SteVenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting:	**EXECUTIVE**	**Agenda Item:**

Portfolio Areas: The Leader

Date: **11 July 2018**

2017/18 ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

NON-KEY DECISION

Authors – Katrina Shirley/ Elaine Wright   Ext.2976/2192
Contributors –Charlotte Smith/ Chloe Norton/ Alison Hill Ext. 2457/2501/2556
Lead Officer – Richard Protheroe   Ext. 2938
Contact Officer – Katrina Shirley

1.   PURPOSE

1.1   To consider the content of the Council's draft Annual Report 2017/18 at Appendix A, and to consider arrangements for final publication.

1.2   To highlight the Council's performance across a number of key themes and priorities during 2017/18.

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   That the progress on the delivery of the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) programme be noted together with the overall performance and achievements of the Council during 2017/18.

2.2   That the closure of the Partner of Choice Programme as outlined in paragraph 3.57 be approved.

2.3   That the content of the Council's draft Annual Report 2017/18 at Appendix A be agreed.

2.4   That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director (Corporate Services and Transformation) following consultation with the Leader to approve any final changes to the Annual Report prior to its publication.

2.5   That the suite of 2018/19 performance measures at Appendix C be noted.

2.6   That the improvement plans and associated timeframe for delivery identified to enable effective application of the Homelessness Reduction Act and improve

service performance relating to homelessness preventions are endorsed (paragraphs 3.87 to 3.89 refer).

2.7   That initial improvement activity in the Customer Service Centre is noted and future plans to improve performance during 2018/19 are endorsed (outlined in paragraphs 3.120 to 3.127).

2.8   That the initial steps being carried out during quarter one 2018/19 to improve management of sickness absence across the Council are endorsed (outlined in paragraphs 3.145 to 3.150).

3.   BACKGROUND

Executive Summary

3.1   The FTFC programme has gathered momentum during 2017/18 and in the main is on track against delivery of the agreed outcomes. This is reflected in performance measure results aligned to FTFC delivery. The focus and desired outcomes for each FTFC programme along with a summary of key successes for 2017/18 is outlined from paragraph 3.16 onwards.

3.2   The Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme was reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team during the first half of 2017/18 to ensure governance arrangements remained effective as several programmes moved from the planning phase to the delivery phase during the year.

3.3   Due to ongoing IT resilience issues the Council prioritised the delivery of an IT Improvement programme during 2018/19, with a number of actions required ahead of the full launch of the Connected to our Customers Programme. The Executive approved the improvement plan in November 2017. This programme of work is now overseen by the senior representatives from Stevenage Borough Council and our partner, East Herts Council, including the Chief Executives, Directors and the senior IT management team.

3.4   There have been some sustained high levels of performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) for April 2017 to March 2018, to include the following:

- The number of households in temporary accommodation has been maintained below the thresholds set across the year.
- The determination of planning applications has consistently exceeded national targets.
- Collection rates for Council Tax and non-domestic rates have met or exceeded target.
- Levels of residual (not recycled) household waste have not exceeded the thresholds set.

3.5   Through the financial year the Strategic Leadership Team has requested that Assistant Directors identify improvement activity for performance measures that did not meet the target set. The improvement activity identified is being

aligned to the Business Unit Reviews that aim to deliver sustainable services that better meet the needs of customers. This transformation of service delivery requires longer-term improvement planning and the impact on performance results has been minimal for the current year.

3.6   In response to quarter three performance the Executive was advised (March 2018) of:

- Plans to increase the availability, skills and knowledge of Customer Service Advisers to improve performance in the Customer Service Centre. This remains an area of improvement focus until performance demonstrates initial improvement across the full set of CSC measures – A summary of the improvement plans together with associated timeline for delivery are outlined in paragraph 3.127.

- Plans to improve the management of sickness absence and align health and well-being policy to the primary reasons for sickness absence. This remains an area of improvement focus until revised policy and practice indicates a sustained reduction on levels of sickness absence (paragraphs 3.145 to 3.150 refer).

3.7   In response to performance for April 2017 to March 2018 the Senior Leadership Team has also requested a focus on homelessness preventions. Improvement plans are outlined in paragraph 3.89.

3.8   Assistant Directors have determined targets for 2018/19 having consideration for the 2017/18 trends, planned reviews of /revisions to service delivery models and alignment to 2018/19 budgets.

3.9   The Council's approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the new performance framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to amend targets in year to drive forward additional improvement in services and processes where appropriate. Although there is no guarantee services will meet these increased targets, it is important for the Council to aspire to improve performance levels and standards for the benefit of internal and external customers.

Annual Report 2017/18

3.10   The Annual Report 2017/18 reviews, and informs the community of, the progress in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan 'Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council' during 2017/18.

3.11   Members approved the new Corporate Plan in December 2016. It reflects the Council's continuing focus on co-operative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town over the period 2016-2021 through the flagship Future Town Future Council (FTFC) transformation programme, as seen in figure 1.

Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

3.12 The 5 year FTFC programme consists of 9 programmes. There are five external programmes focused on improving the quality of life of Stevenage residents through regenerating the town centre, building new homes, improving how local people feel about their neighbourhoods, providing high quality housing services and enhancing the accessibility of our services and the customer experience. The four internal programmes aim to build strong foundations within the Council through improving processes and skills, maintaining financial security and making sure the Council is fit for the future. This aids delivery of the externally focused programmes.

3.13 During 2016/17, the Council's services were re-organised into 9 Business Units across three key delivery themes: Customer, Place and Transformation and Support. In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across these themes is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement. This recognises the critical role all Assistant Directors play in the delivery of the Future Town, Future Council Programme, either as a lead on one or more of the nine FTFC programmes or as an enabler, delivering services across the three themes.

3.14 The draft Annual Report 2017/18 outlines what has been delivered this year against the outcomes and aims within the FTFC programme as well as highlighting achievements across a range of other Council services.

3.15 Key performance results are included throughout the draft Annual Report and a number of performance highlights and areas for improvement are presented in more detail within this Executive report. A complete set of performance measures that was applied during 2017/18 across all themes (FTFC programme and the customer, place, and transformation and support themes) is attached at Appendix B.

Future Town, Future Council Programme Annual Update

External Facing Programmes

Stevenage Centre Town Centre Regeneration Programme

3.16   **Programme Outcomes**

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance - one completed by 2020/21 and one to begin 2019/20

3.17   **Programme Overview**

3.18   Regeneration of the town centre is the Council's number one priority and was the priority most often placed in residents' 'top three' in the town-wide survey undertaken this year. The Council wants to make Stevenage a destination of choice through delivering a new vibrant town centre, with quality shopping, office and leisure facilities.

3.19   The Council officially announced the appointment of Mace as the development partner for Town Centre regeneration in February. Mace, the international development and construction company behind some of the world's landmark developments, will be undertaking the first phase of regeneration (SG1). This ambitious scheme will bring £350million of private investment into the town centre. It will see the area covering the Council (Daneshill House) offices, the Plaza, bus station and some of the adjacent car parks redeveloped with new shops, bars and restaurants, homes, new public spaces, and a central public sector hub accommodating the Council offices, a library, exhibition space, and health services.

3.20   Other key programme successes during 2017/18 included the following:

- Public realm improvements to The Forum and Littlewoods Square were completed.
- Final designs for planned public realm improvements to Market Place have been developed and approved by Sponsors and Members. Engagement with local businesses took place to cover the timeframe, benefits and finished look of the planned enhancements.
- Plans to improve the appearance of the North Façade buildings of Town Square and enhance the standard of the canopies have been prepared and the Council will be working with Mace over the coming months to develop designs for this area.
- Residents have been kept informed of regeneration plans through drop-in sessions, articles in the Stevenage Central magazine and information campaigns using the Stevenage Central branding.
- Plans are progressing to open a visitor centre in the former subway unit in the town centre Plaza. Through a partnership involving the regeneration team, Mace and Stevenage Museum, the centre will illustrate some of

Stevenage's heritage as the first post-war New Town, celebrate some of the cutting-edge technology produced by the town's businesses (e.g. the Mars Rover), and inform residents about the exciting regeneration plans.

