

Part I – Release to Press

Meeting EXECUTIVE

Portfolio Area NEIGHBOURHOODS & CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL

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CO-OPERATIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME DELIVERY 2018-19

NON-KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report summarises the delivery of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme to date and outlines plans for 2019-20 delivery moving forwards.

2 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive note the delivery of activity undertaken through the programme to date.
- 2.2 That the Executive note the proposed forward plan for the CNM programme over the coming year.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As a provider of public services, it is important that continuing efforts are made to maintain and improve the appearance of the Borough's neighbourhoods. One of the aims of co-operative working is to work for and with our communities, supporting them to take ownership of, and realise the improvements they want in their local area. Ward walkabouts took place in all 13 wards between June and September 2015 and were led by Members and Community Development Officers. The Chief Executive and Senior Managers accompanied them. Resulting from the walkabouts was greater understanding of some of the unique strengths of each ward, such as:
 - A real connection between Members and residents
 - A higher than expected level of community engagement and involvement
 - A real sense of belonging amongst residents
 - · Excellent neighbourhood and community facilities
 - Generally well looked after and public and privately owned areas

However, a number of challenges were also identified, with some public areas looking tired due to the ageing appearance of much of the public realm, some pockets of fly tipping and poor landscaping. A number of garage blocks looked poorly maintained and uninviting. As a Co-operative Council it was also clear that there was a real opportunity to work with local residents to resolve these issues with longer term solutions.

- 3.2 The 2015 Residents Survey suggested that some residents felt less able to influence local decisions in their local areas. A neighbourhood focussed programme therefore created a real opportunity to address this.
- 3.3 'Co-operative Neighbourhoods' was subsequently identified and approved in October 2015 as one of SBC's nine priorities for the following five years under the 'Future Town, Future Council' Programme – Co-operative Neighbourhood Management. This included a commitment of £1.8m targeted investment over the years of the programme. The programme schedule focussed on 2 wards per year from 2016 – 2020. The order corresponding with resident satisfaction levels based on the resident's survey findings.

Year	Wards
2017-18	Pin Green, Shephall
2018-19	St Nicholas, Martins Wood
2019-20	Bedwell, Longmeadow
2020-21	Old Town, Roebuck
2021-22	Symonds Green, Manor
2022-23	Woodfield, Bandley Hill, Chells

Central to the programme was a more co-operative way of working with local communities, designing solutions based on local priorities. To do this Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) needed to gain a better understanding of its unique communities, what their issues were and how the council could facilitate the required changes. SBC also needed to ensure that its staff were experienced, trained and empowered to be conduits for neighbourhood development. A commitment was made to work with communities to design and deliver a targeted investment programme that would achieve real improvements, as well as improve their sense of belonging, increase opportunities for community engagement and ownership. A Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Board was structured in 2016 to bring together workstreams and project managers together to drive these ambitions forward and fulfil the outcomes of the programme.

4.0 CNM VISION AND OUTCOMES

4.1 Vision – what SBC wants to achieve:

'To work with and for our communities to improve our neighbourhoods'

Outcomes – what will happen when this is achieved:

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

4.2 EARLY FOCUS

Initially the CNM programme focused on a programme of environmental improvements envisaged to address some of the issues identified in the ward walkabouts:

- Litter bin renewal
- Play area renewal
- Shrub bed improvements
- Improving hard standings

4.2.1 RE-PROVISIONING LITTER BINS

During 2017/18, all litter bins were replaced in Pin Green and Shephall. A further £34k was spent during 2018/19 on replacing litter bins in St Nicholas and Martins Wood.

4.2.3 PLAY INVESTMENT

During 2016 officers completed a review of all play areas in Stevenage, and a report was subsequently presented to the Executive Committee in February 2017 making recommendations for the future delivery of exciting, high quality play spaces. Members approved an investment (£1.5 million) to upgrade and provide 21 primary sites in the main parks and larger open spaces, along with 24 secondary site and 10 playscapes, all of which would ensure an excellent level of sustainable provision across the town. This investment has been delivered as a module of the Council's Co-operative Neighbourhood Management programme. The content and design of play spaces has been determined by local children, young people and residents. The scheme has led to the following achievements:

- Consultation with over 500 children and young people, took place during the last two years, which has informed the improvements to the play areas.
- During 2018 play area improvements have been delivered to Balmoral Close, Blenheim Way, Holly Leys and Fairlands Valley Park.
- Revised and improved signage has been installed to all play areas within each ward.

