

Meeting: EXECUTIVE

Portfolio Areas: The Leader

Date: 10 July 2019



2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

NON-KEY DECISION

Authors – Charlie Smith/ Chloe Norton Ext. 2457/2501
Contributors – Katrina Shirley Ext. 2018, All Assistant Directors
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 2018/19 and to consider arrangements for final publication.
- 1.2 To highlight the Council's performance across a number of key themes and priorities during 2018/19.

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 2018/19.
- 2.2 That the content of the Council's draft Annual Report 2018/19 at Appendix 2 be agreed.
- 2.3 That delegated authority be given to the Interim Strategic Director (Communities), following consultation with the Leader, to approve any final changes to the Annual Report prior to its publication.
- 2.4 That the suite of 2019/20 performance measures at Appendices 3a and 3b be noted.
- 2.5 That improvement activity in the Customer Service Centre is noted and future plans to improve performance during 2019/20 are endorsed (outlined in paragraphs 3.121 to 3.123).

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- 2.6 That the steps that were carried out during 2018/19 to improve management of sickness absence across the Council are built upon for 2019/20 (outlined in paragraphs 3.124 to 3.128).
- 2.7 That improvements to ensure the Council's Health and Safety compliance tasks are completed and certified on time are noted, with the view that this is continued throughout 2019/20 with the new contractor (outlined in paragraphs 3.82 to 3.84).
- 2.8 That Executive note that improvements to the Housing Repairs service have been implemented and further works to enhance this function are in progress (outlined in paragraphs 3.98 to 3.101).

3. BACKGROUND

Executive Summary

- 3.1 The focus and desired outcomes for each FTFC programme along with a summary of key successes for 2018/19 is outlined from paragraph 3.16 onwards.
- 3.2 There have been some sustained high levels of performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) for April 2018 to March 2019, to include the following:
 - A high rate of rent collection was achieved
 - The percentage of homes that were maintained as decent exceeded target for the year
 - All council housing properties have a valid gas safety certificate
 - Average end to end repairs times on all categories of repair (routine, urgent and emergency) have been delivered within target timescales
 - The determination of planning applications has consistently exceeded national targets
 - The percentage of food establishments assessed as broadly compliant with food hygiene standards remains at above 95%
 - Complaints that were escalated to Stage 2 or 3 continued to exceed target
 - Time taken to process new housing benefit claims or change in circumstances has continued to be better than the target
 - Almost all appraisals were completed to meet corporate deadlines
- 3.3 During 2018/19 the Council prioritised the delivery of an IT Improvement programme to enhance the resilience of the IT infrastructure. The service has undergone rigorous audits and further actions are now in place to monitor the improvements requested. This programme of work continues to be overseen by the senior representatives from Stevenage Borough Council and its partner, East Herts Council, including the Chief Executives, Directors and the senior IT management team.
- 3.4 In last year's Annual Report, the Executive was recommended to endorse improvement plans associated with the delivery of the Homeless Reduction

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Act. Homeless preventions exceeded targets throughout 2018/19 and in total there were 399 preventions against a target of 360 (compared to 231 preventions in 2017/18).

- 3.5 Throughout 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.
- 3.6 During the course of 2018/19, in response to a number of performance challenges, the Senior Leadership Team has put in place plans to drive forward improvements in the following areas, which will continue to be implemented in 2019/20:
- Customer service centre case handling (a summary of the improvement plans are outlined in paragraph 3.123)
 - Sickness absence (paragraphs 3.124 to 3.128 refer)
 - Time taken to re-let Major Works Void properties (as outlined in paragraphs 3.98 to 3.101)
 - Health and Safety compliance tasks in non-domestic council properties being completed and certified on time (as outlined in paragraph 3.84)
- 3.7 Assistant Directors have determined targets for 2019/20 having consideration for the 2018/19 trends, planned reviews of /revisions to service delivery models and alignment to 2019/20 budgets. These can be seen at Appendix 3.
- 3.8 The Council's approach to performance management allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The flexibility 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 2018/19

- 3.9 The Annual Report 2018/19 reviews, and informs the community of, the progress in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan 'Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council' during 2018/19.
- 3.10 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.