3.21 During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Signing off the Development Agreement for SG1.
- Working with Mace to develop and consult on plans for SG1.
- Progressing more detailed plans for a public sector hub in the town.
- Completing improvements to the Market Place and wayfinding signage as well as developing plans to improve the Town Square.
- Establishing the "Stevenage Works" local labour market employment & training initiative in conjunction with North Herts College and Job Centre +.
- Opening the visitors' centre to showcase our history as well as our ambitious future.

Housing Development Programme

3.22 **Programme Outcomes**

- Increased number of affordable homes in Stevenage
- Improved access to the housing market in Stevenage for a greater number of residents

Programme Overview

3.23 Providing decent, affordable homes appropriate to the needs of residents is one of the Council's key priorities and again was high on the agenda for many respondents to the town-wide Resident Survey. The Council is meeting this priority by delivering its own new build programme. Overall the programme remains on track for delivery of 300 homes by 2020.

3.24 The Council has been progressing well with the adoption of the new Local Plan. A successful Public Examination of the plan was held, with the independent Planning Inspector giving a positive report after listening to the views of residents and businesses. We are now working with the Government to get the plan adopted. The plan should then provide the certainty to encourage developers to bring forward their schemes to provide a range of housing, including a proportion of affordable homes.

3.25 Key programme successes during 2017/18 included:

- 34 council homes have been developed this year, bringing the total number since 2014 up to 131. These included new homes at the Archer Road and Vincent Court schemes in addition to a number of acquisitions.
- Further schemes are under construction at the former March Hare and Twin Foxes pub sites and at Ferrier Road. Together these schemes will deliver 44 new homes.

- Three more sites for future development have been prioritised during 2018. Initial design work is progressing and these schemes are expected to deliver approximately 50 units in total.
- The Council is working co-operatively with Chase Homes and Metropolitan Housing Association on the old Dupont site, where over 200 homes are being developed. The Council will have access to 34 of these homes to let at social rents in exchange for funding.
- Stevenage has been awarded £900,000 of infrastructure funding from the Government which means the Council can press ahead with plans for a new housing development scheme at Kenilworth Close.
- Residents and staff are being kept informed of progress and plans and the Housing Management Advisory Board was taken on a tour of new build schemes early in the year.
- In terms of wider housing delivery, figures published last summer showed that 690 homes of all types were completed in Stevenage the previous year, well above the annual target.

3.26   Next year the programme will focus on:

- Completing and letting 54 new homes across a number of schemes
- Starting work on a further 267 new/replacement homes across a range of planned schemes
- Consulting with the public and securing planning permission for the Kenilworth Close site, including plans for the flagship older persons housing scheme
- Exploring the viability of other potential areas of development across the town including opportunities to work in partnership with other providers
- Continuing to work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable homes

Excellent Council Homes

3.27   **Programme Outcomes**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers

3.28   **Programme Overview**

3.29   The Council's aim is to provide high quality, efficient and effective housing services. The Council has committed through the Excellent Council Homes programme to transform its housing services to better meet the needs of its customers.

3.30   Work is underway on Phase 1 of the programme to implement digital improvements and new ways of working and to provide staff with tools and skills to deliver excellent customer service. These improvements lay the essential foundations for Phase 2 of the programme, which will continue the delivery of digital improvements, embed new ways of working and enable customers to benefit from improved access to services through a wide range

of methods, including online self-service services and additional support for those who need it.

3.31 Projects in Phase 1 are themed into four main categories:
- Business Vision: focused on embedding corporate values and unified customer service to all members of staff. This is to ensure that customers will receive the same, excellent customer service from every member and area of business.
- Digital Housing: aimed at improving back office processes and enhancing internal systems in order to support digital development and access to information for our customers.
- Service and Personal Development: focused on delivery of a cohesive team provided with the right tools and skills to deliver excellent customer service.
- Knowing our Customers: aimed at understanding our customers' needs and prioritising them. This is to improve contact with our customers and visibility and approachability of our staff.

3.32 In January 2017 Members agreed to invest £1.5m over three financial years to enable the delivery of the Council's Excellent Council Homes programme. This investment contributes to the foundation work and enhanced access to services for our customers.

3.33 During 2017/18, residents were provided with an opportunity to give feedback on the housing services currently provided by the Council and suggested areas for improvement, through both the 'Big Knock' and the 'STAR' satisfaction survey. The surveys highlighted that key priorities for tenants and leaseholders were the repairs service, the quality of their homes, value for money and communications. Residents' feedback will be incorporated into developing future phases of the programme as well as improving 'business as usual' activities.

3.34 Progress during 2017/18 included:

- The new Housing and Investment management team is now in place with management roles aligned to the customer journey.
- Within the Housing Advice and Homelessness service new processes and technology have been implemented to support the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act from April 2018 and to improve case management and the service customers receive. More advice is provided at the first point of contact in the CSC and customers are now benefiting from personalised housing plans.
- Within the Supported Housing Service more agile ways of working have been implemented to enable the team to be more responsive to customers' needs and shorten referral processes.
- Ways of working and use of technology continue to be reviewed and improved to lay the foundation for mobile working and streamlined services for customers.
- The quality of online information has been improved, to provide customers with up to date information and in preparation for the new Council website

- Staff engagement in the programme has been sustained through Housing Away Days, informal sessions, focus groups and staff newsletters.
- Engagement with the Housing Management Advisory Board has been maintained with regular updates and the Board has also been strengthened this year with two additional customer members.

3.35 During 2018/19 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Using customer insight information to develop a better understanding of our customers' views and requirements, to enable provision of a more bespoke housing service for each individual customer and improved cohesion with services to the neighbourhood.
- Continuing to improve the way staff and customers use technology.
- Commencing implementation of mobile working in order to save time and enable staff to access information whenever and wherever it is needed.
- Beginning to digitalise our housing service offer in order to provide customers with an additional channel of communication and an opportunity to self-serve.
- Working with members of staff to create a lean, efficient and cohesive workforce that will work towards a 'One Team' approach and a 'Customer First' culture.

Co-operative & Neighbourhood Management

3.36 **Programme Outcomes**

- Residents feel that they can work with the council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area
- Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required
- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council and residents, and help to give people pride in the place they live
- The Council's community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs

3.37 **Programme Overview**

3.38 The Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) programme sets out how the Council will work with communities to improve neighbourhoods. Through working together with residents and other partners the Council believes public spaces can be made more attractive and in turn help to give people pride in the place they live. The CNM programme was formally launched at Stevenage Day in June 2017 and is complemented by a new 'Our Neighbourhood' area on the Council's website. Focused investment in neighbourhood improvements has continued to progress throughout the year.

3.39 Expenditure on the programme in 2017/18 amounted to £459,353, which was used for public realm and playground improvements in addition to the neighbourhood warden scheme. A total of £491,600 New Homes Bonus (NHB) has been allocated to fund further improvements and the

neighbourhood wardens in 2018/19. In addition, £40,000 NHB will fund a pilot to trial community involvement in decision making in the wards where the programme has been implemented.