4.2.4 SHRUB BED IMPROVEMENTS:

In 2016/17 Shrub beds in Shephall and Pin Green of 6,500m2 and 4,500m2 were either cultivated or removed to improve the aesthetic of verges. However, work has been taking place to simplify the licence to occupy process to encourage community groups and individuals to take ownership and maintain shrub beds/planters of importance to them. To date, this has resulted in successful projects in Roebuck, with planters opposite the parade of shops, which are now being maintained by Roebuck Residents Group and more recently a project to improve planters adjacent to Peartree shops has been taken on by Shephall Residents Group.

4.2.5 HARDS STANDINGS IMPROVEMENTS (ref 5.1)

In 2017 work began to improve council-owned paved areas and street furniture in Pin Green. The Engineering Team carried out inspections and picked up and repaired or reported defects in 213 public realm areas across the ward. The programme built on strong member-led community work, which saw new and innovative engagement methods involve residents in setting local priorities and driving projects.

A number of defects across 197 sites were found in Shephall defects were nevertheless found alongside two larger projects as detailed in 5.1.

In St Nicholas during 2018, the focus was once again on hardstand works although additional defects were repaired and reported as detailed in 5.1

During 2018 the CNM board reset the aims for this work stream to ensure public realm improvements progressed were more in line with wider community aspirations, than based purely on officer assessments. In Martins Wood this has led to requests to build a new path to the Community Garden at the Oval and to install a new "Welcome to the Oval" sign both of which will be completed in 2019. Further requests for street lighting at Hampson Park (Pin Green) and Truro Court (St Nicholas) have resulted in new columns being installed, particularly to address community safety concerns in the evening.

5.0 DELIVERY TO DATE

5.1 Ward	Year	Delivery highlights
Pin Green	2016- 2017 In 2016 work began in Pin Green with the programme building upon the strong Member-led community work. This saw new and innovative engagement methods involving residents at the centre of setting local priorities to drive forward their chosen projects. Over the course of the year, this resulted with	 A new Community Centre opening at Hampson Park Young people designing a new skate park Residents creating a 'Friends of' group to support maintenance of Hampson Park New play equipment being installed in Hampson Park and Archer Road Installation of signage to woodlands at Almonds Spring and Sishes Wood. 100 bins being replaced 200 shrub beds being renewed Over 200 public realm defects repaired or renewed
Shephall	2017- 2018 Although community activity was slower to emerge in Shephall, a range of improvements were achieved:	 New play equipment at Peartree Park and Leaves Spring have been installed Installation of signage to woodlands at Shackleton Springs, Loves Wood and Ridlins Wood. Restoration of a raised paved area, walls and railings in Cannix Close. 23 road and street signs have been replaced 126 shrub beds have been renewed 133 new bins have been installed 34 fences or bollards have been renewed 197 public realm improvements

St Nicholas	2018-2019 During 2018, a neighbourhood action plan was developed after extensive consultations with local residents and partners in St Nicholas and Martins Wood that led to the following improvements:	•	New play equipment at Canterbury Way and St Nicholas Park Over 360 public realm improvements 63 bins replaced Parking and paving at St Nicholas Community Centre renewed Truro Court lighting improved Community evening walks to address perceptions of anti-social behaviour, crime and night time safety
Martins Wood	2018-2019	•	Play improvements to Chepstow Close, Martins Wood and The Oval 87 bins replaced Oval community garden restored and a new path installed CCTV improvements

6.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

- 6.1 In 2017 three Neighbourhood Warden posts were created and funded by New Homes Bonus, initially on a fixed term basis of two years. They were to be the eyes and ears of the community and to continue to drive forward the investment programme. They focussed on two priority wards each as follows:
 - Pin Green and Bedwell
 - St Nicholas and Martins Wood
 - Shephall and Bandley Hill

Neighbourhood Wardens have since driven a number of activities to resolve neighbourhood issues in local areas. These have included:

- Community 'clean-up' days working with volunteers, councillors and organisations to tackle fly tipping/littering
- Issuing over 30 fixed penalty notices for fly tipping offences
- Dealing with over 600 complaints reported through Fix my Street.
- Regular attendance at resident group meetings to help problem solve and refer issues to the appropriate departments/organisations.

