,212	21,543,326
	Special Projects & Equipment	30,680	36,073	36,073							
	New Build (Housing Development)	3,770,213	6,906,344	6,044,513	(861,832)	27,781,117	28,642,949	861,832	37,057,000	18,770,580	8,400,000
	Digital & Transformation	62,904	288,936	196,637	(92,299)	194,000	286,299	92,299	199,000	740,000	764,000
	<b>TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>	<b>20,187,658</b>	<b>31,662,436</b>	<b>30,708,306</b>	<b>(954,131)</b>	<b>51,399,194</b>	<b>52,353,325</b>	<b>954,131</b>	<b>57,249,134</b>	<b>41,029,792</b>	<b>30,707,326</b>
	(20,187,657.93)										
	<b>HRA USE OF RESOURCES</b>										
BH930	MRR (Self Financing Depreciation)		18,670,830	18,468,068	- 202,763	13,138,173	13,340,935	202,762	13,532,319	13,938,288	14,356,438
BH902	Other Capital Receipts		-	-	-	1,375,000	1,375,000		-	-	-
BH906	Section 20 Contribution (leaseholders income)		1,226,056	1,226,056	-	2,962,878	2,962,878		3,261,738	1,173,177	805,409
BH901	(RTB) new Build provision		5,759,869	5,238,369	- 521,500	9,677,658	10,199,159	521,501	3,854,421	3,982,876	4,114,542
BH903	RTB - Debt Provision Receipts		428,523	428,523	-	1,464,120	1,464,120		1,050,506	1,076,769	1,103,688
	Borrowing Prudential		-	-	-	14,335,365	14,335,365		30,959,784	12,280,024	9,327,249
	Borrowing Short term										
	S106										
BH904	Developer Contributions (Kenilworth)										
	Direct Revenue Financing (was RCCO)		4,167,218	3,937,350	- 229,868	-	229,868	229,868	3,390,366	4,438,658	-
BH905	Grant		1,409,940	1,409,940	-	8,446,000	8,446,000		1,200,000	4,140,000	1,000,000
	<b>TOTAL HRA RESOURCES FOR CAPITAL</b>		<b>31,662,436</b>	<b>30,708,306</b>	<b>(954,131)</b>	<b>51,399,194</b>	<b>52,353,325</b>	<b>954,131</b>	<b>57,249,134</b>	<b>41,029,792</b>	<b>30,707,326</b>
	Major Repair Reserve Bought Forward (BH930)		(5,915,321)	(5,915,321)		1	(202,762)	(202,763)	(1)	(1)	(2)
	Depreciation (increasing MRR)		(12,755,509)	(12,755,509)		(13,138,174)	(13,138,174)		(13,532,319)	(13,938,289)	(14,356,438)
	MRR Used (decreasing MRR)		18,670,830	18,468,068	(202,763)	13,138,173	13,340,935	202,762	13,532,319	13,938,288	14,356,438
	Major Repair Reserve Carried Forward		1	(202,762)	(202,763)	(0)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)
BH901	Total RTB Receipts Bought Forward		(7,878,356)	(7,878,356)		(3,819,684)	(4,341,184)	(521,500)	(0)	0	1
	Total RTB Receipts Received		(1,701,197)	(1,701,197)		(5,857,975)	(5,857,975)		(3,854,421)	(3,982,876)	(4,114,542)
	Total RTB Receipts Used HRA		5,759,869	5,238,369	(521,500)	9,677,658	10,199,159	521,501	3,854,421	3,982,876	4,114,542
	Total RTB Receipts Carried Forward		(3,819,684)	(4,341,184)	(521,500)	(1)	(0)	1	0	1	1

HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26	2025/26	Variance Q4 v Q1	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Q3 v Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy		Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£		£	£	£
	<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD</b>										
	<b>Planned Investment including Decent Homes</b>										
Various	Decent Homes - Internal/External Works	2,234,340	3,795,020	3,795,020	8,650,000	8,650,000		9,800,000	10,700,000	10,700,000	
Various	Decent Homes External Works				500,000	500,000		550,000	550,000	550,000	
KH299	Insulation Measures				50,000	50,000		50,000	50,000	50,000	
Various	Decent Homes - Roofing										
Various	Decent Homes - Flat Blocks	7,694,171	10,890,790	10,890,790	5,400,000	5,400,000		250,000	250,000	250,000	
KH205	Communal Heating				100,000	100,000		100,000	100,000	100,000	
KH321	High Rises - Improvement Works	94,553	1,271,530	1,271,530	1,750,000	1,750,000		1,750,000			
KH332	New Schemes to be created				947,000	947,000		2,993,000	5,158,000	6,772,000	
	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>										
KH100	Fire Safety	275,048	300,000	300,000							
KH101	Asbestos Management	212,732	230,100	230,100	300,000	300,000		300,000	300,000	300,000	
KH102	Subsidence	86,159	137,630	137,630	120,000	120,000		120,000	120,000	120,000	
KH144	Contingent Major Repairs	369,113	552,090	552,090	500,000	500,000		500,000	500,000	500,000	
KH122	StockCondSurvey	333									
KH127	Dhredecs	849									
KH129	Building safety				1,000,000	1,000,000		1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	
	<b>Estate &amp; Communal Area</b>										
KH223	Asset Review - Challenging Assets	284,318	601,891	601,891	600,000	600,000		600,000	600,000	600,000	
KH224	Asset Review Non Red Shelter	32,242									
Various	<b>Other HRA Schemes</b>	5,040,003	6,652,032	6,652,032							
	<b>TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD</b>	<b>16,323,861</b>	<b>24,431,083</b>	<b>24,431,083</b>	<b>23,424,077</b>	<b>23,424,077</b>		<b>19,993,134</b>	<b>21,519,212</b>	<b>21,543,326</b>	
	<b>SPECIAL PROJECTS &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>										
	<b>HRA Equipment</b>										
KH015	Capital Equipment (including Supported Housing Equip)	30,680	36,073	36,073							
	<b>Sub Total Special Projects &amp; Equipment</b>	<b>30,680</b>	<b>36,073</b>	<b>36,073</b>							

HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY



Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26	2025/26	Variance Q4 v Q1	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Q3 v Final Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy		Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£		£	£	£
	<b>CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD</b>										
	New Build Programme - eligible for 1-4-1	2,600,625	5,759,859	4,382,769	(1,377,091)	20,214,117	21,777,041	1,562,924	14,612,000	12,783,580	8,400,000
	New Build Programme - ineligible	1,169,587	1,146,485	1,661,744	515,259	7,567,000	6,865,908	(701,092)	22,445,000	5,987,000	
KH233	Open Market Acquisitions (Social Rent)	1,325,452	767,463	1,500,000	732,537					891,790	
KH244	Twin Foxes										
KH245	March Hare in Burwell Road (15 Units)	(10,624)	1,107,240	100,000	(1,007,240)	1,637,239	2,644,479	1,007,240		(1,800,000)	
KH247	Kenilworth Close (105 units) (Ineligible 141)	670,422	846,485	643,723	(202,762)						
	Kenilworth Close 1 for 1 Expenditure (61.8%)		469,190	469,190							
KH303	Dunn Close (27 units, 21 main block SA)	981,662	1,715,967	1,300,000	(415,967)		415,967	415,967			
KH279	29 Shephell Way			8,834	8,834						
KH280	Symonds Green	16,066		16,731	16,731						
KH282	North Road	11,743		12,043	12,043						
KH333	Brent Court Social Rent	482,237	300,000	1,001,092	701,092	7,567,000	6,865,908	(701,092)	22,445,000	5,987,000	
	<b>Schemes Under Development</b>	<b>293,255</b>	<b>1,700,000</b>	<b>992,900</b>	<b>(707,100)</b>	<b>18,576,878</b>	<b>18,716,595</b>	<b>139,717</b>	<b>14,612,000</b>	<b>12,800,000</b>	<b>8,400,000</b>
	<b>TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD</b>	<b>3,770,213</b>	<b>6,906,344</b>	<b>6,044,513</b>	<b>(861,832)</b>	<b>27,781,117</b>	<b>28,642,949</b>	<b>861,832</b>	<b>37,057,000</b>	<b>18,770,580</b>	<b>8,400,000</b>
	<b>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</b>										
	<b>IT General (IT)</b>										
KH288	Infrastructure Investment	37,327	97,299	25,000	(72,299)	194,000	266,299	72,299	199,000	740,000	764,000
KH315	Core ICT Equipment Equipmt & Tools	849									
KH315	2024/25		20,000		(20,000)		20,000	20,000			
	<b>Total General IT</b>	<b>38,176</b>	<b>117,299</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>(92,299)</b>	<b>194,000</b>	<b>286,299</b>	<b>92,299</b>	<b>199,000</b>	<b>740,000</b>	<b>764,000</b>
	<b>Connected To Our Customers (CTOC)</b>										
KH288	New CRM Technology (Digital Platform)	24,728	52,967	52,967							
	<b>Total CTOC</b>	<b>24,728</b>	<b>52,967</b>	<b>52,967</b>							
	<b>Housing All Under One Roof programme (HAUOR)</b>										
KH283	Housing Improvements - Northgate online		118,670	118,670							
	<b>Total HAUOR</b>		<b>118,670</b>	<b>118,670</b>							
	<b>TOTAL ICT INCLUDING DIGITAL AGENDA</b>	<b>62,904</b>	<b>288,936</b>	<b>196,637</b>	<b>(92,299)</b>	<b>194,000</b>	<b>286,299</b>	<b>92,299</b>	<b>199,000</b>	<b>740,000</b>	<b>764,000</b>

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## GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26			2026/27		
		Actual Costs	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<b>General Fund - Schemes</b>										
	Stevenage Direct Services	2,448,811	4,916,713	4,557,638	(359,074)	6,353,704	2,578,762	(3,774,942)	250,000	4,166,000	3,916,000
	Housing Development	0	1,938,907	811,000	(1,127,907)	16,202,580	17,330,487	1,127,907	2,874,748	2,874,748	0
	Finance and Estates	442,308	2,737,244	867,723	(1,869,521)	557,000	2,376,378	1,819,378	0	0	0
	Digital & Transformation	90,352	378,822	230,217	(148,605)	303,373	451,978	148,605	0	0	0
	Regeneration	5,729,436	13,868,728	12,768,728	(1,100,000)	27,077,066	28,177,066	1,100,000	1,335,670	1,335,670	0
	Communities and Neighbourhoods	303,928	1,094,629	616,124	(478,505)	492,410	970,916	478,506	0	0	0
	Planning and Regulatory	685,374	953,273	1,046,213	92,940	552,500	710,119	157,619	0	0	0
	Deferred Works Reserve	0	387,222	164,732	(222,490)	282,000	32,000	(250,000)	0	0	0
	<b>Total Schemes</b>	<b>9,700,209</b>	<b>26,275,537</b>	<b>21,062,375</b>	<b>(5,213,162)</b>	<b>51,820,633</b>	<b>52,627,706</b>	<b>807,073</b>	<b>4,460,418</b>	<b>8,376,418</b>	<b>3,916,000</b>
	<b>General Fund -Resources</b>										
BG902	Capital Receipts		6,375,852	3,472,169	(2,903,683)	3,676,351	6,075,552	2,399,201	674,498	2,674,498	2,000,000
	SG1 Receipts		378,000	521,000	143,000	455,000	829,000	374,000			0
	Locality Review receipts		15,000	14,903	(97)	0	0	0	0	0	0
BG905	Ringfenced receipts		1,646,418	1,402,986	(243,432)	0	243,432	243,432	0	0	0
BG904	Towns Fund		7,342,497	7,585,930	243,433	18,807,174	18,869,731	62,557	1,335,670	1,335,670	0
BG904	Other Grants and other contributions (Towns Fund / Homes England)		1,701,380	1,502,852	(198,528)	9,150,000	9,174,603	24,603	0	42,000	42,000
BG904	Contractors Deposits		94,553	60,000	(34,553)	0	34,553	34,553	0	0	0
BG937	Local – Neighbourhood CIL		207,578	182,083	(25,495)	97,500	122,995	25,495	0	0	0
BG903	Capital Reserve (Housing Receipts)		496,190	482,897	(13,293)	568,935	582,260	13,325	0	0	0
-	RCCO		95,000	104,394	9,394	617,000	150,000	(467,000)	0	118,000	118,000
VAR	Revenue Reserves		697,445	357,445	(340,000)	0	340,000	340,000	0	0	0
BG916	Capital Reserve (Revenue Savings)		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
-	Prudential Borrowing Approved		1,995,610	1,995,610	0	3,833,000	2,712,000	(1,121,000)	2,450,250	4,206,250	1,756,000
-	Short Term borrowing and funded from private sale		5,230,014	3,380,107	(1,849,907)	14,615,673	13,493,580	(1,122,093)	0	0	0
-	Funding Gap					0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Resources (General Fund)</b>	<b>(35,166)</b>	<b>26,275,537</b>	<b>21,062,375</b>	<b>(5,213,162)</b>	<b>51,820,633</b>	<b>52,627,706</b>	<b>807,073</b>	<b>4,460,418</b>	<b>8,376,418</b>	<b>3,916,000</b>

## GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26			2026/27		
		Actual Costs	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<b>Stevenage Direct Services</b>										
	<b>Parks &amp; Open Spaces</b>										
KC218	Hertford Road Play Area (S106 Funded)	0	0	0	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0
KE494	Green Space Access Infrastructure	48,163	53,018	53,018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE542	Flat block waste management infrastructure	0	18,730	0	(18,730)	0	18,730	18,730	0	0	0
KE911	Play Area Improvement Programme	454,842	480,330	457,162	(23,168)	75,000	98,168	23,168	0	0	0
KE916	Peartree skate park	0	0	0	0	90,000	90,000	0	0	0	0
KS263	Waste and Recycling System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE377	Transfer Station Can Compactor Equipmt & Tools	(2,732)									
KE453	Rep JCB Shovel Equipmt & Tools	200,704									
KE520	Welfare improvements at out based hubs	0	10,000	0	(10,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE543	Shrub bed programme	0	47,109	47,109	0	44,000	44,000	0	0	0	0
KG002	Garages (GIP)	1,473,245	1,459,610	1,459,610	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	Garages (GIP) 10 year plan (£250k/annum)	0	0	0	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000	250,000	0
Growth	Garages asbestos roof capital works	0	0	0	0	4,500,000	584,000	(3,916,000)	0	3,916,000	3,916,000
Growth	Parks Infrastructure	0	0	0	0	50,000	50,000	0	0	0	0
	<b>Vehicles, Plant, Equipment</b>										
KE497	Trade Waste Containers	0	20,000	0	(20,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Various	<b>Vehicle/Plant replacement Programme - see Appendix 'A1 Vehicles'</b>	<b>268,651</b>	<b>1,240,174</b>	<b>2,424,361</b>	<b>(250,813)</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>1,196,107</b>	<b>73,403</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
KE925	Repair closed church wall St Nicholas church	4,243	30,000	4,243	(25,757)	0	25,757	25,757	0	0	0
KE926	roof residual waste bay Cavendish Transfer Station	0	0	0	0	150,000	150,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Fuel pumps at Cavendish Road fuel station.	0	0	0	0	30,000	30,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Replacement work Cavendish Road fuel station - manhole covers	0	0	0	0	17,000	17,000	0	0	0	0
KE929	Digital system fleet and workshop operation	0	20,000	0	(20,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE930	Digital system streets and grounds services	0	74,546	110,440	35,894	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE931	Digital system play area inspections/managment	0	16,500	0	(16,500)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE932	Digital book of remembrance	1,696	1,696	1,696	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE933	Asset Management system	0	10,000	0	(10,000)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Stevenage Direct Services</b>	<b>2,448,811</b>	<b>4,916,713</b>	<b>4,557,638</b>	<b>(359,074)</b>	<b>6,353,704</b>	<b>2,578,762</b>	<b>(3,774,942)</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>4,166,000</b>	<b>3,916,000</b>
	<b>Housing Development Scheme (Joint GF/HRA)</b>										
KG035	Kenilworth - Community Centre	0	0	0	0	1,223,580	1,223,580	0	0	0	0
Growth	The Oval	0	0	0	0	9,000,000	9,000,000	0	0	0	0
KG036	Kenilworth - private sale (Malvern Close & Blocks A3&A6)	0	1,327,907	200,000	(1,127,907)	5,979,000	7,106,907	1,127,907	424,498	424,498	0
Various	<b>Housing Development Schemes (Joint GF/HRA)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,327,907</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>(1,127,907)</b>	<b>16,202,580</b>	<b>17,330,487</b>	<b>1,127,907</b>	<b>424,498</b>	<b>424,498</b>	<b>0</b>
KG038	Marshgate Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC)	0	611,000	611,000	0	0	0	0	2,450,250	2,450,250	0
	<b>Total Housing Development (including grants to Registered Providers)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,938,907</b>	<b>811,000</b>	<b>(1,127,907)</b>	<b>16,202,580</b>	<b>17,330,487</b>	<b>1,127,907</b>	<b>2,874,748</b>	<b>2,874,748</b>	<b>0</b>

## GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26			2026/27		
		Actual Costs	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<b>Finance &amp; Estates</b>										
	<b>Estates</b>										
KE526	Cavendish Fire Protection : Urgent and H&S Works	6,108	4,563	4,563	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE527	Depots: Planned Preventative Works (reroof)	138,246	257,240	257,240	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE529	Community Centres Urgent and H&S Works	2,470	3,970	0	(3,970)	0	3,970	3,970	0	0	0
KE536	Multi Storey Car Park - Installation of emergency lighting	946	206,434	94,003	(112,431)	0	112,431	112,431	0	0	0
KE554	Bedwell Neighbourhood centre canopy repairs	7,024	7,555	7,555	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE555	8-10 The glebe roof replacement	1,111	1,111	1,111	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE558	MSCP resurface worn stairwell floor	1,526	79,856	9,856	(70,000)	0	70,000	70,000	0	0	0
KE927	Thermal Image Cameras	112,231	140,000	140,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE928	Ph2 fire protection works Cavendish	240	95,000	5,000	(90,000)	255,000	345,000	90,000	0	0	0
KE559	MSCP / Indoor Market guttering	383	1,000	1,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR150	Works to improve vacant premises prior to re-letting	21,375	19,476	19,476	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR151	Daneshill: Urgent and H&S Works	4,884	59,088	19,088	(40,000)	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0
KR152	BTC 2019/20 Backlog H&S Works	378	27,930	0	(27,930)	0	27,930	27,930	0	0	0
KR153	BTC Urgent and H&S Works	284	65,780	0	(65,780)	0	65,780	65,780	0	0	0
KR154	BTC Planned Preventative Works	2,818	179,188	19,188	(160,000)	0	160,000	160,000	0	0	0
KR155	EPC Surveys	4,136	81,896	81,896	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR156	EPC remedials	0	209,710	0	(209,710)	0	209,710	209,710	0	0	0
KR157	Building condition and Insurance valuation Survey	19,462	18,800	18,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR162	Fairlands valley farmhouse roofing works	2,485	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR165	Cavendish Road reception access enhancement	378	189	189	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR166	Cavendish Road manhole covers	26,664	48,079	48,079	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR167	Cavendish Road penstock valve	0	49,886	0	(49,886)	0	49,886	49,886	0	0	0
KR169	MSCP replacement fuse boards	7,080	7,080	7,080	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR170	BTC Essential works - Replace / upgrade doors, Lighting and control	0	195,000	0	(195,000)	0	195,000	195,000	0	0	0
KE921	Improvement works to Hampson Park depot	42,600	42,600	42,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Estates Cont.</b>										
KR171	Burwell Road shops - Reroofing,	1,053	60,000	5,000	(55,000)	0	55,000	55,000	0	0	0
KR172	MSCP fire door replacement	1,551	35,000	5,000	(30,000)	0	30,000	30,000	0	0	0
KR173	Commercial - shop units roof works	1,935	125,000	50,000	(75,000)	0	75,000	75,000	0	0	0
KR174	Commercial properties - General repairs	2,541	100,000	0	(100,000)	0	100,000	100,000	0	0	0
KR175	cavendish - IT server room works	1,066	65,000	0	(65,000)	0	65,000	65,000	0	0	0
KR176	King George V Pavilion - Works to existing Fascia boards	0	20,000	0	(20,000)	0	20,000	20,000	0	0	0
KR177	Replace 1 FM Team vehicle	28,477	28,000	28,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KR178	Cavendish - generator	0	90,000	0	(90,000)	0	90,000	90,000	0	0	0
KR916	Commercial Properties Refurbishment (MRC Programme)	0	359,671	0	(359,671)	0	359,671	359,671	0	0	0
KS278	New Management Software	2,853	53,143	3,000	(50,143)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Finance &amp; Estates</b>	<b>442,308</b>	<b>2,737,244</b>	<b>867,723</b>	<b>(1,869,521)</b>	<b>557,000</b>	<b>2,376,378</b>	<b>1,819,378</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26			2026/27		
		Actual Costs	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<b>Corporate Projects, Customer Services &amp; Technology</b>										
	<b>IT General</b>										
KS268	Infrastructure Investment	89,142	273,605	125,000	(148,605)	20,650	169,255	148,605	0	0	0
KS318	Core ICT Equipment	1,210	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS320	Telephony Hardware Refresh	0	22,500	22,500	0	75,638	75,638	0	0	0	0
KS321	VDI hosting Hardware Refresh	0	11,250	11,250	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS322	Hardware Replacment Program	0	78,660	78,660	0	75,225	75,225	0	0	0	0
KS323	Hardware Replacment Program (HRA Element)	0	(37,466)	(37,466)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Growth	SBC Idox Re-Tender, and Dell Memory (RAM) for Virtual desktop	0	0	0	0	131,860	131,860	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total IT General</b>	<b>90,352</b>	<b>348,549</b>	<b>199,944</b>	<b>(148,605)</b>	<b>303,373</b>	<b>451,978</b>	<b>148,605</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Connected to Our Customer (CTOC)</b>										
KS274	New CRM Technology	0	30,273	30,273	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total CTOC</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30,273</b>	<b>30,273</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total Corporate Projects, Customer Services &amp; Technology</b>	<b>90,352</b>	<b>378,822</b>	<b>230,217</b>	<b>(148,605)</b>	<b>303,373</b>	<b>451,978</b>	<b>148,605</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Regeneration</b>										
KE506	Public Sector Hub	118,405	929,988	929,988	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE541	Railway Station MSCP BUILDINGS	(40,980)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Lease buy outs	0	379,750	379,750	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE585	Public Sector Hub Assembly	1,150	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Ring fenced Receipts Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE947	SG1 Joint Venture	961,107	3,180,108	3,180,108	0	6,169,892	6,169,892	0	0	0	0
Growth	Parkplace - works ahead of Indoor Market relocation (Boston House)	0	1,100,000	0	(1,100,000)	0	1,100,000	1,100,000	0	0	0
	Spur Road (Grant funded)	599,705	599,705	599,705	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE469	Leisure Centre (GD1) BUILDINGS	38,416	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Various	<b>Towns Fund</b>	<b>4,090,049</b>	<b>7,679,177</b>	<b>7,679,177</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16,807,174</b>	<b>16,807,174</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,335,670</b>	<b>1,335,670</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Total Regeneration</b>	<b>5,729,436</b>	<b>13,868,728</b>	<b>12,768,728</b>	<b>(1,100,000)</b>	<b>27,077,066</b>	<b>28,177,066</b>	<b>1,100,000</b>	<b>1,335,670</b>	<b>1,335,670</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Community &amp; Neighbourhoods</b>										
KC202	Fairlands Valley Park - Aqua	0	3,571	3,571	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC232	SALC and the Swim Centre Urgent and H&S Works	40,971	57,992	57,992	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC231	SALC, Swim Centre, and Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre 2019/20 Backlog H&S Works	16,615	18,216	16,615	(1,601)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC242	SLL Leisure management - end of contract capital provision	162,508	235,970	235,970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC237	Fire stopping works at SALC	850	77,819	0	(77,819)	0	77,819	77,819	0	0	0
	Pool cover (to be grant funded)	0	36,000	36,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC238	Lift replacement at SALC	775	41,599	45,000	3,401	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC240	Replacement Camera programme	4,119	40,000	40,000	0	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0
KC052	Shephalbury Park	2,584	5,600	0	(5,600)	0	5,600	5,600	0	0	0
KC236	Ridlins Athletics	0	56	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE917	Ridlins Athletics Facility	15,154	15,916	15,916	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC243	New Leisure Contract	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC245	Equipment replacement at Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre	0	31,887	0	(31,887)	0	31,887	31,887	0	0	0
KC246	Aqua Park - Rubber crumb surface replacement	0	35,000	0	(35,000)	0	35,000	35,000	0	0	0
KC247	Lighting of clock tower - permanent install	0	65,000	65,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC248	Stock condition survey Leisure sites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC250	Fire stopping at SALC	0	220,000	0	(220,000)	0	220,000	220,000	0	0	0
KC252	Lift procurement at SALC	0	160,000	0	(160,000)	0	158,200	158,200	0	0	0

## GENERAL FUND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2024/25				2025/26			2026/27		
		Actual Costs	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy	Final Capital Strategy	Q3 Capital Strategy	Variance Final vs Q3 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<b>Community &amp; Neighbourhoods (continued)</b>	0									
KC253	Sailing Centre	13,523	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC254	Ridlins Stadium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC903	Golf Course	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE118	Lighting Desk SALC - Equipmt & Tools	46,830	0	50,000	50,000	205,510	155,510	(50,000)	0	0	0
Growth	Operational Plant	0	0	0	0	105,000	105,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	CCTV Upgrade	0	0	0	0	159,900	159,900	0	0	0	0
Growth	New pumps/aerators to FVP lakes	0	0	0	0	12,000	12,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Riddlin - Bolier and Hot Water System	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Community &amp; Neighbourhoods</b>	<b>303,928</b>	<b>1,094,629</b>	<b>616,124</b>	<b>(478,505)</b>	<b>492,410</b>	<b>970,916</b>	<b>478,506</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Planning &amp; Regulatory</b>										
KC244	Community Climate Change Fund	14,677	117,578	92,083	(25,495)	97,500	122,995	25,495	0	0	0
KC916	Street Scene UKSPF	22,470	145,075	145,075	0	0	60,400	60,400	0	0	0
KC917	St Georges MSCP - conversion of store room and boiler room to office space	12,829	50,000	12,829	(37,171)	0	37,171	37,171	0	0	0
KE119	Off Street Car Parks (Multi Storey Car Parks)	529,460	444,457	529,000	84,543	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE119	Phase 4 ENPR - Forum			70,000	70,000						
KE120	Park Place Remedials	6,650	94,553	60,000	(34,553)	0	34,553	34,553	0	0	0
KE201	Hard standings	6,575	34,338	34,338	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE217	Parking Restrictions	27,924	15,000	30,000	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE470	Electric Car Charging Points (Grant funded)	33,750	30,102	33,750	3,648	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE530	Car Park Equipment - Digitalisation	723	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE531	Workplace Travel Plan	473	16,172	9,213	(6,959)	0	0	0	0	0	0
KG011	Dis.Fac. Grants GRANTS	29,925		29,925	29,925						
Growth	MSCP Lift Reinstatement	0	0	0	0	200,000	200,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Car Parks Resurfacing	0	0	0	0	140,000	140,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Car Parks - Lighting Phased Replacement (2 years)	0	0	0	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	MSCP Painting	0	0	0	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	MSCP Fire Alarm Upgrade	0	0	0	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0
Growth	Parking Restrictions	0	0	0	0	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0
KE569	Cashless on street parking transition	(81)	5,998	0	(5,998)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Planning &amp; Regulatory</b>	<b>685,374</b>	<b>953,273</b>	<b>1,046,213</b>	<b>92,940</b>	<b>552,500</b>	<b>710,119</b>	<b>157,619</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
KR911	<b>Deferred Works Reserve</b>	0	387,222	164,732	(222,490)	<b>282,000</b>	32,000	(250,000)	0	0	0

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**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Housing and Housing Development  
**Date** 12 March 2025



## **VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY AND LETTABLE STANDARD**

**LEAD OFFICERS:** DENISE LEWIS / ANDREW GARSIDE  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** DENISE LEWIS  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** LORI SMITH

### **KEY DECISION**

#### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To present a new Void Management Policy and revised Lettable Standard for approval.
- 1.2 To meet good practice and promote transparency within the Council it is important that a Policy is in place that outlines how Void properties are managed. There is no existing policy. There is a Void management guide published October 2015.
- 1.3 The key objective of the Void Management Policy is to outline how the council manages properties within the housing stock when they become vacant. The Lettable Standard will manage future tenant's expectations of their new home and to ensure consistency in the standard of properties when they are relet which reflects regulatory and legal obligations.
- 1.4 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 the Cabinet approve the new Void Management Policy (Appendix A) and revised Lettable Standard (Appendix B).