3.40   Key successes during 2017/18 included:

- The majority of public realm enhancements across Pin Green and Shephall have now been completed – works have ranged from replacing worn out concrete parking areas and renewing footpaths to upgrading road signs and repairing/replacing fences, bollards and brick walls. There has been a particular focus on community projects in Shephall, with the Council taking a co-operative approach with Shephall Resident Group to determining and completing improvements.
- Two hundred and sixteen children took part in consultation to inform the design for significant improvements to six play areas across Pin Green, Shephall, St Nicholas and Martins Wood. All six play areas were completed on target.
- All litterbins have been replaced in Shephall and Pin Green and new signage has been installed at five woodland sites across the two wards to provide information to visitors.
- Following discussions with Ward Members, partners, local groups and neighbourhood residents regarding the plans for neighbourhood environment improvements to St Nicholas and Martins Wood, the areas of focus for the two wards in 2018/19 have been agreed.
- Fix My Street reporting improvements have been made, to encourage and support better reporting and resolution of issues.
- Council officers have identified potential opportunities and developed proposals to celebrate and strengthen volunteering in Stevenage both within the community and among Council staff.

3.41   During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Responding to priorities identified through engagement with residents of St Nicholas and Martins Wood in 2017/18, by making significant investment in those wards to improve public spaces and the quality of life of local people. The focus will be on youth engagement/ provision, street lighting, parking issues resolution, open spaces and grounds maintenance and health and wellbeing.
- Engaging with ward Members, partners and communities on the next phase of planned investment in the wards of Bedwell and Longmeadow.
- Investing £230k in outdoor play sites in Bedwell and Longmeadow.
- Seeking Council agreement to a sustainable model for the provision and management of community centres.
- Procuring contractors to launch the Stevenage-wide garage refurbishment programme, with social value requirements being built into the contract.
- Supporting residents in becoming more active members of their community, who make a positive contribution to the town and local area.
- Designing a council-wide framework to support officers and Members in effective and meaningful community engagement.

- Creating a more streamlined approach to increase and enhance volunteering within the Council.

3.42 **Connected to our Customers**

3.43 **Programme Outcomes**

- Use of self-service is encouraged, so more time can be spent with customers that need extra help
- Increased customer satisfaction for residents interacting with key services
- Online customer data will be protected and better used to provide useful insight
- The Council uses technology to meet its ambitions and make its workforce more modern, efficient and responsive to customer needs
- A simple and clearer website with more self-service choices

3.44 **Programme Overview**

3.45 The 'Connected to our Customers' programme aims to improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience. It will enhance the way residents can access Council services through increasing the use of digital options, whilst ensuring that officers continue to spend time with those customers who require additional assistance.

3.46 The town-wide Resident Survey demonstrated support amongst residents for improved digital services: 39% of respondents put 'interacting more with residents and customers on-line' first on their list of ways the Council could save money, whilst 33% indicated that their preferred way to be kept informed was via the website and a further 29% viewed social media as the best channel of communication.

3.47 In February 2017 Members agreed to invest £2.1m over three financial years, of which a significant proportion was for the delivery of the Connected to our Customers Programme.

3.48 In 2017/18 it was recognised that IT improvements were needed to enable the delivery of the wider Connected to Our Customers programme. Therefore the majority of the programme was put on hold pending delivery of these improvements. In November 2017 an IT improvement plan was approved by the Executive. The overarching plan was informed by a range of activity to test the current position and set direction for the future. The improvement plan is based on four key areas of activity: improving resilience, becoming secure, adopting best practice management, and developing a longer-term forward strategy. Taken together, these themes will improve the service over the next 12 months.

3.49 In partnership with East Herts District Council a series of IT infrastructure enhancements have already been delivered including the installation of new storage capacity and the decommissioning of legacy business systems.

3.50 A Digital Transformation Manager has been recruited to oversee and provide additional skills and capacity to deliver the Connected to our Customers Programme. During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Improving the online offer by delivering a simple, clearer website and straightforward online self-service options for key routine transactions, helping customers to self- serve.
- Involving customers and staff in designing and testing new digital products and services before we launch them.
- Launching a new customer strategy that sets out the Council's ambitious plans to improve customer service and promises to deliver a consistent customer service standard across the Council.
- Supporting our overall customer service offer and efficiency by improving back office processes and technology within the Council, and making sure all personal data is secure.

Internal Facing Programmes

Partner of Choice

3.51 **Programme Outcomes**

- Develop new and existing shared services with preferred partners to improve resilience, create efficiencies and establish income opportunities
- Develop the Council's reputation as a professional partner to work with

3.52 **Programme Overview**

3.53 The Council believes that through working with partners it can achieve better outcomes for the town and deliver services more efficiently. The Council has a proven track record of developing a range of partnerships such as those under the Stevenage Together umbrella.

3.54 The Council is part of several successful shared services, including Hertfordshire Building Control (established August 2016), and the new Legal shared service with Hertfordshire County Council (established August 2017).

3.55 In addition the Council is an active participant in a number of partnerships, with a wide array of public sector organisations, which help deliver some of its most important work. Examples include:
- The SoSafe Community Safety Partnership which works to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour within Stevenage
- Working collaboratively with other public sector bodies with property in Stevenage as part of One Public Estate to join up public service and reduce costs
- Delivering improved health and wellbeing opportunities for the town within the multi-agency Healthy Stevenage Partnership
- Regenerating the town centre through the Stevenage First partnership which includes the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP),

Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and
Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce

3.56   After careful consideration, Hertfordshire has decided not to pursue a
        devolution deal with central government at the current time. However, despite
        this decision, there has been significant activity undertaken in Hertfordshire by
        public sector partners in recognition that there are opportunities for even
        greater collaboration across the public sector for the benefit of Hertfordshire
        residents. With this in mind, a Hertfordshire Public Sector Action Plan has
        been developed to outline the key actions that the public sector will take over
        the coming year to work together to achieve its ambitions. The action plan is
        focussed on key activities where one Hertfordshire public sector organisation
        requires assistance from others to enable it to deliver its strategies. The
        development of the action plan has been undertaken by the Hertfordshire
        Public Sector Chief Executives and overseen by the Hertfordshire Public
        Sector Leaders Steering Group.

3.57   As it is now clear that working in partnership is "in the blood" of the Council
        and that there is a strong framework for future collaboration with other public
        sector bodies, the FTFC Programme Board is proposing this programme is
        closed. Development of our partnerships will still continue as part of day-to-
        day business, and any new shared service proposals will be considered and
        implemented within the Financial Security programme.

        Performing at our Peak

3.58   **Programme Outcomes**

        •   The provision of high quality performance management software tools.
        •   Streamlined governance structures that ensure effective and timely
             decision making
        •   A strong performance culture is embedded across the organisation

3.59   **Programme Overview**

3.60   The Council aims to become an insightful Council with improved service
        performance and slimmed down decision-making processes. The programme
        will improve the organisation's insight, analysis and intelligence to help us to
        make better informed business decisions. This is being achieved through
        more timely co-ordination of data and the adoption of tools to support ongoing
        strategic and operational analysis.

3.61   Key successes during 2017/18 included:

        •   The Senior Leadership Team and 4th Tier Managers are now utilising the
             Council's performance and governance system (InPhase). The system
             provides access to data and information that form strategic insight;
             provides a clearer picture of performance to senior management to help
             inform faster action planning and decision making; and provides corporate
             wide transparency of performance and governance information.

- The range of information captured through InPhase has been expanded with the creation of tools to review and report both strategic and business unit risks.
- Steps are being taken to enable council officers to automate the capture of service data that will provide more up-to-date information to inform decisions.

3.62 During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Enhancing business insight through data connectivity and ensuring service managers have the right skills to use the performance management tool robustly to analyse information and make informed decisions that result in improved services for our customers.
- Embedding the performance culture through the effective use of new tools and procedures, to enable lasting performance improvement.
- Completing a review of arrangements for decision making (scheme of delegation) to ensure continued robust and efficient decision-making by council officers at the appropriate level of seniority.

Financial Security programme

3.63 **Programme Outcomes**

Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

3.64 **Programme Overview**

3.65 This programme aims to ensure that the Council has sufficient funds available to deliver quality services that residents want and need. The Council aims to break away from the cycle of dependency on Government grant through becoming more efficient in its processes and developing new and innovative funding streams to ensure it has the resources it needs to be a Council fit for the future and build a vibrant town that residents deserve.