Future town future council

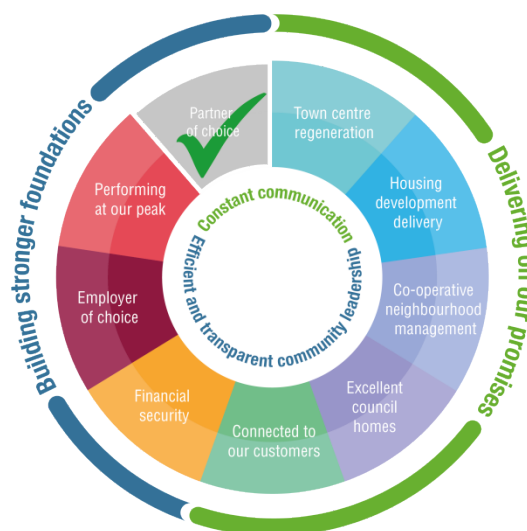


Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

- 3.11 The 5 year FTFC programme originally consisted 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 remaining 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.
- 3.12 Partner of Choice was considered as a closed programme at the end of the 2017/18 financial year (Executive July 2018) due to a strong framework for future collaboration with other public sector bodies being in place and partnership working being “in the blood” of the Council.
- 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 FTFC programmes or as an enabler, delivering services across the three themes.
- 3.14 The draft Annual Report 2018/19 (Appendix 2) 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.

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- 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 2018/19 across all themes (FTFC programme and the customer, place, and transformation and support themes) is attached at Appendix 1.

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 in 2017. 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 the first phase of town centre regeneration (SG1) in February 2018. 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 Key programme successes during 2018/19 included the following:

- The Development Agreement has been signed with development partner Mace for the delivery of SG1. This is a significant achievement built on a number of years of work by the regeneration team and other service areas across the Council.
- Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) has partnered with one of the UK's leading mixed-use developers, Reef Group, to spearhead the £50m Queensway North regeneration scheme comprising the former Marks & Spencer and adjoining retail parade. The major commercial and residential regeneration includes plans to extensively refurbish and improve the existing main shopping area in and around the block on the east side of Queensway North, and build new housing. The development consists of

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approximately 45,000 square foot of new retail and restaurant space, a gym, new offices, an innovation and technology centre and 116 apartments.

- Planned public realm improvements to Market Place have been delivered. This has given a new life to a central part of the town's retail core with the creation of this family friendly play space.
- A consultation on the new bus interchange was held, showcasing the initial designs. The consultation was well attended, with approximately 600 residents visiting to share their views.

3.21 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- Achieving vacant possession of Swingate House
- Advancing the SG1 scheme
- Progressing the bus interchange project in line with milestones
- Beginning works on the Town Square Public Realm and 'North Block' improvements
- Supporting the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) to ensure there are robust governance arrangements in place for the regeneration of Stevenage
- Launching the fresh marketing brand, 'Stevenage Even Better' and opening the visitor centre to celebrate and promote the regeneration of the town

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

3.23 **Programme Overview**

3.24 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.

3.25 The Council continued to work proactively during 2018/19 to get the Secretary of State's Holding Direction on the adoption of the Local Plan lifted. This was achieved in March 2019 and the Council has subsequently adopted the Local Plan since the year-end. This will provide the certainty needed to encourage developers to bring forward their schemes to provide a range of housing, including a proportion of affordable homes.

3.26 Key programme successes during 2018/19 included:

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- 42 council homes have been developed this year, bringing the total number since 2014 up to 173. These included new homes at the Wedgewood Way and Twin Foxes schemes in addition to a number of acquisitions.
- Further schemes are under construction at Ferrier Road, Ditchmore Lane and Burwell Court. Together these schemes will deliver 39 new homes.
- The flagship scheme at Kenilworth Close was granted planning permission and demolition is due to begin on site at the beginning of the new financial year. Consultation took place with local residents to keep them informed of progress.

3.27 Next year the programme will focus on:

- Completing and letting 54 new affordable homes across a number of schemes and 11 private sale homes.
- Starting work on a further 298 new/replacement homes across a range of planned schemes including sites at Shephall Way, North Road and Symonds Green.
- 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.
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company to support the delivery of new homes.

Excellent Council Homes

3.28 **Programme Outcomes**

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

3.29 **Programme Overview**

3.30 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.