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The management of empty homes (voids) is an important service provided by a social landlord. In conjunction with a Lettable Standard the Council provides the platform for those with a housing need to obtain a tenancy and maintain a suitable home, improving quality of life and the overall level of satisfaction with their new home and SBC as a landlord.
- 3.2 The provision of good quality council housing is one of the Council's key priorities; with social housing supply reaching crisis levels across the UK, the effective turnaround of void properties through a fit for purpose voids service is an essential part of maintaining and improving housing supply. Maximising rental income and reducing maintenance costs are essential in achieving these objectives.
- 3.3 The Council manages approximately 7,900 homes of which approximately 5.6% become vacant each year.
- 3.4 Following issues with the capacity and performance of the in-house voids team in 2022/23, a backlog of works to around 100 voids had been generated by early 2023. This was in part due to the aftereffects of the Covid-19 pandemic, material supply delays and significant recruitment challenges, where service capacity dropped below 50%.
- 3.5 Due to these challenges, it was agreed that works to voids properties should be outsourced to a contractor and various interim contractor arrangements have been in place since early 2023.
- 3.6 An independent expert review of the voids service was commissioned through Ridge and Partners, a built environment consultancy practice, in Q1 of 2023/24. The review considered the various issues which the service had experienced and identified key areas for improvement.
- 3.7 In October 2024 a report to Cabinet set out a proposed future delivery model for voids based on a hybrid approach, a core internal team supported by contractors, which was agreed in principle. The report also provided an update on progress with implementation of the voids improvement plan. A transition from the current 100% contractor delivery model is being implemented with the procurement of support contractors in progress – a report seeking delegated authority to award the associated contracts was included on the Cabinet agenda in February 2025.

#### **Stakeholder engagement**

- 3.8 Tenant consultation on the Void Management Policy and revised Lettable Standard commenced in May 2024. The Lettable Standard Survey is ongoing and has targeted tenants who started a new tenancy in the last 12 months.
- 3.9 During 2022/23 the Council's Community Select Committee (CSC) undertook a scrutiny review of voids management. The scope of the review was to look at the issues facing the Housing Property Services teams in managing the end-to-end voids process and to identify ways to improve the time taken to carry out works and relet properties.



- 3.10 The outcomes were incorporated in a voids improvement programme which includes an action to introduce a Void Management Policy and a revised Lettable Standard, which sets out clear roles and responsibilities of the Council and clearly manages Tenants expectations.
- 3.11 An internal agreement is in place between Housing Asset Management Decent Homes Programme Managers and the Empty Homes Team to deliver decent homes work to void properties using recently procured contracts.

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

- 4.1 The draft Voids Management Policy is attached at Appendix A and the revised Lettable Standard is attached at Appendix B.
- 4.2 As a Registered Provider, the Council is required to meet a range of legal and regulatory obligations. To ensure good practice is met there is a need to have a suitable level of oversight, awareness and understanding of key issues and responsibilities of maintaining good quality homes for the allocation of properties.
- 4.3 The development of this policy and the revised lettable standard supports this approach and will form part of the strategic framework which will ensure that homes are well managed and maintained, whilst managing expectations for new and transferring tenants of their new home.

#### **5 IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 The implications of the policy have been reflected in the development of the current HRA Business Plan, MTFS and 2025/26 approved budget. However, the ongoing application of this policy will be used to inform development of future budget requirements and will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect any other legislative or service-related pressures.
- 5.1.2 The implementation of this policy will aid in assessing and maintaining the condition of the Councils housing stock and managing costs associated with void properties. It will also support actions being taken to reduce void turnaround times and the related rent loss.

##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

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

##### **5.3 Risk Implications**

- 5.3.1 There is significant reputational risk if the Council does not provide good quality homes to those with a housing need. This policy and monitoring of the policy will allow for this risk to be mitigated. It is essential to ensure the policy and lettable standard are appropriately embedded into working

practices. To ensure effective implementation both will need to be underpinned by supporting procedures and associated training for staff.

- 5.3.2 The risks are mitigated by the tracking of performance against key performance indicators (KPI's) and ensuring the Lettable Standard is achieved resulting in Tenant satisfaction.

#### **5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.4.1 Equality and Diversity implications are monitored and evaluated within the delivery of the service. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and is attached at Appendix C. This will be updated in line with the review process for this policy.
- 5.4.2 The EqIA has not identified any negative impacts on any groups with protected characteristics with positive implications for older people, people with a disability and socio-economic groups.

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1: Void process map.
- BD2: SBC Current Lettable Standard.
- BD3: Lettable Standard Survey consultation responses.

#### **APPENDICES**

- A: New Void Management Policy.
- B: Revised Lettable Standard.
- C: EQIA.

# Voids Management Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

[2025]

<b>Date created</b>	June 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Owner</b>	Denise Lewis (Assistant Director Building Safety and Housing Property Services)
<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Author</b>	Lori Smith (Empty Homes Manager)
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Building Safety and Housing Property Services: Housing Asset Management
<b>Policy Review Date</b>	June 2026
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Date</b>	April 2024 (reviewed February 2025)

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

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy is to outline how the council manages residential properties within the housing stock when they become vacant. Residential properties will become vacant when a tenancy has been terminated. Vacant properties are referred to as “empty homes” or “voids”. The policy will keep in line with the ‘Making Stevenage Even Better’ corporate plan priority of maintaining good quality homes for the allocation of housing under the council’s statutory duties.
- 1.2 The Voids Management Policy outlines Stevenage Borough Council’s approach to managing void properties to:
- Minimise loss of rental income by reducing the length of time a property remains empty with no tenancy attached; whilst still ensuring the property is repaired to an agreed standard.
  - Provide clear expectations to outgoing tenants about how a property should be left when the tenancy ends.
  - Provide clear expectations for contractors and also incoming tenants on the Council’s Lettable Standard.
  - Monitor void management performance.
  - Monitor customer satisfaction of incoming tenants with their new home.
  - Ensure value for money is delivered in carrying out works to void properties.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 The Head of Housing Asset Management is responsible for:
- The effective implementation and delivery of the policy.
  - Monitoring performance and delivery.
  - Reviewing the policy.
  - Developing processes and procedures in line with the policy.
  - Ensuring that the policy aims and terms are adhered to.

The policy will be administered by the following teams: Empty Homes, Voids and the relevant contractors or direct labour operatives.

This policy will impact tenants of SBC, applicants for social housing in Stevenage, Staff and Councillors.

2.2 This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement Conditions
- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Housing Allocation Policy
- Aids & Adaptations Policy
- Under Occupation Policy
- Local Lettings plan – Independent Living
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy – rechargeable repairs
- Damp & Mould Policy

This policy supports the council's corporate priorities, which are set out in [Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Even Better \(2024-2029\)](#)

In particular: Maintaining Good Quality Homes

### 3. Legal Framework

3.1 This Policy will ensure compliance with the following legislation and regulatory standards and promote good practice:

- Housing Act 1985
- Equality Act 2010
- Homelessness Act 1996
- Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Localism Act 2011
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018 Approved Code of Practice and guidance
- British Standard 7671 As Amended (Electrical Installations)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Decent Homes Standard
- Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) and the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards (effective from April 2024)

3.2 The Council as the landlord is committed to providing good quality homes in line with the [Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards](#). As a Registered Provider the Council will ensure that void properties meet the required outcomes of the safety and quality standard particularly with regards to the following:

- Stock Quality – through a survey of condition prior to and after the property becomes void (and carrying out any works identified to meet the Lettable Standard) will ensure the Council has an accurate, up to date and evidenced understanding of the condition of their homes which can reliably inform provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants.

- Decency – through surveys and associated works to meet the Lettable Standard will ensure that prior to reletting void properties meet and/or continue to be maintained to at least the Decent Homes Standard. The Lettable Standard is consistent with the Decent Homes Standard.
- Health and Safety - take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas. When properties are void surveys undertaken will identify and assess any Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) related hazards, for example damp and mould, and enable action to be taken to remove and/or mitigate these risks to ensure that tenants are safe in their homes. All health and safety related compliance checks will also be undertaken including in relation to gas, electrical, asbestos, fire, water (and lift safety as appropriate) given the property type and location.
- Repairs, maintenance and planned improvements – any repairs and maintenance required will be undertaken as necessary as part of works to meet the Lettable Standard. Where any are to be completed after reletting details will be provided to the new tenant as part of the tenancy sign-up process. Where, based on stock condition survey data, any components, for example kitchen, bathroom or heating, are due for renewal as part of a current or future planned programme this information will be shared with the tenants as far as known. If based on their current condition a component requires renewal whilst the property is void this would need to be agreed separately by the relevant Manager within the Housing Asset Management team.
- Adaptations – where the pre-void surveys identify that the property has been adapted to meet the needs of person(s) with a disability these will be noted and retained to enable the property to be matched to a suitable applicant.

## 4. Equalities

- 4.1 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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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/data-protection-act).

## 6. Policy

### 6.1.1 Tenancy Termination:

Tenants or Next of kin must end a tenancy in accordance with the ending a tenancy guide: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/your-tenancy/ending-your-tenancy> or [Death of a Council Tenant \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/death-of-a-council-tenant)

- How to end the tenancy
- Responsibilities
- What you need to do before you leave
- After you leave

On receiving written notice the Council will conduct a pre-void visit before the tenancy is terminated to inspect the condition of the property. Outgoing tenants will be asked to sign a 'pre-void property inspection form' during this visit. This form will be taken as an agreement that they will adhere to the following conditions set out in the leaving standard:

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/your-tenancy/ending-your-tenancy/advice-on-how-your-property-should-be-left>

There will be opportunity for remedial repairs to take place during the notice period where reasonable and appropriate. It will be the tenant or next of kin's full responsibility to leave the property, garden and outbuildings empty and clear of all items and rubbish. Anything that is left incomplete will be registered as a rechargeable repair.

If elements of a property are considered to have been damaged deliberately or through negligence by the tenant or their household, or unauthorised alterations have been found, the outgoing tenant will be responsible for making good to an approved standard or they will need to agree to any recharges before they can move.

If damage or unauthorised alterations are not visible at the pre-void inspection but are later identified, the outgoing tenant will be notified and recharged.

If a tenant is known to have a disability or vulnerabilities, then recharges may be waived in certain circumstances as set out in the Council's Repairs and Maintenance Policy.



**\*\*Repairs policy link to be added\*\***

Former tenants who feel they have been recharged unfairly have the right to appeal. They must do so in writing, addressing it to the Former Tenant Arrears Advisor who will investigate the matter. The final decision on whether charges should apply will be communicated to the former tenant of the property in writing.

Temporary accommodation terminations will be managed by the Temporary accommodation team. The termination of the occupation agreement will be based on rehousing, abandonment, or eviction. Once the property is vacant the property will be handed over to the Empty Homes team if extensive void works are required.

#### 6.1.2 Void Repairs:

Once the tenant has vacated, the tenancy terminated and keys handed back to the council, the Council will inspect all void properties and scope works required to meet the lettable standard. Asbestos reports will be obtained from the in-house team and any relevant asbestos removal will be carried out. Void properties will be cross referenced against the stock condition survey data and planned works programmes with the relevant teams to make the most cost-effective use of resources. Full stock condition surveys will be carried out to all void properties and ensure updated data is captured to help inform future investment requirements. Works orders will be raised with the contractors or in-house team for repairs to begin with the agreed KPIs. The Council will carry out works in progress visits to inspect standards of work and health and safety compliance of contractors.

All void properties must pass a gas and electrical check with the relevant certificates obtained. A copy of these will be given to the new tenant as part of the sign-up process along with an asbestos survey, a valid EPC and fire safety related information. Any major works or health and safety works that would cause a high level of disruption to tenants or put their safety at risk, will be completed prior to the start of the new tenancy. Minor repairs may take place after the new tenancy has started, this will be communicated to the tenant during the sign-up process and a date to be confirmed by the Empty Homes Team. Any property that requires extensive major works maybe taken out of management to be reviewed by the Head of Housing Asset Management.

Once all repair work to a void property has been completed the property will be post inspected by the Empty Homes Surveyors to ensure the property meets the Council's Lettable standard.

**\*\*link here for lettable standard once approved\*\***

#### 6.1.3 New Tenancies

When a property is put on notice before termination it will be offered in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/housing/allocations/housing-allocations-policy.pdf>

New tenants will be offered a viewing and given progress updates where available and safe to do so. Once the property is ready to let the new tenants will be contacted to arrange the viewing and sign up. A copy of the lettable standard will be issued and anything that is not deemed to meet these will be reported by the tenant. New tenants will be given the opportunity to feed back their satisfaction with the lettings process including the condition of the property through the satisfaction survey issued within the first 2 weeks of their new tenancy.

Temporary accommodation sign up for occupation agreements will be managed separately by the temporary accommodation team.

#### 6.1.4 Targets for Void properties (key to key)

The council will work to target timescales in managing void properties to make sure that the key to key process is as efficient as possible and the property is re-let within the shortest possible timescales. Each stage of the void path will have a set target that will be recorded and monitored within the housing management system.