In addition to this, and more recently, the Neighbourhood Wardens led on a project in partnership with Peartree Springs School in Shephall to improve an alleyway that is a popular route for families attending the school. After the initial clean-up, further works carried out by SBC included; widening the path to create passing points, improving access by widening the existing steps, and repairing a fence. The bus company, Arriva also agreed to sponsor an additional litter bin and volunteered their staff to plant shrubs/bulbs.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Play area improvement	£360000	£332500	£252700
Litter bins replacement	£16000	377500	£54000
Hard standings	£9957	£65182	£71103
Green space signage	£17000	0	0
Public realm (approx.) inc priorities determined by community engagement/consultation activities and using participatory budgeting (2019 onwards)	£57000	£40000	£143300
Neighbourhood Wardens*	£13210	£89230	£125000

7.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD INVESTMENTS TO DATE:

*Wardens will be mainstreamed for 2019-20 onwards through Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Unit Review.

7.1 Additional value has been secured through the involvement of elected members through their use of Local Community Budgets (LCB) that are being used to deliver identified neighbourhood priorities. Some examples are outlined below:

2016: Pin Green Residents Association, Friends of Hampson Park and Ward councillors joined forces to produce a community plan and Neighbourhood Agreements following the relocation and redevelopment of the community centre from Archer Road to Hampson Park. Total investment: £1600.

2017: Pin Green Community Association received funding for the installation of two CCTV cameras. Total investment: £448. During this year the association received a further £500 to install a fenced area at the back of the new community centre to provide a secure space for events, play opportunities and an outside environment specifically for centre users.

2017: Peartree Spring Primary School in Shephall received LCB funding and worked in partnership with SBC to improve an alley way near to the school (ref. 6.1). Total investment: £500

2018: Longmeadow and Bragbury End Gardening Club received LCB funding to further enhance community engagement within and outside Longmeadow through projects such as; a woodland walk and action day along Blenheim Way, supporting other garden projects around the town, purchasing new benches, plants and power tools and to continue maintaining community gardens at Lismore and Bragbury End. Total investment: £2250

8.0 LEARNING

8.1 Reflecting on the CNM programme so far has raised many opportunities to learn and improve on what has already been delivered and achieved. This includes taking more time to build relationships and community capacity as this has been key to achieving a deep understanding of a community's priorities and aspirations. Gaining insight and knowledge about a given area will enable decision making to come from a neighbourhood level rather than being based on assumptions made by council officers which has happened in the past. Furthermore, the need to ensure elected members remain central to driving neighbourhood improvements as they will have extensive knowledge of their wards and the people that live, work or visit them. Therefore they need to be a part of the planning process form the onset and remain involved throughout.

Improvements the programme needs to focus on include; ensuring cooperative working is embedded into all project delivery and that the approach is 'doing with' rather than 'doing to' local communities. Furthermore, whilst the council has made great strides to improve environmental factors such as; public realm, open spaces, play areas, the collective impact of these improvements have not been clearly communicated to local neighbourhoods. There are real opportunities to improve on this with more targeted communications plans.

9.0 ENABLING SOCIAL ACTION PROJECT

In 2018 Stevenage was successful in bidding to be one of two pilot areas for the Enabling Social Action Partnership, sponsored by the Office for Civil Society through the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. This has resulted in a series of action learning workshops facilitated by the Universities of Hull and Sheffield to explore how Stevenage can unlock greater potential with social action and community involvement through the CNM programme.

The learning has enabled the programme to reflect on successes and challenges during the initial years of the CNM programme. This has included taking a longer term approach to neighbourhood management in order to fully engage with local people and gain a deeper understanding of our communities' priorities (ref 8.1).