3.66   Key successes during 2017/18 included:

- Despite continued national government austerity the Council has managed to identify a Financial Security savings package for 2018/19, while protecting the much valued front line services.
- A package of financial security savings for both the General Fund (GF) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) totalling £568,360 in 2018/19 were agreed and approved by Full Council.
- Saving options totalling an estimated £94,000 have been identified as part of the 2017/18 outturn process and further options are being progressed to contribute to the 2019/20-2021/22 Financial Security Target.
- As part of the 2017/18 budget setting process, GF and HRA financial security savings of £258,090 were identified of which £233,300 were achieved in year and the remaining £24,790 were implemented from April 2018.
- The commercial property investment initiative has resulted in the purchase of one property and further sites are being actively sought. The acquisition of sites is focused on ensuring economic growth within the town and economic employment area.

3.67   During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Identifying Financial Security options that meet the three-year Financial Security targets (£2.2Million General Fund and £1Million HRA).
- Managing budgetary efficiency through regular monitoring, analysis of trends and robust challenge of spend as part of the efficiency work stream.
- Setting targets and delivering savings against each individual Financial Security work stream including Fees and Charges.

Employer of Choice programme

3.68   **Programme Outcomes**

- Improved employee engagement
- Right person, right place, right time - recruiting/retaining staff to hard to fill posts
- Improved managerial competency
- Improved reputation as a place to work
- Evidence of staff progressing to higher grades and new roles

3.69   **Programme Overview**

3.70   The Council aims to create a flexible, collaborative, creative and modern workforce to ensure it can deliver the priorities set out in the FTFC programme and give residents the standard of services they expect. This programme aims to transform the way the Council works, ensuring that staff have the skills, abilities and experience to deliver excellence. The Council must become an employer of choice so that it can compete in today's market place and attract and retain the best staff to build for the future.

3.71   During 2016/17 the Senior Management Review was completed and a new leadership team is now in place. Through Future Council Business Reviews, work has begun on shaping the next stage of the transformation programme to ensure the Council has the right structures, teams and people in place.

3.72   Key successes during 2017/18 included:

- The implementation of Future Council Business Reviews and associated staff restructure consultations.
- A new staff Performance Improvement Policy and manager toolkit have been introduced, along with a review of the associated policies (absence management, disciplinary and grievance) and proposals to streamline recruitment and job evaluation processes.
- The initial research and planning for a new corporate appraisal scheme has been completed, with the involvement of members of staff, to ensure that the final scheme provides them with appropriate feedback and direction.
- 'My View', the self-service portal of the new Resource Link HR and Payroll system, went live for staff and Members in April.
- A new Intranet has been procured and the work to build new and improved content continues.
- A programme of Strategic Leadership Team learning has been outlined for 2018/19, focusing on enhancing skills to ensure the delivery of the Council's FTFC change programme together with planned service enhancements.
- A new e-learning package and a 'bite-size' manager training programme have been launched that will develop staff knowledge and capability.
- A comprehensive Equality and Diversity training package was delivered to all staff based at Cavendish Road.
- The programme of training for Members (Modern Members Programme) has been relaunched. Training and advisory sessions are developed with input from Members and delivered with support from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU).

3.73   During 2018/19 the programme will focus on:

- Establishing a compelling employer brand with a competitive pay and benefit offer.
- Developing and implementing a competency framework for staff from Grade 1- 9 of the Council's pay structure.
- Managing Organisational Change effectively with a new appraisal process and valuing staff's health and wellbeing.
- Enabling new ways of working to equip staff for the future including policies, practices and culture.
- Developing digital skills and tools to enable staff self-service.
- Creating a new Learning and Development Strategy.

Corporate Performance Highlights and Areas for Improvement

3.74 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme, and the Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix B. The overview of results for April 2017 to March 2018 (quarter 4 2017/18), which includes eleven FTFC measures and thirty-six business unit themed measures, is outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)
47	29	6	12

3.75 Eleven FTFC measures were reported on for April 2017 to March 2018 (see Appendix B) with just two measures not achieving target:

- HDD1c: Number of affordable homes (gross) delivered by the Council (in the current year), target April 2017 to March 2018 42, achieved 34

  Progress on delivery of affordable homes throughout 2017/18 has been good. However, unfortunately, due to adverse weather that prevented rendering work from being carried out as well as issues with utility providers, the Twin Foxes Scheme has been delayed. The scheme of 14 units (8 for affordable rent and 6 for social rent) is now anticipated to be fully completed in June/July.

- Eoc4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as a percentage of the workforce – March 2018 target 2.3%, achieved 1.6%

  This year the Council recruited five new apprentices and two new graduates. There are also a further six members of staff accessing the apprenticeship levy to support the development of their skills. Although the percentage of apprentices was below target at the year-end, the Council has a successful track record in delivering its apprenticeship scheme and since it started, 48% of apprentices have secured ongoing contracts with the Council. During 2017/18, eleven apprentices secured permanent roles, seven of which were with the Council. Staff continue to be encouraged to access continuing professional development through the apprenticeship levy and apprentice opportunities for 2018/19 are expected to be identified through planned corporate workforce planning and Future Council Business Reviews.

3.76 **Key Business Unit Themes Update**

3.77 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement at the end of quarter 4 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support

Customer Theme

3.78 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

Housing and Investment

3.79 To support future housing development at Kenilworth Close, the Housing and Investment team have worked with affected residents at both Asquith and Walpole Court. The team have agreed individual solutions for each household to support their requirements which, in some cases, has meant a move to other suitable independent living schemes.

3.80 Collaborative working between officers of the Voids, Tenancy and Lettings teams continues to improve, supported by the use of modern technology such as the 'Voids App', which allows real time update on current void status to inform prompt tenant viewings.

3.81 As a result of an increase in the number of permanent housing opportunities that have been provided to those in temporary accommodation, at March 2018, only 46 households were living in temporary accommodation. This represents a drop of 46% compared to the previous quarter and a decrease of 58% compared to the same time in the previous year. However, an increase in customers requiring support has been evident during quarter one 2018/19 that is likely to result in an increased need for temporary accommodation solutions and officers anticipate that this trend will continue.

3.82 Rent arrears at March 2018 were the lowest experienced for many years (£328k). This demonstrates that tenants are being supported to find solutions to any financial vulnerability in challenging times.

3.83 Debt Advice Support Officers supported 694 people experiencing financial vulnerability during 2017/18.

3.84 Tenancy prevented the loss of two Council properties at a substantial discounted price through the identification of inappropriate use of the Right to Buy Scheme.

Health and Safety compliant Council buildings (Assets 5)

3.85 Compliance tasks are being completed on Council buildings. There are no current concerns in relation to meeting statutory Health and Safety requirements, but compliance certification is required to demonstrate that the Health and Safety standards that the Council defines are achieved. These were delayed due to the contractor experiencing ICT issues during December 2017 and short term staff resource issues that have now been resolved.

3.86 Performance is being monitored on a weekly basis and the contractor has put in place resources focused on provision of the necessary certification.

However, the delays have not been fully resolved. Officers continue to monitor activity and ensure that the receipt of compliance reports meets the agreed targets. Recruitment is underway for a Compliance Manager to manage the future contract.

- Assets 5: Health and Safety compliance of Council Buildings, April 2017 to March 2018 target 100%, achieved 97%.

Spotlight: Homelessness preventions (BV213)

3.87 Executive were advised (March 2018) that the target for quarter 4 (January to March 2018) was expected to be achieved. However, the service has experienced further staff changes during the quarter with six members of the team leaving. The result for the quarter is currently advised as an estimate (January to March 2018 target 90, achieved 44 est).