Internal monitoring and reporting will be conducted to check the progress of all void properties against the target times for the key to key process. The reporting will be used to identify reasons behind any delays in each stage of the process and to resolve any common occurrences that are within the Councils control. Targets have been set for the following void paths based on the extent of works required:

Key to Key KPIS:

- General Needs (GN) Standard 28 days (inc 6 days for letting)
- GN Major 56 days (inc 6 days for letting)
- Sheltered Housing (SH) Standard 66 days (inc 44 days for letting)
- SH Major 94 days (inc 44 days for letting)
- Temporary Accommodation (TA) 10 days key to key

## 7. Consultation

7.1 The following stakeholder consultation has been undertaken to inform this policy:

- Staff involved in the key-to-key process – Pulse staff survey.
- The Policy content has been written based on scrutiny reviews of the Repairs and Void Service by the Community Select Committee.
- On going Lettable Standard Survey is available for Tenants that have moved in over the past 12 months to capture trends to improve the service.

- 7.2 As part of the implementation of this policy, we will actively seek feedback from tenants on the operation of this policy and provide feedback on how we have taken this on board when reviewing this policy.

## 8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Business Unit's Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years (see page 1 for details of Business Unit) or earlier if there is a change in legislation 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 other appropriate decision-making body.
- 8.2 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 or Service Manager will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

## 9. References and Resources

### Internal:

- Tenancy Policy and Tenancy Agreement Conditions
- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Housing Allocation Policy
- Aids & Adaptations Policy
- Under Occupation Policy
- Local Lettings plan – Independent Living
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy – rechargeable repairs
- Damp & Mould Policy
- Stevenage Standard
- Lettable Standard
- [Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Even Better \(2024-2027\)](#)

### External:

- [Housing Act 1985](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Housing Act 1996](#)
- [Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\)](#)
- [Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012](#)
- [Social Housing Regulation Act \(2023\)](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982](#)

- [Gas Safety \(Installation and Use\) Regulations 1998 \(GSIUR\) as amended 2018 Approved Code of Practice and guidance](#)
- [British Standard 7671 As Amended \(Electrical Installations\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR](#)
- [Decent Homes Standards](#)

## 10. Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EPC	Energy performance certificate
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
KPIs	Key performance indicators
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council

## 11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

## 12. Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
April 2024	Creation	Lori Smith
April 2026	Review of policy	Lori Smith



## Lettable Standard

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) have agreed a lettable standard that empty properties must meet before they are let. This is a guide to give you (the new tenant) an idea of the expected minimum property condition as set out in the specification below.

**About your home:** The majority of SBC's properties were built in the immediate post second world war years up to the 1960s with some newer properties being completed in recent years. Housing designs have changed throughout the years and lay out and size may vary over each area of the town.

**The council's responsibilities:** To provide you (the new tenant) with a home:

- That is safe, warm and of the required quality to be compliant with the latest legislation and regulatory standards.
- With all certifications on sign up to confirm that all the relevant work has taken place: Asbestos survey, Gas and Electrical Checks and fire risk assessments, water risk assessments and lift safety checks where appropriate, EPC (energy performance certificate).
- With Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Alarms fitted and tested.
- That are modern in terms of decent homes\* standards.
- That any outstanding repairs to the property that could pose a risk to health and safety will be identified and resolved before the property is ready to let.

**The new tenant's responsibilities:**

- **Decoration:** Your new home may not be decorated to your taste but it will be let to you ready to be decorated. The council may provide a decorating voucher when you move into your new home, however it is your responsibility to decorate the property (unless you are moving into Independent Living accommodation, which will be decorated where necessary).
- **Carpets/flooring:** The kitchen and bathroom/ wc will be fitted with standard non slip flooring. The Council will not provide carpets or flooring as standard in other rooms. In some instances where carpet or flooring in good condition has been left by the previous tenant or provided by the Council you will be required to sign for this as a gift taking full responsibility for repairs, disposal and replacement.
- **White goods and furniture:** The Council will not provide any furnishings for your home as standard. In some instances where furnishings have been provided you will be required to sign for this as a gift taking full responsibility for repairs, disposal and replacement. Any electrical goods will have had the relevant safety tests.
- **Removal costs:** Moving home and the costs involved.

- **Minor repairs & maintenance:** You are responsible for the repair and maintenance of some items within your home. These are listed in your Tenancy Agreement and the Repairs and Maintenance Policy a copy of which can be found on the Council's website. **\*\*LINK TO BE ADDED ONCE PUBLISHED\*\*** These include toilet seats, tap washers and chains, and plugs for sinks, baths, and basins.
- **Appliances:** Please note it is your responsibility to arrange for appliances to be connected by a qualified engineer.

# Lettable Standard Specification

## Kitchen

### Kitchen units:

- All doors and drawers secure and fully operational
- All units and worktops should be clean, have tiled splash backs, be sound and sealed. Worktops should be replaced if damaged.

### Sink:

- Sinks to be clean and free of rust and stains with no leaks and free flowing waste. Plugs and chains to be secure.
- Taps to be clean, easy to operate, marked hot and cold and drip free.
- Two rows of tiles or similar splash-back to be provided on the walls above the work surface and sink and be in clean condition, secure with no cracks.

### Cooker points:

- Gas: clean and capped off with bayonet removed, ready for cooker to be fitted by a Gas Safe engineer.
- Electric: power point supplied and clean, ready for cooker to be installed.

### Plumbing:

- Plumbing for washing machine to be provided.
- Valves and waste connections should be left ready for use.
- Hot and cold valves clean and easy to open and close. Valves to be drip free and marked hot and cold. Waste pipe to be secure and drip-free.

### Acceptable standard



### Unacceptable standard



## Bathroom / WC

**Bath:**

- The bath panel and shower will be clean, secure, free from chips and sealed where bath edges meet the tiling. The plug and chain to be secure. There shall be no leaks with free-flowing waste.

**Toilet pan/seat/cistern:**

- To be secure, clean and easy to flush with a new seat.

**Wash hand basin:**

- To be provided in each WC. Basins to be secure, free from chips and provided with a plug and secure chain. There shall be no leaks and free flowing waste.

**Taps:**

- To be secure, clean, easy to operate, drip free and marked hot and cold.

**Tiles:**

- Two rows of tiles or similar splashback to be provided above the wash hand basin and three rows of tiles above the bath. Tiling to be clean, intact, with no cracks. Grout to be renewed where necessary.

**Extractor fans and duct cover:**

- To be cleaned and free of dirt and dust.

**Shower:**

- Showers will be left in place only where serviceable.

**Acceptable standard**



**Unacceptable standard**



**Staircase and handrails**

- There should be at least one handrail per staircase. Handrails, steps, balustrades, Newell posts and treads to be securely fitted. The gap between balustrades will be no wider than 100 mm.

**Acceptable standard**

**Unacceptable standard**





## Windows and doors

### Doors:

- All doors both internal and external will be in good working order with the ability to open and close easily. New locks will be fitted to all external dwelling doors.
- Front doors to flats must be fitted with a fire door compliant with the British Standard, and if a letterbox is provided this must comply with current building regulations i.e. provided with fire resistant seals.

### Windows:

- Security locks to be provided to windows on the ground floor.
- Glazing must be intact and secure with any broken windows to be replaced.
- Windows must be easy to open and close and safety catches operational.
- Window restrictors to be fitted to all casements above ground floor level. Keys to be available at the time of letting.

### Acceptable standard



### Unacceptable standard



## Flooring

- Non slip vinyl flooring fitted in kitchen and bathroom / WC - This will be clean, intact, secure, level and free of trip or slip hazards.
- All other floors and skirting boards will be clean, secure, free of rot and loose nails.

- Any loose floors boards / skirting will be fixed or replaced as necessary.

**Acceptable standard**



**Unacceptable standard**



**Walls and ceilings**

**Walls:**

- To be in sound condition, free from damp and mould, graffiti, large cracks, loose plaster, bulges and holes.
- Wallpaper will be left if in good condition.

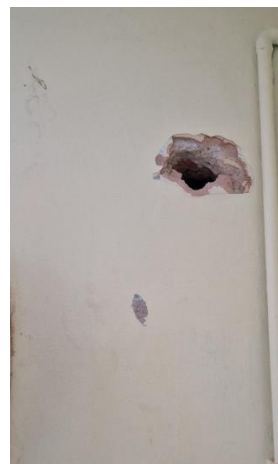
**Ceilings:**

- Polystyrene tiles to be removed from property (including residue paste) and surfaces made good.
- Any mould growth to wall or ceiling surfaces will be treated with a fungicidal wash, leaving the surface ready for decoration.

**Acceptable standard**



**Unacceptable standard**



**Gas**

- The gas system will be tested and a copy of the Landlord's Gas Safety Record Certificate will be provided. The boiler, radiators, thermostat and timer to be in good working order, where possible manuals will be issue. Hardwired carbon monoxide detectors will be installed.

**Acceptable standard**



**Unacceptable standard**



**Electric**

- All electrical fittings will be tested to comply with the current safety regulations (NICEIC). All wiring, fuse boards, sockets, switches, heaters and light fittings to be in good working order. An electrical safety certificate will be provided. Hardwired smoke and heat detectors will be installed.

**Acceptable standard**



**Unacceptable standard**



**Outside space**

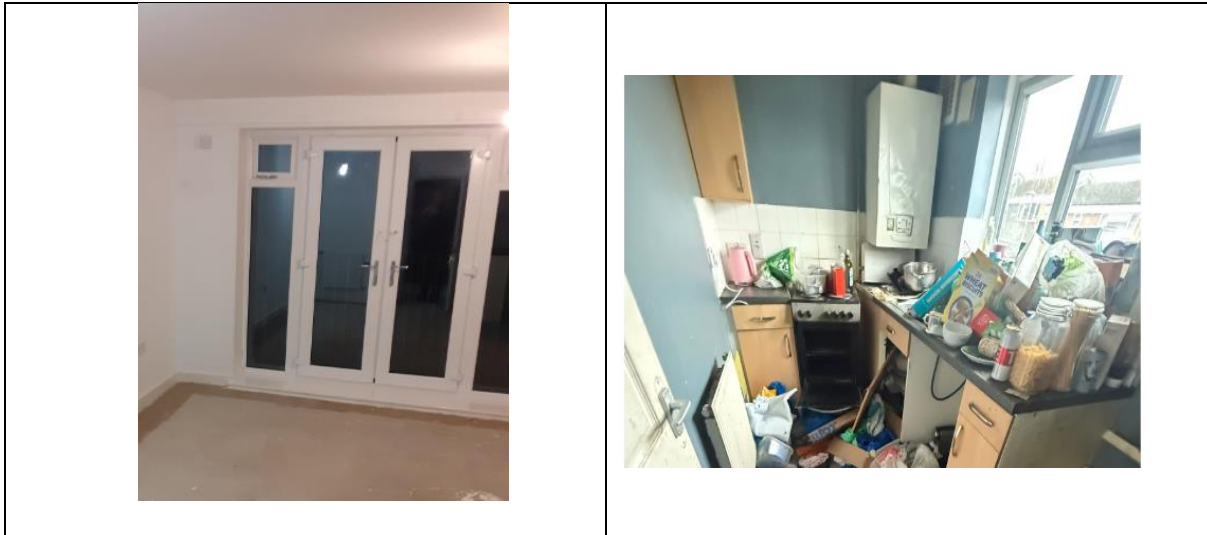
**Gardens:**

- Gardens and outside areas will be tidy and not overgrown and free from waste.
- Footpaths, ramps, external steps and driveways will be checked for trip hazards and repaired as necessary.
- All non-standard dangerous and dilapidated structures such as sheds and greenhouses will be demolished and removed.
- Fencing and gates repaired or replaced, like for like, if repairs cannot be carried out.
- Boundary walls repaired if needed and left safe

**Building:**

- Guttering and down pipes fixed and connected.
- Drains and gullies free from blockages and gully grates fixed.
- Roof will be watertight and any damaged/missing slates/tiles replaced.

Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
	
<b>Adaptations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor grab rails and the like are not to be removed and are to be left in good working order ensuring they are safe to use.</li> <li>• All other aids and adaptations shall be left in place and left in full working order and ready to use unless instructed otherwise whilst the property is void.</li> </ul>	
Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard
	
<b>Cleaning</b>	
<b>Cleaning:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties will be in a clean and presentable condition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean kitchen units and worktops.</li> <li>• Wash down all paintwork.</li> <li>• Clean windows (internally).</li> <li>• Clean and disinfect sinks, toilets, baths and wash hand basins.</li> <li>• Sweep and clean all floors.</li> <li>• Clear of rubbish from the property including gardens, outbuildings and communal areas</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Acceptable standard	Unacceptable standard



Please take some time to read the lettable standards above and if there is anything in your new home that does not meet these standards, you can **report any issues by:**

**Email:** [cscrepairs@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:cscrepairs@stevenage.gov.uk) or **Telephone:** 01438 242 666

Please note that works relating to the lettable standard should be reported within **the first week of your new tenancy**. Later repairs will be dealt with by the repairs team:

**Repairs are categorised as follows:**

**Emergency-** between 8am - 6pm, 7 days a week with target to attend within 24 hours.

**Urgent-** 8am – 6pm with target to attend within 7 days.

**Routine-** 8am- 6pm allow up to 20 working days.

**Chargeable repairs**

The Council will charge you for any repairs that are not a landlord responsibility (e.g. changing the locks because of lost keys) or which have been caused by wilful or accidental damage.

<b>Tenants Name:</b>		<b>Tenancy Start Date:</b>	
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<b>Property Address:</b>	
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**On signing for the above tenancy I understand the following:-**

- It is my responsibly to inform Stevenage Borough Council within the first week of the tenancy start date of any works that have not been completed in line with the above lettable standard.
- Stevenage Borough Council will not do any additional works outside of the lettable standard.

- Stevenage Borough Council reserve the right in some instances not to complete any repairs except emergency repairs or to maintain the property wind and weather proof within the first 6 months of my tenancy when related to tenant abuse.
- Stevenage Borough Council reserves the right to carry out some non-Health and Safety works and non-statutory obligations works after you have moved in.