10.0 REVISING SBC's APPROACH TO NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 It is proposed that the focus in each neighbourhood extends beyond the initial 12 months. This reflects the time necessary to build insight, relationships and community-led action. A proposed operating model will see community work start in each neighbourhood during the target years but with extended project delivery over the following 2 years. This will allow for opportunities to build more enduring and sustainable activities moving forwards. The process will begin with community led engagement, working with ward members and local stakeholders to get to know and be known within specific neighbourhoods enabling local community priorities to be determined. This will supplemented by delivering some 'quick wins' achieved based on identified priorities that will build community confidence and support.
- 10.2 Delivery of projects identified through extensive enagement activities will be completed by project leads and co-ordinated by the Neighbourhood Manager. Enagement will be sustained with local stakeholders and ward members following completion to ensure the community continues to be supported to develop. Work is also currently underway to create an Area-Based Working model to ensure town-wide coverage from the team, working alongside teams in Stevenage Direct Services and Housing to ensure localised issues are addressed more effectively, in a joined-up way.

11.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL GOVERNANCE PROPOSAL

- 11.1 In order to address some of the learning it is proposed that the governance arrangements of the neighbourhood programme are embedded more at the neighbourhood level, starting with the engagement and involvement of local ward members and residents. The proposal for a neighbourhood forum/resident group will be decided by each neighbourhood and will be shaped according to their local requirements and needs. SBC will be facilitators if requested to be so and will ensure representation at meetings. A co-operative council officer board will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis with a more encompassing co-operative remit, to drive new cooperative initiatives across the council. This may include furthering ambitions around wealth creation across the town and embedding a new area-focussed operating model for council services.
- 11.2 It is also clear that a focus on emerging issues from neighbourhoods should be part of a continuous cycle of service planning and delivery. Emerging findings from the current ward walkabouts will help to drive further plans for improvements with area-based teams as they are established.

Extending this area based working model to include SDS and Housing teams will provide better opportunities to align work and create more responsive service delivery working across neighbourhoods. This will result in creating greater impact in local areas and a more sustainable future operating model.

12.0 PARTICIPATORY BUDGETS

- 12.1 This approach will also introduce a participatory budgeting pilot scheme of £40000 by engaging residents in meaningful consultation in the wards that the CNM programme has prioritised to allow community input into decision making in those areas during 2018\19 and 2019\20. The monies are proposed to be used initially in Shephall, Martins Wood and St Nicholas, to fund stimulating and innovative delivery of neighbourhood improvements/projects that have been identified by local people. This process will also help to inform future mainstream funding as it will have been determined by the community's first hand involvement and decision making. It will also provide an opportunity to work with ward members to consider how LCB's might contribute towards identified community priorities in the future.
- 12.2 Extensive engagement activities have already taken place in Shephall and these have produced a range of priorities to be actioned. These will be culminate in a public vote on projects in early summer 2019.

13.0 A RENEWED VISION

13.1 The CMM programme has set out a renewed vision

'The neighbourhoods of Stevenage are places where residents are proud to live in and feel safe and well, and where people and organisations work together (co-operatively) to make things better'.

Over the course of 2018 the Business Unit Review for Communities and Neighbourhoods was undertaken to ensure there was sufficient capacity to deliver the CNM programme. A community development service was created to drive the programme forward.

Supporting this, the realignment of resources across the business unit ensured that the four Neighbourhood Warden posts were mainstreamed as part of a more sustainable offer, with one warden recruited specifically to address issues in high footfall areas, such as the Town Centre.

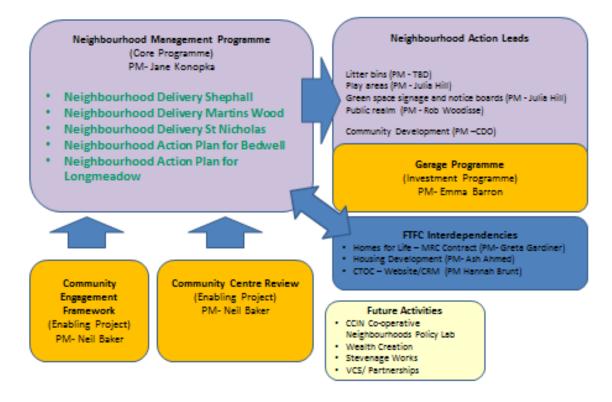
Furthermore the need for a framework setting out the dynamic ways in which the council can engage with the town's residents was identified alongside Cooperative Neighbourhood Management work. There are numerous examples of community engagement practice across the town, often led by elected members and supported by officers, but these are not always documented with learning shared across council teams.