3.31 The programme currently comprises four main themes:

- **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.

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- Knowing our Customers: aimed at understanding our customers' needs and prioritising them to provide bespoke services where possible. This is to improve contact with our customers and visibility and approachability of our staff.

A new theme is to be introduced in 2019/20 to reflect major investment in the Council's flat blocks including the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC), sprinkler systems and lift replacements.

3.32 In January 2017, Members agreed to invest £1.5m to enable the delivery of the Council's Excellent Council Homes programme.

3.33 Progress during 2018/19 included:

- 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 concluded in January. These improvements laid 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.
- Foundation projects delivered early in the programme have reaped benefits this year – new, more efficient income processes have resulted in increased rent collection, improved arrears recovery and the highest ever court fee collection rate (£27,400); and changes to the way the housing options team works have enabled them to prevent more households from becoming homeless (further details can be seen in paragraphs 3.67-3.68).
- Customer service training was delivered to staff. This focused on improving customer service skills and ensuring timeliness, quality of complaint responses, professionalism and the importance of listening to our customers. There has been a decline in the number of complaints about staff attitude.
- A review was undertaken of customer visits and recommendations were made to streamline processes and to achieve more efficient ways of working.
- An electronic document management system was procured and implemented this year, which will minimise potential GDPR breaches in the Housing and Investment service and allow better tracking of customer contacts.
- The 5th Tier management review has been completed, delivering a leaner and more flexible management team with more generic job descriptions which should ensure future flexibility and adaptability.

Although the theme of 'major investment in the Council's flat blocks' referred to in paragraph 3.31 above is being introduced in 2019/20, progress in this area has already been made in 2018/19, further details of which are included in the Housing and Investment section (see paragraphs 3.70-3.72).

3.34 During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

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- The launch of a new online account where customers will be able to access housing services 24/7.
- Delivery of a major refurbishment programme to our flat blocks (incorporating the MRC, lift replacements and retrofitting of sprinklers).
- Implementation of a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach in conjunction with staff from Stevenage Direct Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.
- Completing the final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review.
- Providing staff with the right business tools and software to enable them to work more effectively out in the community.
- Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Initiative Strategy and Housing Older Persons Strategy.

Co-operative & Neighbourhood Management

3.35 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

3.36 Programme Overview

3.37 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 an 'Our Neighbourhood' area on the Council's website. Focused investment in neighbourhood improvements has continued to progress throughout the year. The programme has been further re-purposed to provide the FTFC oversight for the development of the Council's approach to area-based co-operative neighbourhood management.

3.38 Key successes during 2018/19 included:

- The majority of public realm enhancements across St Nicholas and Martinswood have now been completed – works have ranged from renewing footpaths to upgrading road signs and repairing/replacing fences, bollards and brick walls. Neighbourhood action groups have been set up in these wards to determine priorities in these areas.

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- Consultation has taken place with over 500 children and young people over the last two years, which has informed the improvements to play areas - during 2018/19, play area improvements were delivered to Balmoral Close, Blenheim Way, Holly Leys and Fairlands Valley Park.
- A Community Engagement Framework has been completed and sets out clear actions to achieve.
- Consultation events were held with local businesses and in neighbourhood shopping areas in St Nicholas, Pin Green and Shephall to understand key issues and concerns in these areas.
- Improvements were made to eight garage sites this year and the programme will now align with the flat block refurbishment contract to include improving our garage stock.
- Stevenage has been one of two national pilots for the Enabling Social Action Partnership, sponsored by the Office for Civil Society. The learning has helped to refocus efforts on community and member led prioritisation in local neighbourhoods.

3.39 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- Developing the Council's approach to co-operative neighbourhood management, working initially with Stevenage Direct Services, Housing and Investment and Communities and Neighbourhoods.
- Continuing the planned roll-out of neighbourhood improvements, with consultation and engagement work starting in Bedwell and Longmeadow.
- Completing the Community Centre Review.
- Progressing the Garage Programme.
- Reviewing and reshaping resident involvement activity in response to the Community Engagement Framework.

3.40 **Connected to our Customers**

3.41 **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

3.42 **Programme Overview**

3.43 The 'Connected to our Customers' programme aims to improve the accessibility of the Council's 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.