**Tenants  
Signature:**

**Date:**

*\* Please note that decent homes elements including kitchens, bathrooms, heating and windows/doors are on a programme and will be replaced when due. Subject to material availability the Council would wish to give tenants an opportunity to make a style choice where appropriate.*

Estimated time taken to complete: 2 hours\*

\*Please note that this should be a working document, compiled throughout the creation of the linked project



Void Management Policy

# Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

April 2024 – April 2026

<b>Date created</b>	April 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Owner</b>	Denise Lewis – Assistant Director Building Safety and Housing Property Services
<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Author</b>	Lori Smith – Empty Homes Manager
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Building Safety and Housing Property Services: Housing Asset Management

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).

# 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>		<b>Voids Management Policy – Residential Properties</b>			
Lead Assessor	Lori Smith, Empty Homes Manager, Stevenage Borough Council			Assessment team	Claire Warren, Empty Homes Coordinator, Stevenage Borough Council
Start date	April 2024 (reviewed Feb 2025)	End date	April 2026		Andrew Garside, Head of Housing Asset Management, Stevenage Borough Council.
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	April 2026				Lynne Huggins, Programme Manager, Stevenage Borough Council.

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospective tenants</li> <li>• Current tenants</li> <li>• Staff at Stevenage Borough Council</li> </ul>
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detail the approach to the management of void properties to be relet.</li> <li>• Ensure that our customers are treated in a fair and consistent way.</li> <li>• Focus on working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders ensuring that a safe, warm and healthy home is provided.</li> <li>• Ensure that homes are relet in a condition which meets the lettable standard and the internal environment is safe, warm and free from hazards and the fabric of the property is protected from damage.</li> <li>• Comply with statutory and regulatory requirements and good practice where applicable.</li> <li>• Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to offer value for money.</li> <li>• Minimise rent loss.</li> </ul>



What **positive measures** are in place (if any) to help **fulfil our legislative duties** to:

Remove discrimination & harassment	Ensuring all are treated fairly and in a consistent way.	Promote equal opportunities	Demonstrating what level of service and standards can be expected from the council for all incoming tenants.	Encourage good relations	Delivering to an agreed Lettable Standard will build confidence with tenants. Encourage partnership working internally and externally
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Housing and Planning Act 1985</p> <p>Equality Act 2010</p> <p>Homelessness Act 1996</p> <p>Housing Health and Safety Rating System (defined within the Housing Act 2004)</p> <p>Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012</p> <p>NEC – Housing management internal system</p> <p>Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024</p>
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>It is important that, as a Local Authority, the impact this Policy may have on people moving into a property owned by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) is monitored and assessed to ensure that there is no indirect, or direct, discrimination, contrary to the public sector equality duty. SBC are morally and legally accountable for ensuring homes are maintained to a standard and ensuring that doesn't put any individuals or marginalised groups at a disadvantage.</p> <p>It is understood there is a proportion of customers who will be considered vulnerable. In these instances, SBC will make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis to support them as best as</p>
--	---

	possible. Refresher training and raising awareness to staff on Equality Act 2010 will help promote equality and inclusion overall going forward.
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## Evidence and Impact Assessment

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

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Age					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	This policy will ensure any vulnerabilities linked to age will be considered when detailing the lettable standard for Housing for older people (independent living / flexi care schemes). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lettable standard (including decoration for Housing for older people (independent living / flexi care schemes).</li> </ul> Others going into general needs properties will be supplied with decorating vouchers.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promotion of ILS / flexi schemes as properties that are decorated to a good standard.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A		

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>This policy will ensure any vulnerabilities linked to disabilities will be considered in line with the aids and adaptations policy:</p> <p>The Council has a specific policy relating to Aids and Adaptations, which is available online - <a href="https://www.stevenage.gov.uk">Aids and Adaptations Policy (stevenage.gov.uk)</a>.</p> <p>SBC have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Disability  <a href="https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243">https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</a></p> <p>2021 Census Profile:  <a href="https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true">https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</a>  <a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/">https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/</a> - latest changes in Stevenage.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	To ensure the policy is clear and transparent, ensuring all disabled tenants receive equitable treatment and service.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impact – this is not something that we assess or discriminate against in the management of empty homes.				

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

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
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		

Pregnancy & Maternity					
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		

### Race

Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/AN	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in the management of empty homes.				
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	

### Religion or Belief

Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in the management of empty homes.				
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	

### Sex

Positive impact	N/A	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
-----------------	-----	-----------------	-----	----------------	-----

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in the management of empty homes.		
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

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<b>Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual</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	Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in the management of empty homes.				
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>Socio-economic<sup>1</sup></b> <b>e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement</b>					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	

<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.

<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>Each property provided by SBC will not differ in standard. Decorating vouchers are provided to every general needs property if redecoration has not already been carried out by contractors/in-house team. Issuing decorating vouchers will significantly help those with lower socio-economic status.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account -Herts Insight Economy, Work &amp; Education Profile</p> <p><a href="https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/herts-insight/topics/economy-work-and-education.aspx">https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/herts-insight/topics/economy-work-and-education.aspx</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/">https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/</a> - latest changes in Stevenage</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Additional Considerations</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts</p>					
<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>Negative impact</p>		<p>Unequal impact</p>	
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>					
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>			<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>		

## Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

<p>Staff?</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Residents?</p>	<p>TBD</p>
---------------	------------	-------------------	------------

Voluntary & community sector?	TBD	Partners?	N/A
Other stakeholders?	TBD		

## Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

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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 EqIA demonstrates the proposed policy is robust and there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. All opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
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?
Equality Act 2010 Training for staff	Ensure staff have refresher training on act to ensure equality is promoted.	Andrew Garside		On-going training review

Approved by Assistant Director: Denise Lewis

Date: February 2025



**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Housing and Housing Development  
**Date** 12 March 2025



## AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

**LEAD OFFICERS:** DENISE LEWIS / ANDREW GARSIDE  
**CONTACT OFFICER:** DENISE LEWIS  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** MICHELLE UPCHURCH / KEITH PEIRSON

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of an updated version of the Aids and Adaptations Policy following a review and consultation with tenants.
- 1.2 The key objective of the policy is to support tenants, while providing assurance that the Council is fulfilling its legal and regulatory obligations.
- 1.3 This policy supports Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024-2029 key priority of maintaining good quality homes.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the outcomes from the consultation with tenants on the Aids and Adaptations Policy and how these have been reflected in the final version attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 That Cabinet note that the Policy will become effective from 1 April 2025 and will be publicised on the Council's website. This policy will replace the previous version from 2020.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approves the updated Aids and Adaptations Policy.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

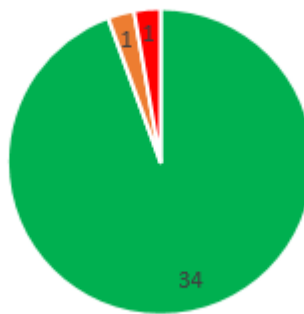
- 3.1 The Council is obligated to meet a variety of regulatory and legislative responsibilities, including those under the Equalities legislation, and The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards. To effectively fulfil these duties, it is essential to maintain a high level of oversight, awareness, and understanding of key issues related to aids and adaptations.
- 3.2 The Council has a legal duty to provide reasonable adaptations to support residents to live independently within their homes. This service is highly valued and plays a crucial role in enhancing tenants' quality of life. Over the years, demand for this service has steadily increased. Coupled with the challenges posed by the pandemic and staff shortages, this surge in demand has resulted in a backlog of cases.
- 3.3 To address the backlog work is underway to strengthen working relationships with other internal teams to facilitate the implementation of the updated policy. In line with the Allocations Policy 2023 this will help match adapted properties to prospective tenants and in line with the Downsizing Policy encourage moves to more suitably sized properties and/or independent living schemes, where appropriate support can be provided.
- 3.4 A contract is being procured by the Aids and Adaptations teams to carry out bathroom, kitchen, and some external works, with the goal of addressing the historic backlog of cases during 2025/26. This initiative is expected to significantly reduce waiting times for tenants, while also freeing up valuable time for surveyors to focus on more complex cases and help deliver this policy successfully.
- 3.5 Despite challenges with recruitment, the service has continued to deliver essential works for tenants. The council completed 505 works order in 2023/24 and reported the following KPI's:
- 70% (351) of 505 works orders were completed on time.
- 3.6 Permanent recruitment into the Project Manager post was successfully completed in December 2024. Since then, significant progress has been made in streamlining project workflows and improving overall service delivery. The new Project Manager has played a key role in addressing the backlog, enhancing coordination across internal teams, and ensuring that projects are completed in a timely and efficient manner. This appointment has also contributed to strengthening communication with tenants, ensuring their needs are met more effectively, and facilitating quicker response times for necessary adaptations.
- 3.7 As part of the review of the Policy, the results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) surveys for 2023-2024 were analysed for references to the Aids and Adaptations service. Within the TSM's, Aids and Adaptations was cited by 12 tenants out of the 1,000 approached as a reason for their overall satisfaction. Of these, 50% provided positive feedback. However, among those who mentioned Aids and Adaptations in the free-text responses and expressed dissatisfaction with the overall service provided by Stevenage Borough Council as a landlord, the primary concerns were delays and communication issues. This policy aims to address these challenges by

implementing clear guidelines on timescales, which should help improve service delivery and potentially lead to greater satisfaction.

3.8 Ongoing satisfaction is measured through satisfaction surveys conducted with tenants following the completion of adaptation work. Survey responses and results for the last year are illustrated below:

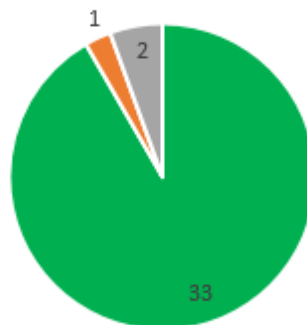
Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Total
10	4	1	1	2	-	-	-	7	3	2	1	5	36

Overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you have received?



■ Very Satisfied ■ Fairly Satisfied ■ Very dissatisfied

Over all how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of work carried out?



■ Very satisfied ■ Fairly Satisfied ■ Neither

3.9 A further service user consultation was conducted from December 2024 to January 2025. This consultation targeted tenants and users of the Aids and Adaptations service including those who were waiting for aids and adaptations and those who had works completed in last 12 months. The consultation was also expanded to include health professionals involved in the service, ensuring a broad range of perspectives were considered.

- 3.10 In response to those who expressed an interest in participating in a focus group, the Resident Liaison team is assisting in structuring a new focus group for the service.
- 3.11 In response to the RSH feedback from the inspection carried out in September 2024 around the Council ensuring that it understands who resides in its properties and how this information is used, steps were taken to engage directly with tenants affected by the proposed changes within the policy. This consultation process has ensured that tenants are well-informed about the aspects of the policy that matter most to them, helping to tailor the Council's approach to better meet their needs and expectations.
- 3.12 The Aids and Adaptations team has developed an Improvement Plan, and the related projects will be planned and delivered in collaboration with colleagues from Housing IT and Transformation to streamline the service and enhance data management.

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

- 4.1 The final version of the updated Aids and Adaptations Policy is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 The updated policy has been reviewed having considered the feedback from service users and relevant legislation.
- 4.3 There are no significant changes proposed to the policy, however the main revisions include:
  - a. Detailed measures on how the council will meet legal requirements.
  - b. Clearer guidelines on what is considered when reviewing requests for adaptations to council properties, improving transparency on decision-making process for tenants.
  - c. Implementation of clear guidelines on timescales tenants should expect in relation to types of work recommended.
- 4.4 This policy aligns with the Allocations Policy 2023, which aims to match customers with suitable accommodation.
- 4.5 Where a property is underoccupied, tenants will be encouraged to downsize in accordance with our Downsizing Policy. This policy also provides support to facilitate the move, including financial compensation for each room surrendered and assistance with moving costs.
- 4.6 Similarly, where a tenant requires additional support that can be more effectively provided through a move to one of our Independent Living Schemes, they will be encouraged and assisted in taking up this opportunity.
- 4.7 The Executive Housing Working Group (EHWG) considered the draft policy on the 26 June 2024 and endorsed the proposed approach to consultation.
- 4.8 The draft updated policy was shared for further consultation to gather the views of tenants and service users, which took place between December 2024 and January 2025. A variety of consultation methods, including an

online form, paper form, and QR code, were used to ensure residents could engage with the Council in a way that best suited them.

- 4.9 From the consultation with 594 users, 131 responses (22%) were received. An overwhelming majority of residents expressed support for the Council's policy. Out of the 106 tenants who completed the survey, 38 indicated their willingness to participate in a focus group to provide further input on shaping our Aids and Adaptations service.

Additional details on the consultation results can be found in **Background Document (BD1)** or on the council's website under the Resident Voice page: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/resident-voice>

- 4.10 Based on the consultation feedback received no alterations were required to be made to the policy.
- 4.11 Communication regarding waiting times, delays, or the decision-making process related to adaptations will be improved ensuring transparency and clear guidelines which will help mitigate dissatisfaction.
- 4.12 The Aids and Adaptations Policy was included as a policy development item on the Community Select Committee's work programme in February 2025. At the meeting held on 5 February the following comments were made on the Policy:
- Members requested a definitive list of reasons for refusal; however, officers clarified that decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, allowing for individual assessments based on the tenant's needs and the suitability of the property.
  - Officers will always aim to find the most practical solutions within the policy, such as providing a bidet instead of a full wet room where appropriate.
  - Members acknowledged that OTs assessments may not always be logistically feasible (e.g. if a driveway isn't achievable in a given location) and to work with surveyors for the best solution.
  - Members suggested that officers explore ways to reuse equipment, whether through private or council initiatives.
  - Officers will ensure that tenants are matched with suitable properties in appropriate locations.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

- 5.1 The staffing resources required to support the implementation of the Aids and Adaptations Policy have been included within the 2025/26 HRA budget as approved by Full Council in January 2025. A budget of £567k has been included in the approved 2025/26 budget to fund aids and adaptations related works. The reduction in budget provision compared to previous years recognises the discretionary nature of the budget and the wider pressures on the HRA. The financial resources allocated to fund Aids and Adaptations, however, will be kept under review.