The development of a new Community Engagement Framework, presented to the Executive in February, helps to illustrate the council's commitment to residents and the way the council responds to community needs and aspirations. The Co-operative Neighbourhood Management Programme represents a very clear corporate priority to work with local residents to improve local neighbourhoods. The framework enhances opportunities to further develop Co-operative Neighbourhood Management whilst also embracing a wide ranging response to communities needs and aspirations across the town. The framework was approved by Exec in February 2019 and will be published in March 2019.

14.0 FOCUS MOVING FORWARDS

- 14.1 To ensure that the focus remains on what communities really aspire to achieve in their local area, attention must be given to ensure:
 - Ownership is at a neighbourhood level and led in partnership by ward members, communities and council officers. This includes the use of participatory budgeting and targeted LCB investment being directly used to achieve identified community priorities
 - The social impact is captured as well as the physical i.e. community wellbeing, safety, skills
 - Strong project and communications planning underpins all community engagement and projects
 - Strong performance management is conducted and clear key performance indicators are monitored through to achievement.
 - Governance is re-focussed at a neighbourhood level. Co-operative Board to drive council's co-operative agenda i.e. wealth creation, VCS partnership, enabling projects.

15.0 2019/20 DELIVERY



15.1 The programme is due to start undertaking further community engagement in Bedwell and Longmeadow in 2019 as the programme extends to these wards and builds on the successful delivery of the play improvement programme completed during 2018 in these ares. The engagement work will explore a range of opportunities both in terms of physical improvements but will also explore health and wellbeing, skills and social improvements in relation to the Healthy Stevenage strategy and Stevenage Works initiative. The engagement activity will also look at opportunities to develop the "Living Streets" agenda as part of the council's Transport Strategy.

In addition to this, the play improvement programme will continue to deliver improvements in the wards of Roebuck and the Old Town. Sites include:

Roebuck:

Shephalbury Park, St Margarets Spencer Way (subject to adopting the land from the developers)

Old Town:

Burymead (The Avenue) Whitesmead Recreation Ground.

15.2 The CNM Programme is funded through the council's allocation of New Homes Bonus. The projected funds available for 2019/20 (Bedwell and Longmeadow) are outlined below.

	2019/20
Play	£137000
Hard standings	£50000
Litter bins	£121000
Public realm (approx.) inc priorities determined by community engagement/consultation activities and using participatory budgeting (2019 onwards)	£142000

15.3 During the early part of 2019/20 a conference event will be held with other stakeholders to share the council's achievements and learning to date and to lead a 'Call to Action' for other public bodies, including Hertfordshire County Council and funders to support the work to drive neighbourhood improvements. This will help to capture the benefits of working in partnership to improve the quality of life for local residents.

16.0 SUPPLEMENTARY PROJECTS DRIVEN THROUGH THE CNM PROGRAMME

16.1 The following strategic projects have also been delivered through the CNM programme:

16.2 THE COMMUNITY CENTRE REVIEW

- The review of community centres started in 2017, sponsored through the councils Co-operative Neighbourhood Management Programme.
- The initial review built upon previous reviews undertaken in 2003 and 2008. The review explored current operations across all sites and utilised Stevenage Community Association Network meetings to better understand some of the joint challenges and future opportunities.
- The review highlighted some of the current innovation and good practice with community centres and associations, while highlighting the need for further community consultation within the town on needs and aspirations for 21st century community buildings.
- Consultation work will now form the second stage of this review process, involving community associations and wider public views.

Review work area	Start date	Completion date
Cooperative Compact Partnership	January 2019	March 2020
Community Consultation	January 2019	August 2019
Final Report	July 2019	September 2019

16.3 THE GARAGE PROGRAMME

In October 2018 Executive approved an extension to the flatblock refurbishment contract to include the improvement of council-owned garages. The team have been working with the contractors – Wates Living Space and Mulalley and Partners – to inspect the garages in the programme and design a schedule of priced works. Surveys will soon get underway for the garage blocks that are due for refurbishment in years two and three of the programme, so that a comprehensive and fully-costed schedule can be designed and all neighbourhood engagement proactively planned in advance. Works to two sites located on Albert Street and Gladstone Court will be completed between February and March 2019. The team will use these to evaluate the approach and processes they have in place to ensure the intended outcomes of the garage programme are achieved. In conjunction with the works being completed, the refurbishment team are working with our Neighbourhood Wardens and local residents to resolve any known antisocial behaviour issues surrounding these blocks.