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3.44 The Council's digital aspirations will evolve as we co-operatively redesign services with our workforce and customers. This modernisation of service delivery will allow the Council to be more responsive to customer needs and flexible in order to adapt more quickly to changing demands or priorities.

3.45 Key successes during 2018/19 included:

- Access to the Revenues & Benefits services has been enhanced with the provision of online self-serve options which includes a suite of mobile responsive Council Tax self-serve forms. This new functionality will be promoted in 2019/20.
- New Council website design and development. New website design and functionality will better meet customer needs – providing better self-serve options and incorporating new accessibility requirements in line with recent legislation. A cross-party Member group has been actively involved in the design and delivery of the new website.
- Web content and editing training completed to ensure best practice when writing web content, which has provided a network of digital champions across all service areas.
- Review of existing website content.
- Specification for the Digital Platform product finalised and procurement process commenced. This is the primary technology that will enable the Council to improve services to the customer. The digital platform replaces our old outdated CRM (customer relationship management) system used by the contact centre but additionally provides us with the ability to connect up council systems so that they can pass data between and through swifter processes.

3.46 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- New website testing completion, with 'go-live' expected in late summer 2019.
- Finalising procurement of the digital platform and plans for implementation.
- Phased implementation of digital platform capabilities starting with replacement CRM and quick wins for self-serve options.
- Customer and Business Account functionality placed into the new website, providing a single view of the customer and establishing a new centralised digital customer relationship.
- Developing a service redesign approach that will optimise new technology and new ways of working.
- Developing a Channel Shift Strategy which will clearly set out our approach to optimising the take-up of the new digital services whilst ensuring access for everyone, so that no-one is left behind.
- Implementation of the Environmental Services case management system. Integration into the digital platform to enable self-serve.
- Working with services to understand desired new ways of working and technology to support mobile, agile and area working. Planning for how we want to work from the new Public Sector Hub.

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Internal Facing Programmes

Financial Security programme

3.47 Programme Outcomes

- To meet the Financial Security three year savings target
- To ensure that the General Fund expenditure equals income without the use of balances from 2022/23 onwards
- To ensure the Housing Revenue Account has sufficient funding to meet the capital needs of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and identified revenue needs
- To identify Financial Security options using the three revised workstreams (efficiency, commercial and improved processes), before recommending any service rationalisation options, as summarised below.