- 5.2 The implementation of the updated policy alongside any legislative changes, and service-related pressures will inform the planned review of the HRA Business Plan and future budget-setting processes.
- 5.3 The policy aims to mitigate unnecessary adaptations to properties where adapted properties are already available to meet individual needs.

#### **Legal Implications**

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

#### **Risk Implications**

- 5.5 The adoption of the updated policy will help mitigate delays in processing referrals for delivery of adaptations and avoid failure to complete necessary adaptations in a timely manner which could pose safety risks to tenants, especially those with mobility impairments or other specific needs.
- 5.6 There is a risk of non-compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, including the duty to provide reasonable adaptations to tenants under the Equality Act 2010. Failure to meet these obligations could result in reputational damage, or financial penalties.
- 5.7 The effectiveness of the policy relies on the capacity and training of staff responsible for assessing, delivering, and managing adaptations. Insufficient capacity or capability of staff could result in delays in service delivery. It is crucial to ensure the policy is effectively integrated into working practices. For successful implementation, the policy must be supported by appropriate procedures and training for staff.
- 5.8 Risks are mitigated by tracking performance against key performance indicators and ensuring compliance with legislation and regulatory requirements.

#### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 5.9 Equality and Diversity implications are monitored and evaluated within the delivery of the service. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken alongside the review process for this policy.
- 5.10 The EqIA identified positive impacts on some of the groups with protected characteristics, principally those related to age and disability, with no negative impacts identified.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 Consultation Data Analysis

BD2 Aids and Adaptations EqIA

## **APPENDICES**

1 Aids and Adaptations Policy

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# Aids and Adaptations Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

2024

<b>Date created</b>	June 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Cabinet
<b>Owner</b>	Denise Lewis, Assistant Director Building Safety and Housing Property Services
<b>Version</b>	1
<b>Author</b>	Keith Peirson (Housing Investment Programme Manager) Charlotte Carter (Business Improvement Manager)
<b>Business Unit and Team</b>	Housing Asset Management – Aids and Adaptations
<b>Policy Review Date</b>	June 2026
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Date</b>	June 2024 (reviewed February 2025)

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

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DRAFT

## 1. Purpose

### 1.1 What is the policy position?

The policy sets out Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC's) strategy for dealing with internal and external requests for aids and adaptations in its council tenanted homes. It is necessary to clarify to customers and the wider audience our intentions, the limitations of the service, what other options and support we can offer and the conditions under which we might refuse to carry out the work requested.

### 1.2 What does it aim to achieve?

This policy aims to provide a single document explaining how the council will provide adaptations to council tenants properties which is to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

The Council as a social landlord has various responsibilities including those under the Equalities legislation, The Regulator for Social Housing's Consumer Standards and this policy is intended to set out the assistance that can be provided by the Council.

This policy will enable disabled people of all ages to build and sustain their independence. The purpose of any installation of an aid or adaptation is to modify the home environment to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families.

This policy allows the council to support our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and a key priority of maintaining good quality homes.

For residents living in private sector properties or homeowners, they should find further details of the Disabled Facilities Grant through our Environmental Health and Licensing Service. Further details can be found [here](#). For prospective tenants requiring aids and adaptations within new tenancies, further information is available within our Allocation Policy, which is available [here](#).

### 1.3 Does it replace an existing policy?

This policy replaces the previous policy from 2020.

## 2. Scope

### 2.1 Who is responsible for administering this policy and who will be impacted?

The Assistant Director of Building Safety and Housing Property Services have overall responsibility for the policy, ensuring it is fully implemented.

The Head of Service and Programme Manager are responsible for:

- The effective implementation of the policy
- Monitoring the performance and delivery
- Reviewing the policy in line with the policy review date or in response to changes in legislation governing the provision of aids and adaptations.

This policy is relevant to all our employees, tenants, other stakeholders, and persons who may work on, occupy, visit, or use our premises, or who may be affected by our activities or services.

**2.2 Does it underpin all policies, strategies, and schemes, or is it specific to a particular Business Unit (BU)?**

This policy is specific to tenants and those employees that interact with tenants. This is including Housing and Neighbourhoods, Building Safety and Housing Property Services.

The policy underpins the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Tenancy, Safeguarding, and Allocations Policies.

### **3. Legal Framework**

**3.1 What legislation is this policy associated with?**

This policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the requirements of the following:

- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Children Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- The Housing Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
- Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 - Consumer Standards in particular – Safety and Quality Standard 1.5.1, 2.4.1 and 2.4.2
- Building Regulations 2010

**3.2 What are the legislative or regulatory requirements that the council must fulfil?**

This policy has been developed to ensure that Council tenants are able to receive aids and adaptations to at least the same standard as would be provided if assistance were to be provided under the Mandatory Disabled Facilities legislation. A person will be considered for reasonable adaptations in their home under the Equality Act 2010 if they are a Stevenage Borough Council tenant and they, their partner or a member of their immediate family who is permanently resident in the household and is considered as disabled as defined within section **6.8 Eligibility** and that substantially affects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities or access facilities in or around their home.

### **4. Equalities**

**4.1 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

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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/data-protection-act)

## 6. Policy

- 6.1 The policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will manage and administer aids and adaptations to its properties for council tenants. The policy is not written for owner occupiers, leaseholders, private or housing association tenants for whom other provisions exist via Disabled Facilities Grants much of which is administered via the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA).
- 6.2 The policy is more flexible than any of its predecessors in that it promotes options and alternatives.
- 6.3 Adaptations are categorised as minor, major, and complex. The definitions and Expected timescales for delivering adaptations are as follows:

Type of work	Cost of work	Timescale		As an example of work – includes but not limited to
		Desktop Assessment	Delivered once accepted	
<b>Minor Works</b>	Less than £1000	4 weeks	20 working days	Temporary ramps Half steps Handrails Grab rails Lever taps Sanitary ware

<b>Minor Works</b>	More than £1000	4 weeks	12 weeks	Over bath shower  The installation of stair lifts and special purpose equipment  Ramps
<b>Major Works</b>	More than £1000	4 weeks	52 weeks	Bathroom and kitchen adaptations, ground floor WC conversions  Garage conversions, extensions, and access
<b>Complex</b>	More than £1000 and involving planning consent, building control.	4 weeks	<i>Dependent on complexity and involved 3<sup>rd</sup> parties</i>	

Major and Complex works – if accepted a technical feasibility and financial viability survey will be undertaken. If survey is viable then providing there are no better or quicker options such as a move to a property already fully or partially adapted that meets the needs of the customer), we aim to carry out the work in line with the above.

- 6.4 To provide clarity and uniformity across tenures the Council will adopt the same approach to consider if assistance should be provided as defined within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).

The council must be satisfied that the “eligible works” are “necessary and appropriate”, and that they have been judged to be “reasonable and appropriate” having “regard to the age and condition” of the property as set out within the Governments Code of Guidance for the assistance. But each application will be assessed on its merits.

The Equalities Act 2010 states ...” where a disabled person requests and would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the council must “take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid”. Please note that landlords do not have to make changes which affect the structure or would substantially and permanently alter their housing stock.”

6.5 This policy aligns with the Allocations Policy 2023 which seeks to match customers with a suitable property i.e., where it is preferable to offer the tenant an alternative property which already has or is more suited to the required adaptations then this option will be presented to the customer. Where possible we will seek to match the person to a property local to their current home.

6.6 Where a property is underoccupied, the tenant will be encouraged to downsize in line with our Downsizing policy which also provides support to facilitate a move including financial compensation for each room surrendered and help with moving costs.

6.7 Similarly, where the customer requires additional support which can more easily be provided through a move to one of our Independent Living Schemes the tenant will be encouraged and assisted to take up this opportunity. This will be dependent on the tenant being eligible for Older People properties.

## 6.8 Eligibility

6.8.1 A person will be considered for adaptations if they are a Stevenage Borough Council tenant and they, their partner or a member of their immediate family who is permanently resident in the household has an impairment that is likely to last for at least 12 months or for the remainder of the person's life, that substantially affects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities or access facilities in or around their home.

6.8.2 Under the terms of this policy a person is regarded as 'disabled' as defined under the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) if they have any of the following:

- Sight, hearing, or speech is substantially impaired
- Mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- Physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairment

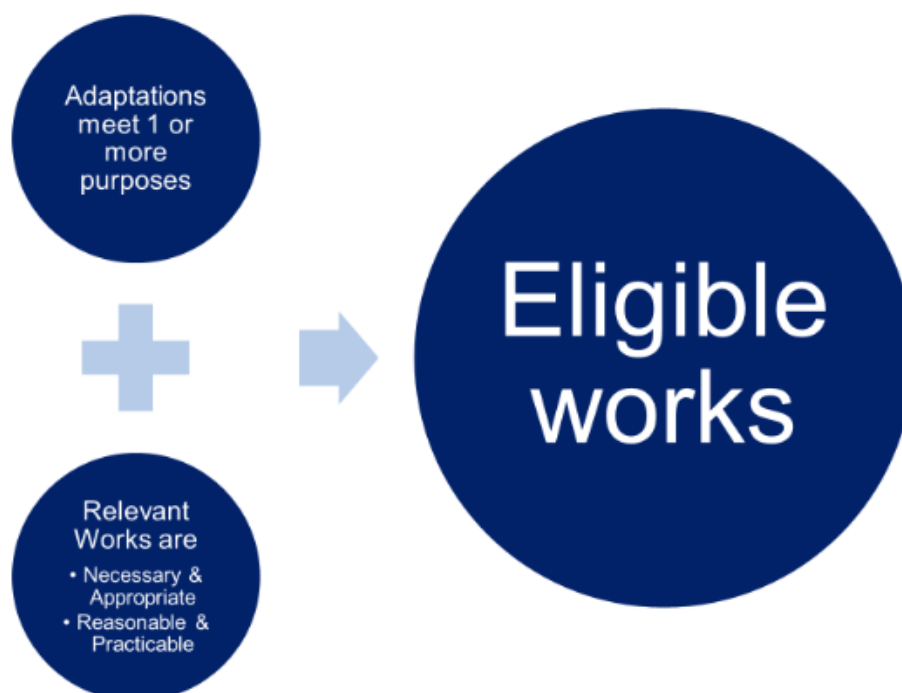
and a person over 18 is taken to be disabled if:

- they are an adult who is or could be registered under [section 77 of the Care Act 2014](#)
- they are an adult who is or could be registered under [section 18\(5\) of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- they are a child or young person registered under [paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989](#)
- they are a disabled child as defined by [section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#).

The council is responsible for considering adaptation referrals to the properties we own and that are occupied by our tenants.

## The Eligible Works

In line with the wider approach to providing disabled adaptations assistance will only be available for “eligible works” as set out in the Governments Guidance and as reflected within Section 23 of the Housing, Grants and Regeneration Act 1996. The approach to be adopted within this policy will see the adoption of the same “purposes” for which assistance will be provided as stated within the Act and Guidance.



Eligible works will be considered as: -

- Facilitating Access to the home and garden
- Making the premises safer
- Access to the principal family room or bedroom
- Access to a toilet
- Access to a bath or shower
- Access to a wash hand basin
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Better heating
- Control of power, light, and heat
- Caring for others

Full details of Eligible works are set out within Appendix 1 of this policy.



The Council will consider if each of the “eligible works” are “necessary and appropriate” and “reasonable and practicable”, in line with this policy and the framework adopted.

## **6.9 Costs of Adaptations**

6.9.1 In line with the disabled adaptations legislation this policy will consider the maximum level of assistance towards eligible works as £30,000. The Council is not required to fund additional works over this amount. However, in line with Government Guidance the Council has the discretion under this policy to provide up to an additional £20,000\* to cover eligible works, and this is in line with the Hertfordshire County Council approach.

\*This approach will only be taken in exceptional cases and for complex cases, each case will be determined on its own merits and the final decision would be made by the Assistant Director.

The council will work with the Occupational Therapist to look at other alternative cost-effective solutions within the £50,000 limit. If this is not possible the council will look for alternative suitable accommodation. For further details of other reasons aids and adaptations can be refused please see following section.

6.9.2 The council will set an annual budget in which will be used as efficiently as possible to provide a fair and accessible service to all existing tenants, whilst demonstrating value for money. If the demand for assistance exceeds the annual budget allocation, a waiting list will be operated subject to priority need which can be rolled forward into the next financial year.

6.9.3 The processing of referrals for recommended works will generally follow a chronological order, aligned with any established priority system. However, in emergency situations, referrals may be processed outside this order, subject to approval at the discretion of the Council. Where necessary, the Council will also work with the tenant to explore alternative options such as re-housing or other sources of funding.

6.9.4 The timescales will depend on the urgency and complexity of the adaptations required. High priority cases, as defined by the occupational therapist on the referral, will be prioritised for action, but major and complex schemes will take longer to complete.

In cases where planning permission or other regulatory elements are required, we cannot guarantee the timescales will be met.

To address waiting times for adaptations, the team will be expanded through permanent recruitment. This will increase capacity and enable the Council to implement the policy more efficiently, ensuring timely execution by streamlining processes and securing adequate resources.

6.9.5 The council will operate a triage system to make an initial assessment of the complexity and urgency of referral to help the person understand the likely timescales

for delivery of the work. As stated in point 6.3 above, the council will complete a desktop assessment within 4 weeks of receipt of the referral, the customer will be updated on further timescales following that assessment.

The council will keep the customer updated on progress at all stages, from acknowledging receipt of the referral and expectations, up to the completion and satisfaction survey.