17.0 OTHER FUTUER TOWN, FUTURE COUNCIL INTERDEPENDENCIES

17.1 <u>Homes for Life</u> – Through the Major Refurbishment Contract(MRC) early conversations have developed to see how the MRC can support the wider aspirations of CNM programme. The Community Development team have met with contractors to secure an additional £5000 to support community-led projects over the course of the next year. This relationship can be further developed to build on apprenticeships, skills and training for local residents.

<u>Housing Development</u>: The successful regeneration of Archer Road, including the re-location of the community centre to Hampson Park is being used to inform the Kenilworth Road development.

<u>Town centre Regeneration</u>: Partnership working between the council's Housing Development team and Community Development will support future community engagement with Bedwell in 2020/21 as this ward also forms part of the town centre regeneration plans.

<u>Employer of Choice</u>: During 2018 the programme oversaw the development of a staff volunteering policy as part of the council's Corporate Social Responsibility agenda. The policy enables staff across the council to better connect and support some of the CNM activities, offering skills, time and expertise to community-led initiatives.

<u>Connected To Our Customers</u>: The planned development of the council's digital transformation offer will increase how it engages with its customers. There is a clear link between the council's digital ambitions and its relationship with communities that will be further developed as this programme develops.

18.0 FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- 18.1 In January 2019 the council was successful in its bid to drive a Co-operative Neighbourhood Policy Lab through the Co-operative Council Innovation Network. The Policy Lab will share the Stevenage learning at a national level and help to develop clear policy proposals as to why neighbourhood management delivers good and effective council services. Stevenage will lead this work in conjunction with other CCIN member councils. This will culminate in a report of findings in 2020.
- 18.2 The CNM programme will also further look at opportunities to support a Stevenage approach to wealth creation, looking at more opportunities to lock in the circulation of money and resources to support the Stevenage economy and local residents.

19.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 19.1 The review to date has highlighted the importance of engaging more fully with Stevenage communities to gain a deeper understanding of priorities and aspirations. This has led to the recommendation of increasing the length of time given to successfully deliver neighbourhood improvements.
- 19.2 The review has highlighted the need to work more co-operatively with Stevenage communities and partners. In particular we need to form stronger links with our partners at HCC in order to align and influence their planned future neighbourhood investment.
- 19.3 These recommendations have been highlighted by learning through the Enabling Social Action Programme and in partnership with ward members, existing stakeholders, resident groups and previous feedback from completed projects.

20.0 IMPLICATIONS

20.1 Financial Implications

The CNM programme relies on New Homes Bonus Funding each year. If this is removed or decreases, future planned improvements work may not be achievable.

20.2 Legal Implications

There are currently no legal implications

20.3 Risk Implications

At this stage, risk levels are low. This will be reviewed if and when changes occur to the CNM programme or how it is funded in the future.

20.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Equality and diversity in relation to neighbourhood planning and development delivery formed a central platform of the initial review process. The council is committed to ensuring that the CNM programme enhances community cohesion and builds stronger communities across the town. Equality and diversity will therefore have a central role in how we engage with our Stevenage communities and ensure all voices/opinions are heard. We will also serve the following protected characteristic groupings, by being safe, equitable and providing welcoming environments.

- Age
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Identity
- Race

- Maternity and Paternity
- Disability
- Religion and Belief

20.5 Information Technology Implications

In order for the community development team to be fully integrated and working at a neighbourhood level, IT needs to be fit for purpose and robust enough to facilitate remote working. To support this, the team will also be required to negotiate 'working hubs' within community buildings to base themselves in order to be accessible and visible.

20.6 Safeguarding Children Implications

Safeguarding implications will be fully assessed during consultation and all community development activities. The council will ensure consultation with children and young people follows national standards in ensuring safety and security for those involved.