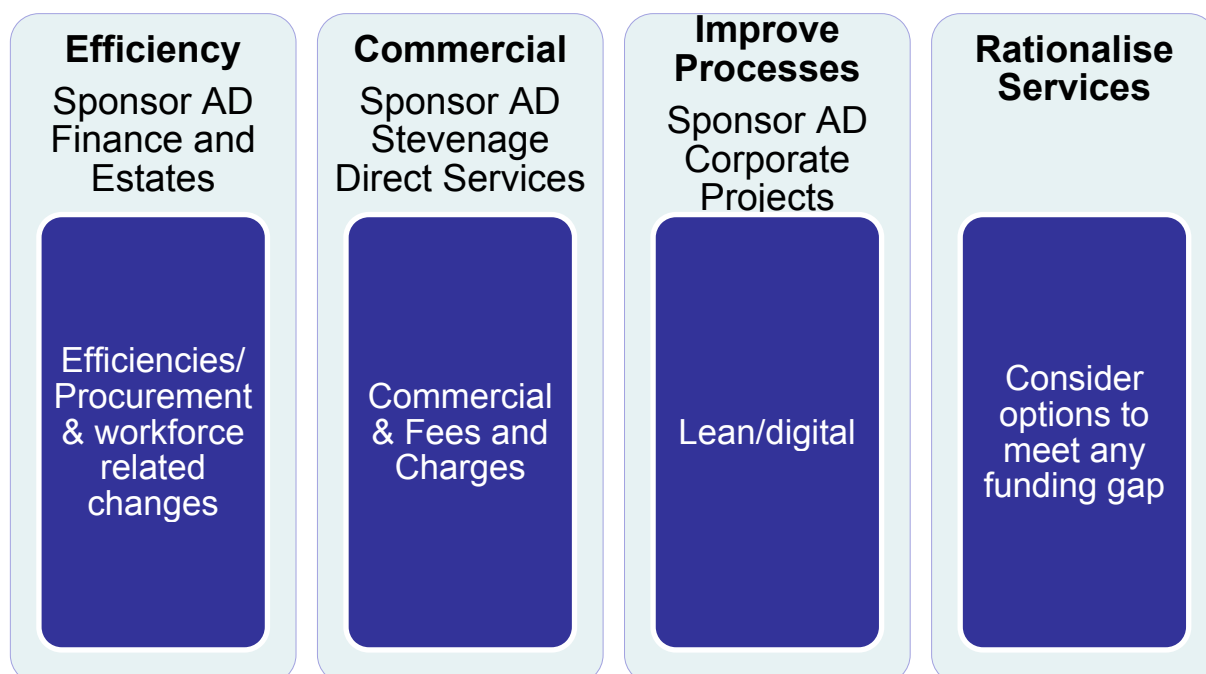


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

3.48 Programme Overview

3.49 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.

3.50 Key successes during 2018/19 included:

- Approval of a Financial Security three year savings package totalling £2.263Million at the November Executive 2019.

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- Approval of 2019/20 Financial Security options of £798,550 for the General Fund at the February 2019 Executive.
- Approval of 2019/20 Financial Security options of £354,630 for the HRA at the January 2019 Executive.

3.51 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2020/21-2022/23 via the Financial Security workstreams.
- Review of leases for the Commercial Portfolio, to ensure they are reviewed in a timely manner to protect the Council's revenues.
- Purchase of Investment Properties to meet the General Fund target of £200,000.
- Completion of Locality Reviews to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy.
- Review of fee-earning services to determine fee versus cost.
- Identifying options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions
- Review of budgets for cross-cutting reviews.
- Presentation of Financial Security options to the Leader's Financial Security Group before approval by the Executive.

Employer of Choice programme

3.52 **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

3.53 **Programme Overview**

3.54 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.

3.55 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.

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3.56 Key successes during 2018/19 included:

- The continued implementation of Future Council Business Reviews and associated staff restructure consultations.
- A new intranet has been launched as a new and improved internal communications platform for all staff.
- The Council received an Armed Forces Covenant Silver Award, recognising the organisation as an employer of Choice for Ex-service personnel and reservist employees.
- Working collaboratively with the Council's recognised Trade Unions, staff have been offered the opportunity to develop their literacy, maths and computing skills and attain formal qualifications.
- Events and interviews took place to recruit the 2018 intake of graduates. The Council received the highest number of applicants this year since joining the programme three years ago.
- A full organisational staff survey was launched to seek staff's views about the Council. Full results were benchmarked against 2016 and 2017 results and actions plans were developed in response to the findings.
- A new Competency Framework for Grades 1-9 has been drafted, incorporating principles of Co-operative Councils and 21st Century Public Servant. Staff engagement and consultation have allowed staff to shape and influence the framework, and achieve buy-in.
- Implementing a new Organisational Change policy, a new appraisal process (REAL Conversations) and valuing staff's health and wellbeing.
- Further development and rollout of the HR and Payroll System has continued, providing more self-service functionality for staff and managers, offering new digital ways of working.

3.57 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- Establishing a compelling employer brand with a competitive pay and benefit offer, including development of the new e-recruitment module of the HR System
- Developing and implementing a competency framework for staff from Grade 1- 9 of the Council's pay structure.
- 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.

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

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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 2018/19 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.
- Corporate and service governance is now incorporated in InPhase and it will allow Assistant Directors to review actions.
- A modified scheme of delegations of Council functions to officers was approved.

3.62 During 2019/20 the programme will focus on:

- Enhancing our business insight through data connectivity, and ensuring service managers have the right skills to use the tool robustly to analyse information and make informed decisions that result in improved services for our customers.
- Developing our insight culture through the effective engagement and use of our new tools and procedures, to enable lasting performance improvement.
- Delivering a new scheme of delegations to officers in respect of Executive powers.