## **6.10 Reasons for Refusal**

6.10.1 There are multiple reasons why SBC may refuse to carry out all or some of the work requested. Below gives examples of reasons why SBC might decline a request for adaptations. This list is in no way exhaustive:

- I. The property is unsuitable for adaptations due to overcrowding (in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement), except where minor works can be carried out to provide benefits until a suitable alternative property is found
- II. Where the work exceeds £30,000 (or £50,000 with discretionary top-up) as detailed above.
- III. In the opinion of the council, the work is not necessary, appropriate, reasonable, and practical.
- IV. The work is not technically feasible or could be achieved in a different way.
- V. The application does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- VI. The referral is not via the Occupational Therapist (OT) service or our internal referral process via our supported housing staff. The council reserves the right to seek an OT's report on aids and adaptations requests below £1,000 in value on a discretionary basis, to ensure the proposed works meet the customer's individual needs in the most effective way.
- VII. The tenant is currently on the Housing Register, except where minor works can be carried out to provide benefits until a suitable alternative property is found.
- VIII. Where work for the individual is to a communal area but will negatively impact communal space for other residents or be prohibitively expensive
- IX. The tenant has a Right to Buy Application

6.10.2 If a request for aids and adaptations is refused for any reason the tenant will be supported in alternative solutions. These solutions may include:

- Assistance with joining the housing register for an alternative move.
- Providing information and support with registering for a Mutual Exchange
- Referral to the Independent Living service or Flexicare if suitable
- A discussion with OT and tenant about alternative solutions which could be more necessary, appropriate, reasonable, or practical.
- Referral to the Income team or Welfare Benefits Advice team who may assist with arrears or payment plans.

- 6.10.3 Any reason for refusal can be appealed by the tenant. A request for an appeal should be received in writing within 28 days of the decision to refused communicated to the tenant. The appeal will be reviewed by a Head of Service or Assistant Director.
- 6.10.4 The escalation following an appeal would be to approach the Housing Ombudsman or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman depending on the circumstances.

## **6.11 Mental capacity**

Where the Council thinks a tenant lacks capacity to make a particular decision or take a particular action for themselves at the time the decision or action needs to be taken, they should follow the guidance laid out in the [Code of Practice to the Mental Capacity Act 2005](#).

## **7 Consultation**

### **7.1 Who have we consulted with in the development of this policy?**

7.2 The policy was consulted on with the relevant Portfolio Holder, the Executive Housing Working Group, Heads of Service and impacted staff members.

7.3 In part of forming this policy, the tenant satisfaction perception survey for 2023-2024 were analysed for mentions of the aid and adaptation service. Within the tenant satisfaction measures and the perception surveys for 2023/2024, Aids and Adaptations was mentioned by 12 tenants of the 1000 tenants approached as a reason for overall satisfaction. 50% of those resulted in a positive response. Of those that mentioned aids and adaptations within the free text who were dissatisfied with the overall service provided by Stevenage Borough Council as a landlord the main themes included issues with delays and communication. This policy ensures that clear guidelines on timescales are imposed and may result in further positive results. Satisfaction will continue to be measured with transactional surveys with tenants following completed adaptation work.

7.4 As part of the implementation of this policy, we will actively seek feedback from tenants on the operation of this policy and provide feedback on how we have taken this on board when reviewing this policy.

## **8 Monitoring and Review**

8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Business Unit's Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years (see page 1 for details of Business Unit) or earlier if there is a change in legislation. 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 Executive or appropriate decision-making body.

- 8.2 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 or Service Manager will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

## 9 References and Resources

Internal Documents:

Stevenage Borough Council – Tenancy Agreement

Decant Policy

Right to Buy Policy

Health And Safety Policy

Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Better 2024 – 2029

Allocations Policy 2023

External:

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

Children Act 1996

Equality Act 2010

The Care Act 2014

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002

The Housing Act 1985

The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: Guidance for local authorities in England

## 10 Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council
OT	Occupational Therapist
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant

## 11 Appendices

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## Appendix 1

### Eligible Works

#### Facilitating access to the home and garden

There is a need to remove or help overcome any obstacles which are preventing the disabled person from moving freely in and out of the property, including common parts, in and around the garden and any yard, outhouse or “other appurtenance” (e.g. a balcony or the land adjacent to the mooring of a qualifying houseboat).

Access can also include works outside the normal curtilage of the dwelling, such as a dropped kerb pavement crossing.

#### Making the premises safer

There is a need to make the home safer for the disabled person and other people living with them. It’s not appropriate to be too prescriptive but the needs covered under this subsection might include situations where:

- someone with challenging behaviours is hurting themselves, other people they live with or damaging the property.
- someone with impaired vision cannot safely navigate into and around their home or carry out everyday tasks and activities.
- someone with impaired hearing can’t hear a standard smoke alarm; or
- someone with a physical disability could not safely escape in the event of a fire.

#### Access to the principal family room or bedroom

The disabled person is unable to access a room suitable for use as a living room or gain access to a room usable for sleeping. Or where the disabled occupant shares a bedroom with another person, they cannot access a room of sufficient size so that the normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.

#### Access to a toilet

The disabled person cannot access a room with a toilet or cannot use the existing toilet.

#### Access to a bath or shower

The disabled person cannot access a room with a bath and/or a shower or cannot use the existing bath and/or shower. In cases where the disabled person needs access to a bath and a shower, they would need to demonstrate a medical need for both.

### **Access to a wash hand basin**

The disabled person cannot access a room with a wash hand basin or cannot use the existing wash hand basin.

### **Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food**

The disabled person cannot access or does not have suitable facilities to prepare and cook food for themselves and others living with them.

### **Better heating**

People with limited mobility who remain in one room for long periods usually need a warmer home than able-bodied people.

### **Control of power, light and heat**

The disabled person cannot operate the controls for power, light or heating in their home.

### **Caring for others**

The disabled person cannot move around the home to care for another person who normally lives there, whether they are related to the disabled person. This may include a spouse, partner or family member, another disabled person or a child. Importantly the dependent being cared for need not be disabled.

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## 12 Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
31/05/2024	Revised policy	Keith Peirson Programme Manager
26/02/2025	Reviewed following Community Select Committee and Clearance Board	Michelle Upchurch Project Manager

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**Meeting** Cabinet  
**Portfolio Area** Environment & Performance  
**Date** 12 March 2025



## HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS IN STEVENAGE

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Lewis Claridge | 2158  
**Lead Officer** James Chettleburgh | 2266  
**Contact Officer** Lewis Claridge | 2158

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the Government's new High Street Rental Auctions process.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an outline of how a consultation process would operate in Stevenage with regard to designated High Street Rental Auctions areas.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content and detail relating to High Street Rental Auctions and how they would be applied in Stevenage.
- 2.2 Agree to authorise a future consultation on designated areas for High Street Rental Auctions in Stevenage, for a minimum of 28 days in accordance with Regulations.
- 2.3 Note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and fed back to Cabinet.

## 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 From December 2, 2024, local authorities in England will be able to hold high street rental auctions to let vacant high street and town centre properties without requiring the consent of the owner or any superior landlords or mortgagees. The Government states that councils will be handed these new powers "to breathe new life back into high streets and transform long-term empty shops".

### *Legislation*

- 3.2 High Street Rental Auctions, a new power for local authorities to require landlords to rent out persistently vacant commercial properties to new tenants such as local businesses or community groups, were introduced as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/enacted>.
- 3.3 Part 10 of the Act sets out the framework for the power, and further details are defined in the Local Authorities (Rental Auctions etc.) (England) and Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.<sup>1</sup>

### *High Street Use*

- 3.4 Central to the high street rental auction regime is the concept of "high street use". High street use is not confined to retail. Instead, it is given a very wide definition similar to, but wider than, the commercial, business and service use Class E. It includes (but is not limited to) uses such as shops, offices, restaurants / cafés / bars, public entertainment, community halls and manufacturing.

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Authorities (Rental Auctions) (England) and Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)

*Premises in scope for High Street Rental Auction*

3.5 To be within scope of the local authority's high street rental auction powers, premises must:

- (i) be situated on a designated high street or in a designated town centre. The local authority has power to designate a street as a high street and/or an area as a town centre where they consider them important to the local economy because of a concentration of high street uses;
- (ii) be considered by the local authority to be suitable for a high street use;
- (iii) have been unoccupied for the whole of the immediately preceding year or 366 days in the immediately preceding two years (the vacancy condition). A state of affairs will not amount to occupation unless the occupation is substantial, sustained and involves the regular presence of people at the premises. Time spent vacant before the provisions come into force still counts.
- (iv) be such that the local authority is satisfied that occupation of the premises for a suitable high street use would be beneficial to the local economy, society or environment (the local benefit condition).

3.6 If conditions (i) and (ii) are met, the premises are qualifying high street premises. Warehouses are specifically excluded from being qualifying high street premises and so are out of scope.

*Costs*

3.7 The local authority has the option of requiring the successful bidder to pay for the searches, survey and its legal costs incurred preparing the auction pack, including the agreement for lease and lease. The landlord will have to bear its own costs, most notably the cost of any works deemed necessary to bring the premises up to the minimum standard.

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

**Recommendation 2.1: That Cabinet note the content and detail relating to High Street Rental Auctions and how they would be applied in Stevenage.**

##### *Non-Statutory Guidance*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-street-rental-auctions-non-statutory-guidance/high-street-rental-auctions-non-statutory-guidance>

- 4.1 Non-statutory guidance explains High Street Rental Auctions in detail from start to finish and should be used to guide interested parties through the process. It is for local authorities concerned about vacant commercial premises in their area, commercial landlords and their lenders, businesses and community groups seeking a commercial space and commercial agents who may be responsible for running a High Street Rental Auction on behalf of a local authority.
- 4.2 The High Street Rental Auction process is expected to take 22 to 24 weeks from initiation to completion. The stages and timings are summarised below.

##### *Considerations for using a High Street Rental Auction*

- 4.3 High Street Rental Auctions will provide local authorities with a strong tool to use in places where vacancy rates are a problem and where there is little cooperation between landlords and local authorities, however, they will not be applicable in all cases of vacant high street premises.
- 4.4 When considering whether a High Street Rental Auction will be appropriate, a local authority should consider whether the specific premises in question meets the requirements of the legislation, as well as whether alternatives to High Street Rental Auctions might be more appropriate.

##### *Steps prior to using a High Street Rental Auction*

- 4.5 Once satisfied that a High Street Rental Auction is the right course of action to take, a local authority must take several preliminary actions before beginning the process:
- Designating a street or area where a High Street Rental Auction can be used, including a 28-day minimum community engagement period;
  - Satisfying the vacancy condition and local benefit condition;
  - Obtaining information about the premises in question (local authorities may want to capture this information in a vacancy register);
  - Engaging with landlords to encourage cooperation between parties; and
  - Surveying the premises to assess the suitable high street use and/or the works needed for the premises to reach the Minimum Standard.

### *Using a High Street Rental Auction*

- 4.6 The High Street Rental Auction Process begins with a 10-to-12-week Notice Period and then a 12-week Auction Period.

#### *Notice Period*

- 4.7 The Notice Period begins with a local authority serving an initial notice on the landlord of premises they have identified as eligible for a High Street Rental Auction. The landlord will then have the chance to make their own arrangements to enter into a tenancy, if this tenancy begins within 8 weeks of the serving of the initial notice and provided, they meet certain conditions. If the landlord fails to enter into such a tenancy, the local authority may serve a final notice informing the landlord of the local authority's intention to run a High Street Rental Auction in relation to the premises. The landlord has the chance to serve a counter-notice, objecting to the final notice, and appeal. Assuming the final notice is not withdrawn by the local authority following counter-notice, or successfully appealed, the process will then move to the Auction Period.

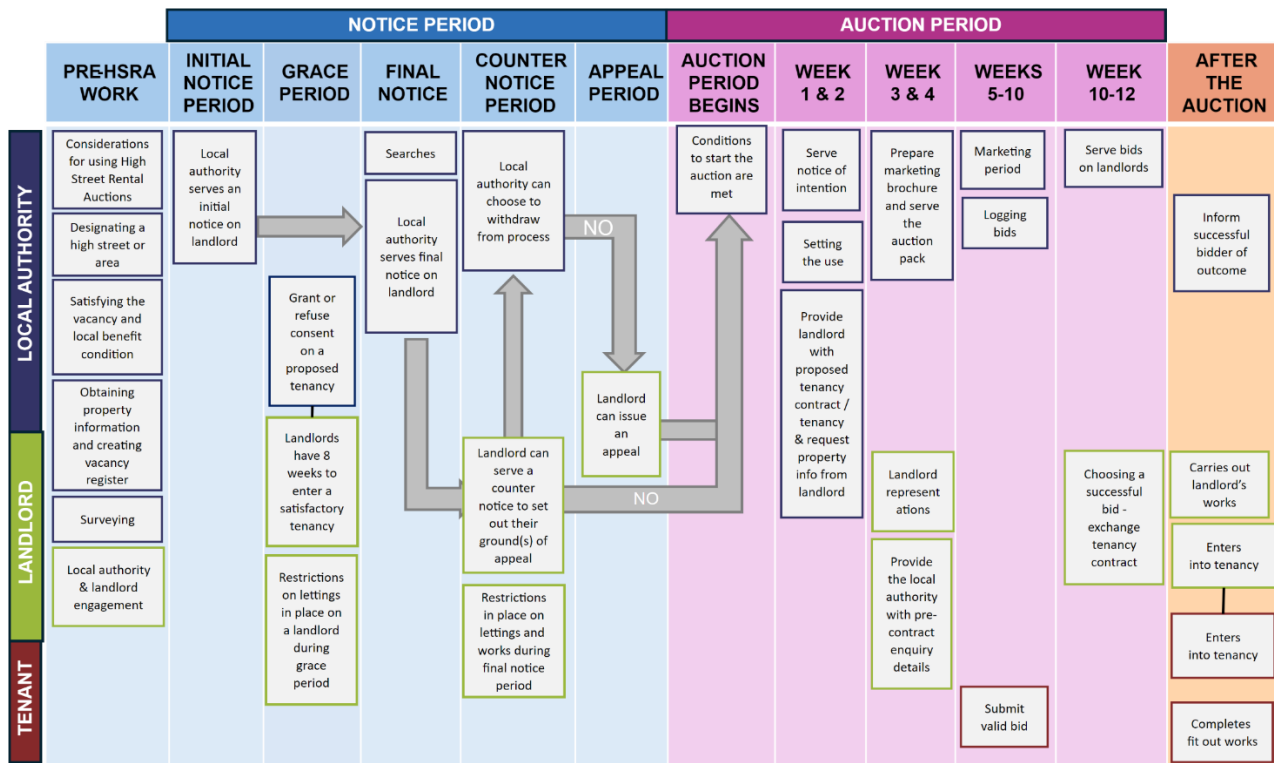
#### *Auction Period*

- 4.8 The local authority then has 12 weeks to:
- (1) auction the premises and
  - (2) complete the tenancy contract.
- 4.9 During weeks 1 to 4 of the Auction Period the local authority and landlord should engage with each other, with the landlord being required to provide information about the premises and being afforded the opportunity to make representations on the proposed terms of the tenancy contract and tenancy, so that the auction pack can be created. The tenancy contract and tenancy, along with several other documents, will make up the auction pack. A marketing period (operating during weeks 5 to 9 at a minimum) follows where interested parties can register their bid with the local authority. In weeks 10 to 11 of the Auction Period the local authority must serve the bids on the landlord before a successful bidder is chosen. The auction process concludes when a tenancy contract is exchanged between the successful bidder and the landlord.