3.88 Due to ongoing staff issues experienced throughout 2017/18, the target for the year has not been achieved.

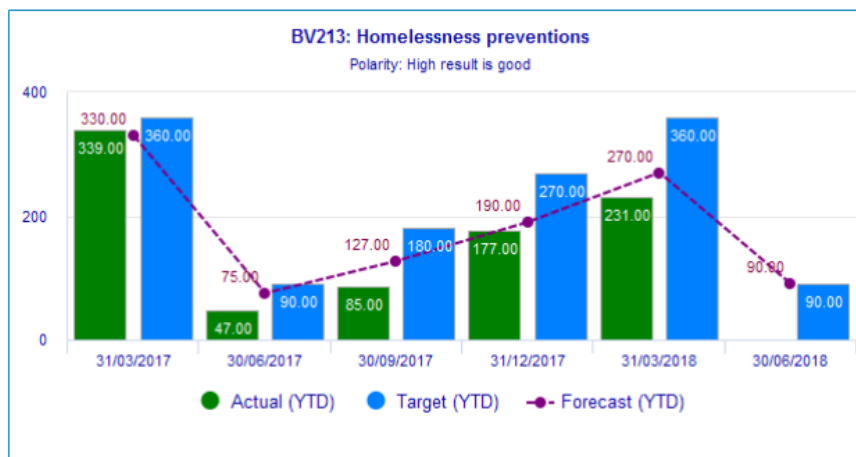- BV213: Homelessness preventions, April 2017 to March 2018 target 360, achieved 231.

Figure 3: BV213 – The number of homelessness preventions

3.89 Initial activity carried out to improve performance includes:
- A training programme for all housing advice staff during quarter 1 2018/19.
- Training on the Homelessness Reduction Act which came into force 3 April 2018 to other housing teams and services during quarter 1 2018/19.

Future plans to improve performance include:
- Consultation for a service redesign that, subject to consultation outcomes, will be implemented by the end July 2018.
- A review of the IT Housing Advice module project 12 months post implementation (Q4 2018/19).
- Collaborating county wide to meet the demand of the new legislation through bi-monthly Hertfordshire Head of Housing meetings.

Review meetings are being held to monitor progress of the implementation of the legislation, including the use of new IT software, and Council officers will continue to monitor implementation.

Communities and Neighbourhood

3.90 The Play Service were finalists for the Team of the Year at the LGC Awards 2018 demonstrating the positive contribution the service makes in supporting local communities.

3.91 The Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Forum won the southern region community action category at the TPAS regional awards. TPAS (Tenant Engagement Experts) aim to recognise and reward the unsung heroes of communities.

3.92 The first cultural strategy for the town, 'Stevenage Re-imagined" was approved by Executive (March 2018) with endorsement from Arts Council England who have pledged to work with Stevenage on the implementation.

3.93 Plans to improve health and well-being for Stevenage residents have been outlined in the Healthy Stevenage Strategy. The plans were informed by a Health Summit held in December attended by more than 80 local organisations and the strategy was launched at the Stevenage Together Forum in March.

Community Safety

3.94 The SoSafe Community Strategy (2018 to 2020) was approved by Executive (April 2018). It outlines some of the SoSafe partnership successes, the priorities over the next three years and the actions the partnership will take to address them. The aim of the strategy is to build safer, stronger and more confident communities and identifies five key objectives:

1. Help to make people feel safe
2. Reduce crime and disorder including criminal damage
3. Protect and safeguard vulnerable people
4. Tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB) co-operatively with partners
5. Break the cycle of substance misuse and offending.

3.95 According to the results of the Resident Survey, almost 9 in 10 (88%) residents feel safe when outside in their local area during the day, and more than half of residents (52%) say that they feel very or fairly safe when outside in their local area after dark. SoSafe will continue to work co-operatively to make communities safer.

- CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population, April 2016 to March 2017: 38.3 incidents per 1,000 population, April 2017 to March 2018: 37.75 incidents per 1,000 population against threshold of 33.1.

- CS9: Criminal damage per 1,000 population, April 2016 to March 2017: 10.72 incidents per 1,000 population, April 2017 to March 2018: 12.86 incidents per 1,000 population against a threshold of 9.13.

- NI15b: the rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000 population, April 2016 to March 2017: 33.12 incidents per 1,000 population, April 2017 to March 2018: 33.58 incidents per 1,000 population against a threshold of 33.07. The scope of crimes now classified as 'violent' was expanded for 2017/18.

Place Theme

3.96 The Place Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Planning and Regulation
- Stevenage Direct Services
- Regeneration
- Housing Development

(The Regeneration and Housing Development Business Units are primarily focused on delivery of the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration and Housing Development Programmes of FTFC. Delivery updates for these programmes are summarised in paragraphs 3.16 to 3.21 and 3.22 to 3.26 respectively.)

Planning and Regulation

3.97 Planning applications have been determined throughout the year within corporate and statutory targets.

3.98 As of March 2018, 96% of food establishments in the area are assessed as broadly compliant with food hygiene law. This means that, as a minimum, they are considered 'generally satisfactory' in the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme that assesses the hygiene, structure and confidence in management of the premises.

3.99 During February 2018 officers surveyed 83 town centre businesses (70 face to face). In general, most stores willing to share information advised that trading levels met or exceeded other stores/competitors, and although footfall had reduced, advised that improvements were evident.

3.100 In April 2018 the Council agreed to join the Herts Home Improvement Agency to help deliver Disabled Facilities Grants and other services to our residents through a single point of contact.

Stevenage Direct Services

3.101 To support improved play areas for toddlers through to teenagers, Executive approved £1.5 million of capital over five years (2017 to 2022), together with £37k annually to support improved maintenance. As referred to in paragraph 3.40, officers consulted with over 200 children and young people over the spring/summer to help inform significant play area improvements to six

sites. Officers have now started consulting with children to inform improvements to play areas across Longmeadow.

3.102 To enhance the Town Centre Gardens Pond a fountain feature was installed to the Women and Doves Statue.

3.103 **Repairs and Voids**

3.104 Repairs Satisfaction

3.105 Repairs satisfaction surveys are currently recorded using e-forms and feedback cards. During quarter 2 (July to September 2017), the Service put additional arrangements in place for telephone surveys to encourage customer feedback and capture customers' views on their experience of the repairs service delivered. This is having a positive impact with the level of satisfaction steadily improving. Customers advised a 94.05% satisfaction level with the service provided for April 2017 to March 2018 (92.5% April to December 2017).

3.106 Repairs Service Delivery

3.107 The completion of repairs by the Council's team continues to meet targets and has improved on the previous quarter achieving an average completion time of 7.5 days during quarter 4 (quarter 4 target 9 days, quarter 3 achieved 8.5 days, target 9.5 days). A number of jobs that have taken a significant time were completed and this has an adverse impact on overall performance. The overall time taken to complete a repair from time of reporting was 11.6 days for April 2017 to March 2018 (10.2 days for April to December 2017). As part of the arrangements to implement and embed the Repairs and Voids improvement programme a Contract Manager has been assigned to implement robust contracts for our supply chain contractors in order to facilitate effective performance management and ensure service delivery to our customers is to expected standards. Work has commenced in conjunction with the Council's procurement team and is expected to be complete by Autumn 2018.

3.108 The Council continues to monitor revised service delivery arrangements introduced during quarter 2 (July to September 2017) to ensure that the materials required are available at the time of repair. (ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time, April 2017 to March 2018 target 90%, achieved 83.82%).

3.109 Voids Sheltered: The time taken to re-let standard sheltered voids.

3.110 On a positive note, twenty properties have been let during quarter 4. The letting of these properties was delayed in order to provide a tailored customer service to vulnerable customers. Once properties are let that have been void for a significant period, the performance figures are negatively affected. Due to the adverse impact of positive customer service on this measure, the measure is proposed for removal from the corporate measure set for 2018/19, but will be monitored by the business unit.

- Voids sheltered: the time taken to re-let standard sheltered voids, April 2017 to March 2018 target 70 days, achieved 111.31 days.

3.111 Void properties continue to be assessed to determine where there is potential to redesign property layout to improve future demand; to determine whether a property needs to be removed from management; and to identify those properties that will continue to be advertised.

3.112 Voids General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids, April 2017 to March 2018 target 26 days, achieved 32.11 days.
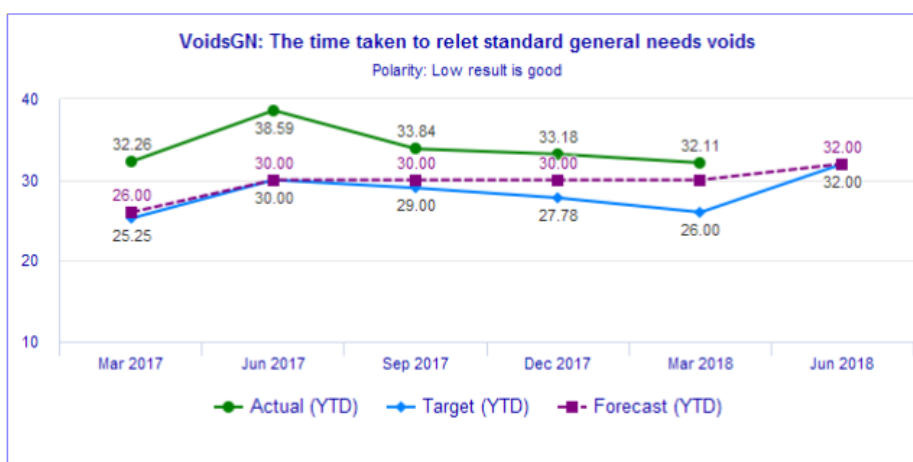
Figure 4: Voids GN – The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids

3.113 Average re-let time performance for April 2017 to March 2018 (32.11 days) has improved on performance to December 2017 (33.18 days).

3.114 Service delivery is improving. A purge of active void cases carried out during quarter four 2017/18 has resulted in an increase in the number of lettings and minimised the number of void cases carried forward into the new financial year.

3.115 As outlined in paragraph 3.80, collaborative working between officers of the Voids Team, Tenancy and Lettings continues to improve supported by the use of technology such as the 'Voids App', which allows real time update on current void status to inform prompt tenant viewings improving re-let times. Repair and Voids performance indicators for 2018/19 have been reviewed and aligned to the work to improve service delivery to ensure future targets are realistic and achievable in year.

3.116 Rental income loss associated with void properties at March 2018 is marginally above the budgeted position for the year. There have been more void properties that required Decent Homes work than anticipated.

3.117 Further work to improve the Repairs and Voids service is ongoing, with a current focus on a review of unit costs for repairs and voids and new projects will be introduced projects being as deemed necessary.

3.118 The ultimate aim of the improvement programme is to ensure that the Repairs and Voids function is operating successfully and serving its customers well which will help enable it to take on further work when deemed appropriate in due course.

Transformation and Support Theme

3.119 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units:
- Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Technology
- Corporate Services and Transformation
- Finance and Estates

Corporate Projects, Customer Services and Technology

Spotlight: Customer Services

3.120 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) was identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at quarter 3 (March 2018 Executive). This focus has been retained until performance demonstrates initial improvement across the full set of CSC measures.

3.121 A significant number of calls to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) are resolved by the CSC advisor that initially answers the call (57.7%). An additional 11.2% are passed to a more appropriately skilled advisor within the CSC in order to provide a response that will meet the customer need at this first point of contact with the Council. This performance measure will be revised for 2018/19 to include both elements of resolution within the CSC.

- CSC13: Percentage of calls closed at first point of contact by the CSC, April 2017 to March 2018 target 62%, achieved 57.7%.

3.122 The availability and flexibility of the current CSC staffing model has been the main factor impacting on CSC performance throughout 2017/18. A new model has been developed for 2018/19 that provides for growth of posts to support the stabilisation of performance, the development of skills in the team and support for new working practices relating to transformation projects.

3.123 During quarter four (January 2018 to March 2018), action to support service performance improvement has focused on recruitment and training:

- A new approach to recruitment was piloted that increased the number of applications and improved the quality of applications received.
- Two advisers were provided with training (to multi-skilled status) increasing flexibility of service delivery.
- A Performance and Training Manager role has been successfully filled (job share)

3.124 The impact of staff resource has been exacerbated by the implementation of new working practices associated with transformation of service delivery for Homelessness and Housing Advice. A review of practice will be carried out to ensure the new service meets customer needs through a sustainable CSC approach.

- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds, April 2017 to March 2018 target 55%, achieved 52.8%.
- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre, April 2017 to March 2018 target 5.5%, achieved 9.7%.
- CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes, April 2017 to March 2018 target 85%, achieved 71.5%.
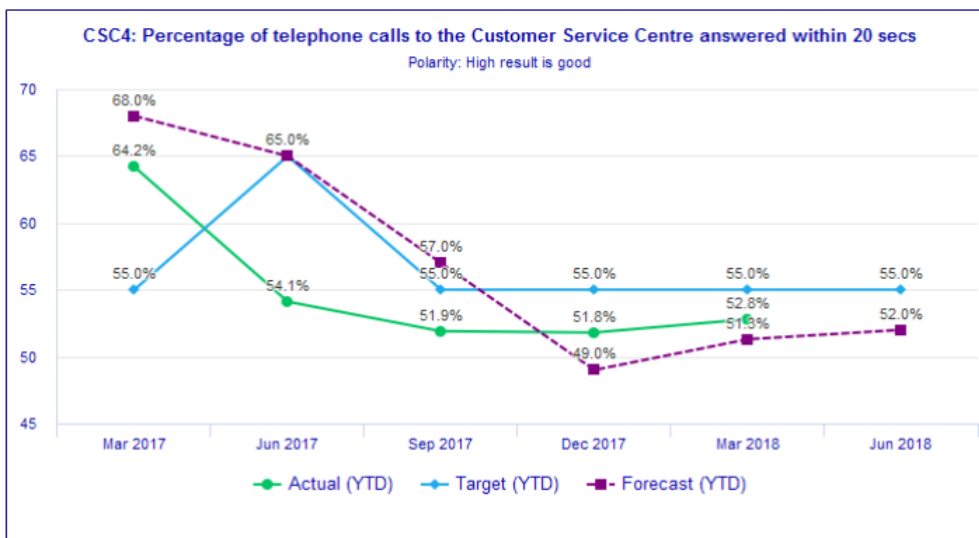

Figure 5: CSC4 – Percentage of telephone calls to the CSC answered within 20 seconds
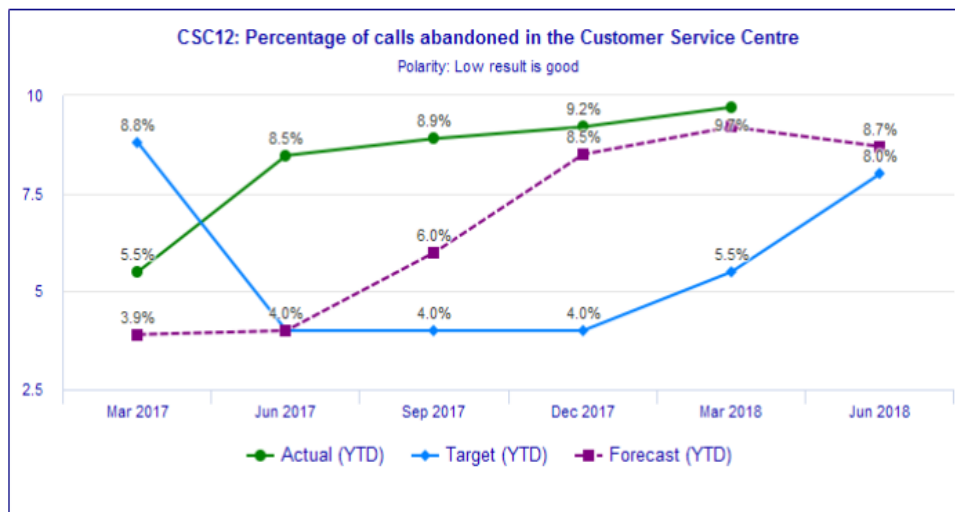