#### *After the Auction*

- 4.10 The successful bidder at auction will enter into two legal agreements with the landlord. The first is the tenancy contract, which governs the landlord's required works prior to the tenancy commencing, and the second is the tenancy itself, which will set out the specific obligations on the tenant and landlord during the term of the tenancy.
- 4.11 Following completion of the landlord's works, the tenancy is granted.

**Figure 1. High Street Rental Auctions Process Flowchart.**



*Other Considerations*

4.12 Other considerations include:

- Landlord carries out works to the property i.e. within 3 months unless otherwise agreed with local authority.
- Fit out works will still be at tenants' expense and open accordingly.
- There are protections on pubs / alterations cannot be made without landlord approval.
- 4 week rent free period.
- Landlord to serve notice where required.
- The tenant will need to notify local authority if there is a change in use under permitted development e.g., change from a shop to a restaurant. If any changes made under permitted development, must revert back to High Street Rental Auction (HSRA) process.
- Any new tenancy agreements do not have to follow the HSRA process.
- Upfront costs of process borne by the local authority and to recover under relevant guidance / Government funds. Landlord costs only relate to repair works to make property suitable to let (unless it is not viable to do so e.g. significant fire or water damage).
- It will generally cost the Council £5,000 per auction process.
- Councils will have powers to gain entry (14 days' notice) in order to survey, but local authority must make sure property is secure once survey has been completed.

- The landlord will need to be aware that through the HSRA process there is a risk a tenancy secured can be at a lower rent than what they are seeking (even in cases where there are residential properties above a shop).
- The Government will publish an online tool on dealing with the HSRA process.
- There will also be funding from Government to help with rolling out the HSRA programme.

*Planning Use Class / Permitted Development Rights*

- 4.13 The Permitted Development Right for suitable high street use that supports the policy should be relied upon if the building's extant planning use and the proposed use of the successful bid are not in the same planning use class.
- 4.14 As noted above, in the majority of cases, it is expected that the existing planning use and proposed planning use of the building will fall within use Class E, a broad use class that includes most commercial, business and service use(s), such as shops, cafes, or gyms. In these cases, no change of use requiring planning permission will occur and the Permitted Development Right for suitable high street will not need to be engaged.
- 4.15 The Permitted Development Right for suitable high street allows for the change of use of a building which is a qualifying high street premises. The permitted development right does not apply in military explosive storage areas or safety hazard areas. The local authority needs to inform the local planning authority of:
- a. the suitable high street use for which the premises will be used;
  - b. the date on which the use will commence; and
  - c. the date on which the use will cease.
- 4.16 The date on which the use will commence ((b) above) will arise once the tenancy is granted and the tenant has assumed occupation of the premises. The tenancy contract obliges the landlord to serve notice on the local authority as soon as the landlord's works are complete (the completion of the landlord's works then triggers the grant of the tenancy). This notification should then allow the local authority to notify the local planning authority of the date on which the use will commence under the tenancy.
- 4.17 The tenant should also ensure this step has been completed by the local authority to make sure the use of the premises is legal for the duration of the tenancy.
- 4.18 Any change of use permitted through the Permitted Development Right for suitable high street use only applies for the duration of the High Street Rental Auction tenancy, and the building's planning use will revert at the end of the tenancy.

*Why is Stevenage Borough Council considering designating areas for HSRA*

- 4.19 A summary of reasons why HSRA is beneficial include:
- Its purpose is to bring life back into the High Street / national renewal / community support / taskforce for regeneration.
  - Issue of blight from empty shops (where they have been empty for 1+ years)
  - One of the solutions to help deliver revitalisation of the High Street.
  - Part of a suite of initiatives such as Business Improvement District / Business Rate Reform / initiatives to tackle crime along with community right to buy initiatives.
  - Engagement with the local community around the new powers to deliver change.
- 4.20 It is important to note that the High Street Rental Auctions regime should be viewed as more of a “last resort” and as an incentive for landlords to maintain occupied properties that are in meaningful use. The HSRA legislation is designed to engage landlords and is a power that could be imposed to ensure any vacant properties or properties at the risk of falling into vacancy, have a mechanism that can help to bring them back into meaningful use.
- 4.21 HSRA is a tool that could be used to address High Street vacancy but not one that definitely will be used. It is difficult to determine, at this early stage, the level of requirement we will have in reality for HSRA in Stevenage.
- 4.22 While designation of High Street Rental Auction areas is not a statutory designation, officers are of the view that this would be a good opportunity to tackle the problem regarding vacant High Street properties in the town and issues regarding private landowners.
- 4.23 Designation could also provide a deterrent for landlords to keep their premises vacant for long periods of time and encourage them to engage with the Council in a proactive manner.

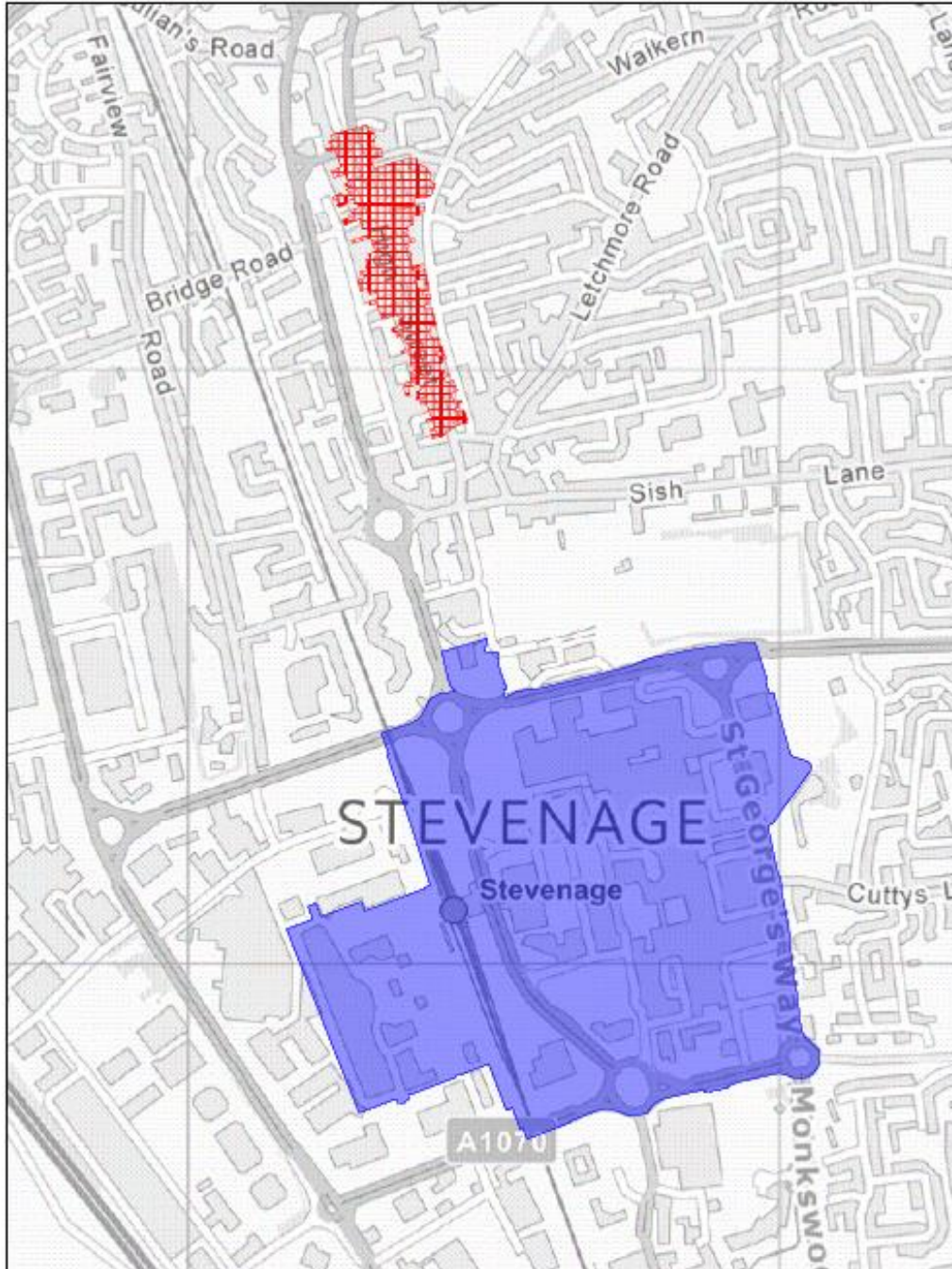
**Recommendation 2.2: That Cabinet agree to authorise a future consultation on designated areas for High Street Rental Auctions in Stevenage, for a minimum of 28 days in accordance with Regulations.**

- 4.24 The process of designating High Street Rental Auction areas involves public consultation on the designated areas, for a minimum of 28 days. Once the designated areas have been agreed, the process as outlined in Figure 1 will apply to premises within those designated areas.
- 4.25 For any future consultation process (dates to be determined), the Council is proposing to designate the Town Centre and Old Town High Street areas as designated for High Street Rental Auctions. This complies with the boundary areas relating to Local Plan Policies TC1 (Town Centre) and TC9 (High Street Shopping Area).
- 4.26 Following the consultation process and approval of designated High Street Rental Auctions areas, the Council’s Estates team will be asked to survey those



properties within the designated areas as per the process outlined in above and so that we have an up-to-date record of properties in each area.

## Local Plan - Policies TC1 and TC9



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**Recommendation 2.3: That Cabinet note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and fed back to Cabinet.**

- 4.27 The Planning & Development Committee, via the Chair and Vice Chair, have been circulated this Cabinet Report in advance of the Cabinet meeting.
- 4.28 Any feedback from Planning & Development Committee Members will be taken into consideration in the Cabinet's approval of this Report's recommendations.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The HSRA process will cost the Council £5,000 per auction process. The overall financial cost will ultimately depend on the level of interest, support and take up the HSRA scheme generates over time.
- 5.2 The local authority has the option of requiring the successful bidder to pay for the searches, survey and its legal costs incurred preparing the auction pack, including the agreement for lease and lease. The landlord will have to bear its own costs, most notably the cost of any works deemed necessary to bring the premises up to the minimum standard.
- 5.3 Other than staff costs in terms on both consulting upon the HSRA areas and reporting the HSRA process as it develops with the Estates team, there will be no significant staff and resourcing costs associated with the HSRA process.
- 5.4 There could be legitimate concerns from current landlords, for example the potential costs involved to refurbish and revive properties that are not in use. It should be noted that the High Street Rental Auctions regime should be viewed as more of a “last resort” and as an incentive for landlords to maintain occupied properties that are in meaningful use. The HSRA is more of a power that could be imposed to ensure any vacant properties or properties at the risk of falling into vacancy, have a mechanism that can help to bring them back into meaningful use.
- 5.5 Should the HSRA be imposed, there is potential to gain funding from numerous sources, for example grant funding or bidding from landlords for any required funding.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.6 The successful bidder at auction will enter into two legal agreements with the landlord. The first is the tenancy contract, which governs the landlord’s required works prior to the tenancy commencing, and the second is the tenancy itself, which will set out the specific obligations on the tenant and landlord during the term of the tenancy.
- 5.7 The local authority has the option of requiring the successful bidder to pay for the searches, survey and its legal costs incurred preparing the auction pack, including the agreement for lease and lease. The landlord will have to bear its own costs, most notably the cost of any works deemed necessary to bring the premises up to the minimum standard.
- 5.8 Officers will seek legal advice as required, as the HSRA process develops over time.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.9 The risk implications, at this early stage, are difficult to determine given that the HSRA process is more of a tool that could be used, rather than one that will be used. There could be a risk that the legal requirements are not adhered to and the due HSRA process not followed; this could cause delays to securing occupancy for vacant premises and therefore jeopardise the vitality of our High Streets. There could also be potential risks concerning the perception of High Street properties in Stevenage.
- 5.10 There is a potential risk for the landlord if a property is vacant, which would have a large impact on the overall process as outlined in Figure 1. The landlord is required to carry out tasks which may not fit the process as outlined or desired.
- 5.11 There is a risk that, due to the complex nature of the HSRA process, that steps in the process could be missed or not covered adequately. The Planning and Estates teams will work closely to ensure that the process is clearly communicated to interested parties, as part of the consultation.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.12 The HSRA process will support policies designated in the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019) and emerging Local Plan Review and Partial Update, which is scheduled to be submitted to the Secretary of State in Spring 2025.
- 5.13 The HSRA process will complement the town's regeneration plans and align with the Local Plan Town Centre policies.

### **Economic Implications**

- 5.14 Designation could also provide a deterrent for landlords to keep their premises vacant for long periods of time and encourage them to engage with the Council in a proactive manner.
- 5.15 The HSRA process will provide greater certainty in ensuring that the High Street areas of Stevenage provide a wide range of occupied units that offer a variety of amenities and services to the population of Stevenage workers, residents and visitors.
- 5.16 This in turn, alongside a suite of initiatives including Business Improvement Districts and Business Rate Reform, will stimulate investment into local services and help to expand an already growing economy in the town, further enhancing its strategic economic position in the Golden Triangle area between London, Cambridge and Oxford.

### **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.17 The community could benefit from the HSRA process with a fully vibrant High Street meaning there would be a higher degree of natural surveillance and related initiatives to tackle crime.

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