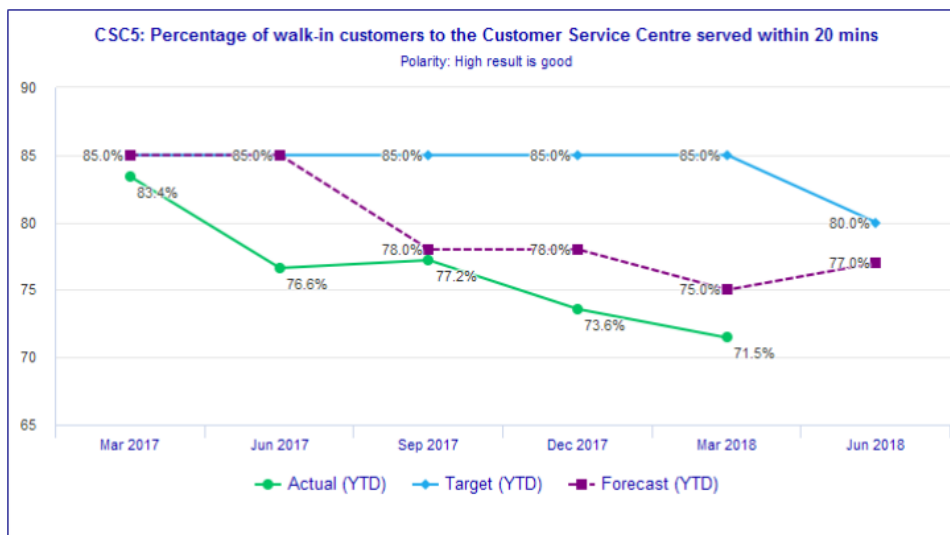Figure 6: CSC12 – Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre.

Figure 7: CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the CSC served within 20 minutes

3.125 Satisfaction in CSC

3.126 Satisfaction with the CSC remains high (89%) and the Council regularly appears in the top ten performing Councils nationally for customer satisfaction for the call centres' walk in services and telephony (captured through Govmetric). Customers like how they are treated by advisers and appreciate the time given to them during a call.

3.127 Plans to stabilise and sustain future CSC performance include:

- A continued focus on improving the availability of advisors:
    - Further focus on recruitment and retention to include the development of a local CSC strategy and recruitment of a new Operational manager – Planning and Resource.
    - Establishing an effective resource planning function that will be assessed against best practice (Professional Planning Forum).
    - A review of the training and coaching development model.
- Implementation of a revised service delivery model, resulting from:
    - A review of working practices within the CSC (considering options such as home working, appointments in the walk-in, and a review of opening hours).
    - The implementation of digital self-service options for customers as part of the Connected to Our Customers programme to drive down transactional and avoidable contact, leaving capacity to provide in-depth services for those in need.
    (Delivery by March 2019)

3.128 Customer Feedback

3.129 The majority of customers are receiving responses to complaints within the corporate targets set and performance is better than both 2016/17 and 2015/16.
- CTOC1: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline, April 2017 to March 2018 target 95%, achieved 94.4% (April 2016 to March 2017 achieved 90.6%, April 2015 to March 2016 achieved 75.15%).

3.130 As advised to Executive (December) senior management reminded service managers of the importance of considering all the evidence available when a complaint is received, to enhance the quality of response and to act upon information to enhance future service delivery. The percentage of complaints progressing to stage two and three that are upheld (Cust1) improved significantly during quarter three and this has been sustained through quarter 4:

- The percentage of complaints that progressed to stage 2 or 3 and were upheld April to December 2017 target 40%, achieved 42.9%, April 2017 to March 2018 achieved 43.7% (i.e. 66 complaints upheld out of a total of 151 escalated to stages 2 or 3)

3.131 To enhance the handling of complaints and quality of complaint responses, the Customer Feedback team routinely offers training to officers with responsibilities for administrating complaints. In addition, services must capture learning on upheld complaints and then record implemented or planned service improvements to improve the service offer and encourage a reduction in customer complaints.

Technology

3.132 IT resilience and availability was tested over the August Bank Holiday due to a fibre break. The availability of core IT systems for January 2018 to March 2018 during supported hours achieved 99.49%.

- ICT1: Percentage availability of core systems during supported hours, April 2017 to March 2018 target 99.5% achieved 98.9%

3.133 Due to identified weakness in the Direction, Control and Execution areas of IT management the Chief Executive is now sponsoring the IT improvement programme. A range of immediate corrective action has already been implemented to address the known weaknesses.

3.134 The production and implementation of the IT Improvement Plan has provided a catalyst for the development and strengthening of officer relationships between East Herts and Stevenage. Securing a partnership of equals, with an open and flexible working relationship is essential for the future success of the shared service.

3.135 During 2017/18 new Strategic Directors and officers were appointed to the Shared IT Service Partnership Board, bringing fresh views on how to set the future strategic direction of the service. The Board itself is included in a governance review which together with a new IT Steering Group, will streamline decision taking. This governance arrangement will be supported by the newly created IT Programme Management Office (IT PMO) function, which will provide control and reporting on the entirety of the projects and 'business as usual' activities carried out by the IT service.

3.136 It is the intention that the Shared Service Partnership Board will oversee the development and adoption of a single IT strategy for the next three to five

years, where currently two separate and outdated strategies have existed. This will set a clear direction for the service and provide a key reference point for clear and timely future funding decisions. The adoption of a single IT strategy will also be critical to the delivery of the Council's digital transformation ambitions, whilst a strategic agreement with East Herts District Council on a joint IT platform, will enhance the customer experience.

3.137 The Assistant Director (Corporate Services and Transformation) has identified that projects and business as usual work was uncontrolled, and this has a significant impact on the IT team's ability to maintain day to day services. In response an interim IT PMO and project management structure has now been introduced and a draft project/work change process drafted for review. All work underway has been reviewed and assigned into a project or programme and the most pressing activities have a project manager assigned. A dashboard for project management has been produced and all projects now have a RAG status applied. The immediate result was felt with the recent Generator power down work that was successful due to the extra effort and process applied. A Technology review is also underway with an external partner to identify and agree improvements to the present infrastructure and create a technology strategy.

3.138 To address issues with Business Engagement and to understand future demand the PMO will work with each business area to develop a pipeline of projects using the engagement process and then help each business area to understand how to prioritise and budget. This pipeline of activity will be shared across all parties for consideration and approval.

3.139 A "Big Picture" of all planned and known activities for up to 5 years is already in development for the IT Partnership. This will enable better planning and prioritisation of resources.

3.140 Small change will be handled by a Small Change Group made up of representative of the business areas, a draft is due for circulation and members are to be sought. It is hoped this will be active in July 2018 and will act to prioritise work for normal small change in the group. The External Enterprise Architect will act as Interim Chair to ensure a smooth take up.

3.141 The Assistant Director (Corporate Services and Transformation) and the IT Transformation Lead are also working with the IT team on driving forward service improvement using International IT Service Management Standards. This includes undertaking service reviews and reaching agreement on improved processes in June 2018. These will concentrate on improving incident and problem management which will enable better allocation of effort and resources to fix issues. It has been determined that many of the tools used by the IT Team are adequate and are able to be further utilised to provide better performance so it is expected that following good practice and new policies will improve the responsiveness of the service.

Corporate Services and Transformation

Our staff

3.142 The HR and Payroll system, 'MyView', has now been live for one year (April 2017). The system has provided staff with opportunities to update contact information, access payslips and request leave. Future plans for development include establishing self-service requests for mileage and expenses claims. Information is used by Human Resources to maintain accurate information and is providing more accurate performance data.

3.143 The Council's Human Resources team continue to work with service managers to ensure that all Council staff appraisals and objective setting meetings are completed (to include new officers appointed). The rate of completion for staff appraisals is now 100%.

3.144 Agency Usage: The use of agency staff has reduced over 2017/18, but is slightly above the March 2018 target. The primary reasons for the use of agency staff are to ensure continuous service delivery where there are staff vacancies or sickness absence.

- Pe2: Agency usage as a percentage of total workforce, April 2017 to March 2018 target 10%, achieved 11.1%

Spotlight: Sickness Absence

3.145 The management of sickness absence was identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at quarter 3 (March 2018 Executive). This focus has been retained until revised policy and practice indicates a sustained reduction on levels of sickness absence.

3.146 There has been an increase in the number of long-term complex health conditions being managed. This has been a focus of long-term absence management which now accounts for 54% of sickness absence (60% at December 2017).

3.147 At the end of quarter 4 average sickness absence within 7 of the 9 business units was below the corporate target of 8 days. The only two business units that were above target were Stevenage Direct Services (14.29 days) and Housing and Investment (11.49 days). HR business partnering support is continuing to be targeted at these business units and other service teams that have high levels of sickness absence to effectively review sickness absence information and ensure compliance with the application of the recently revised Absence Management Policy.

3.148 A programme of training is continuing to be delivered to provide managers with the skills to effectively manage sickness absence. Sickness absence is now recorded using the HR system, 'MyView' and this has improved the accuracy of performance reported. This will provide managers with access to real time sickness information to support absence management.

3.149 Realistic but differential stretch targets (as seen below) are to be applied to the nine business units during 2018/19 to help ensure the corporate target of 8 days is achieved:

Service Area	Average over last 5 years	Proposed Target for 2018/19
Housing and Investment	10.3	9.0
Communities and Neighbourhoods	6.9	5.0
Stevenage Direct Services	12.1	11.0
Regeneration	0.8	1.0
Housing Development	11.6	2.0
Planning and Regulatory	5.0	5.0
Corporate Services	5.8	5.0
Finance and Estates	6.2	5.0
Corporate Projects, Customer Services & IT	4.6	5.0
SLT Sponsors	1.8	0.5

3.150 In addition a business case for the introduction of a third party reporter service that will ensure staff receive early advice and support to help improve their attendance has been approved by the Strategic Leadership Team and is currently being procured.

- Pe4a: Sickness Absence rate threshold for twelve months to March 2018 per fte 8 days, achieved 9.5 days.
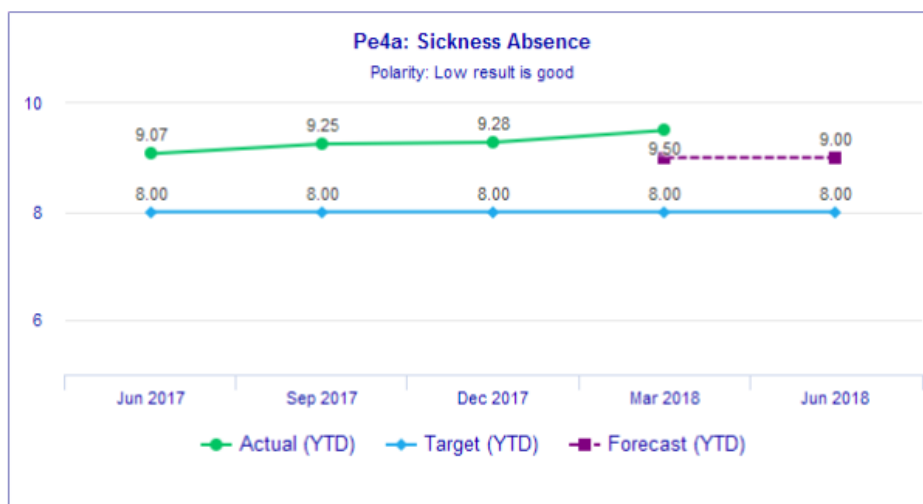

Figure 8: PE4a: Sickness Absence rate for the current workforce (days per fte)

Finance and Estates

3.151 To support robust financial management a range of procurement and contract management training was delivered to council officers.

3.152 Housing Benefit Claims and changes are now being processed in just 3.04 days and have consistently improved during 2017/18. Benefit processing times for April 2017 to March 2018 are 7.16 days.

- Time taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events (NI181) April to June 2017 achieved 13.94 days, July to September achieved 8.03 days, October to December achieved 7.11 days, January to March 2018 achieved 3.04 days (results updated from year to date values to results for the appropriate quarter)

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 **Performance and Achievements of the Council during 2017/18**

4.2 The information presented in this report is taken from a review of the year's Corporate and Future Town Future Council performance measures and the information supplied from each service. It aims to give Executive an overview of the achievements the Council has made this year despite continued austerity and reflects our need for continued improvements in some areas to ensure the Council is fit for the future.

4.3 **Annual Report Purpose and Content**

4.4 The Annual Report 2017/18 emphasises the co-operative approach of the Council to service design and delivery. It highlights how the Council has been able to continue to meet the needs of the community despite the tough economic challenges the Council has faced and it outlines the progress against the transformation programme Future Town Future Council.

4.5 The document reflects on the achievements against the Corporate Plan 'Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council over the last year as well as a brief summary of what the Council aims to achieve in the forthcoming year to deliver the Corporate Plan, supporting the annual review of outcomes and priorities.

4.6 The Senior Leadership team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to suggest the key achievements for the annual report.

4.7 The Annual Report will be published on the Council's website and will be promoted through social media and the Chronicle magazine.

4.8   **Council Performance Measures 2018/19**

4.9   The impact of the broad transformation being applied across the Council has been considered when determining appropriate measures and targets to monitor performance throughout 2018/19. The full suite of 2018/19 measures and targets can be seen in Appendix C. These have been separated into current measures, new quarterly measures and new annual for ease of reference.

4.10   Portfolio holders have been briefed on the new performance measure suite, approximately half of which have been introduced to monitor outcomes relating to the FTFC programmes as delivery accelerates.

4.11   **Performance Improvement Plans**

4.12   A number of areas have been identified in Section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement is required and outline plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

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 improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any future resourcing needs.

5.2   **Legal Implications**

5.2.1   There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3   **Risk Implications**

5.3.1   There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). Officers responsible for developing performance improvement plans will need to consider any risk implications from the improvement activity identified.

5.3.2   The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

5.4   Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Corporate Plan Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council. This helped to determine any negative, positive or disproportionate impact our outcomes and priorities might have on people in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Furthermore officers responsible for improvement activity identified within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting Equality implications.

5.5   Policy Implications

5.5.1 The council's Corporate Plan is the keystone in the Council's policy framework. It sets out the Council's strategic priorities and informs the corporate improvement and change programmes.

5.5.2 The Corporate Plan impacts on some Council services and its priorities should be reflected in all relevant Business Unit planning processes.

5.5.3 The Annual report 2017/18 highlights the Council's co-operative approach to services. It ensures the Council continues to communicate its improvement priorities and co-operative vision to the people of Stevenage.

5.6   Other Corporate implications

5.6.1 Improvement activity outlined may impact on the development of future policy or procedure.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

▪   Council Corporate Plan: Our Co-operative Council; Future Town Future Council December 2016 Council
▪   Executive Report March 2018 – Corporate Performance for Quarter 3

APPENDICES

▪   Appendix A: Council Annual Report 2017/18
▪   Appendix B: Council Performance measures 2017/18
▪   Appendix C: Council Performance measures 2018/19