Corporate Performance Highlights and Areas for Improvement

3.63 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (i.e. the FTFC programme and the Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix 1. The overview of results for April 2018 to March 2019 (quarter 4 2018/19), which includes thirteen FTFC measures and forty two business unit themed measures, is outlined below:

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Number of Measures	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Number of measures not reported*
55	44	3	5	3

*Community Safety measures were not reported last year due to changes in the Police recording system and SBC officers were unsure of the accuracy of data. This will be reported from quarter 1 2019/20

3.64 Key Business Unit Themes Update

3.65 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement at the end of the financial year 2018/19 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes:

- Customer
- Place
- Transformation and Support

Customer Theme

3.66 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

Customer Theme - Highlights

Housing and Investment

3.67 The newly formed Housing Options and Supply Team have worked hard to deliver homelessness preventions in excess of the target for this financial year. In comparison to 2017/18, the team have achieved a 73% increase in preventions. The additional preventions have been achieved through enhanced client working and having a single caseworker managing the client relationship throughout the process. This is despite challenges such as:

- The implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act
- An increase of 33% in the number of presentations accepted for Housing Advice
- A restructure of the service to form the new team
- An increase in the number of clients approaching the service for advice

3.68 A high rate of rent collection was achieved (99.1%). Rent arrears have continued to fall and were £292k at the end of March 2019 compared to £328k the previous year. This demonstrates that tenants are continually being supported to find solutions to any financial vulnerability in challenging times.

3.69 A summary of major works improvements made in 2018/19 is given below:

- 103 heating installations
- 17 new electrical rewires

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- 188 new kitchens
 - 275 new bathrooms
 - 112 new external wall insulations
 - 381 new windows
 - 374 new doors
 - 95 new roofs
- 3.70 The Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) is a £45m five year programme that has been awarded to contractors Mulalley and Wates to carry out improvement works on the Council's flat blocks and garages. During 2018/19, the housing investment team have worked very closely with the contractors to develop processes and procedures to ensure robust management of the MRC and 'year one' of the programme is progressing well. Twelve resident consultation events have taken place in the local communities for the 'year one' blocks. Both contractors regularly attend coffee mornings at the schemes where they are working to engage with residents and keep them updated.
- 3.71 As part of the tender bids contractors were asked to provide proposals for delivering social value during the term of the contract. Activities to date include attending careers events, providing mock interviews, offering pre-employment training, sponsoring local events, working with local schools and donating prizes for resident social events.
- 3.72 Two further major works schemes were launched in 2018/19 for the Replacement and Renewal of Communal Heating Systems (2018-2022) and the Refurbishment of Lifts (2018-2023). During 2019/20 the team will also commission a contract to start retrofitting sprinklers to the Council's tower blocks.
- 3.73 100% gas and fire safety compliance was achieved in the Council's domestic properties.

Communities and Neighbourhoods

- 3.74 The Council successfully hosted the Tour Series over the late May bank holiday as part of the Stevenage Cycling Festival. The event was televised on ITV with an estimated 10,000 people in attendance.
- 3.75 The Council won an Excellence in Public Health Award for its work on creating the town's first Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.76 The Stevenage Museum has successfully secured £60,000 funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project about the history of the Gordon Craig Theatre.
- 3.77 A Public Health District Offer fund of £30,000 for two years was signed at the end of March 2019. The funding will be used to build upon the success of Stevenage Healthy Hub to create further opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of the town in response to the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.

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- 3.78 The Arts Council England awarded the Council £10,000 to support the implementation of the Cultural Strategy, *Stevenage re-imagined*. An Arts and Heritage Forum has been established and further bids are being prepared for external investment in arts and culture for the town.
- 3.79 The community development team were successful in a bid to the Co-operative Council Innovation Network to lead a national Policy Lab on co-operative neighbourhood working. The lab will work with North Herts District Council, Staffordshire County Council and Sunderland City Council.

Community Safety

- 3.80 The Council became the first local authority in Hertfordshire to sign up to the Modern Slavery Charter. The Charter represents a commitment from the Council to actively challenge business practices which may enable modern slavery to occur.
- 3.81 Stevenage against Domestic Abuse (SADA) has been commissioned by North Hertfordshire District Council, reflecting the value that partners place on the service that Stevenage provides. The organisation works in partnership with Hertfordshire Police, North Hertfordshire District Council and a number of volunteers to support victims of domestic abuse. SADA has secured funding of approximately £168k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help resource both SADA and the No More Service until March 2021.

Customer Theme - Area for Improvement

Health and Safety compliant Council buildings

- 3.82 Performance Measure Assets 5a: Health and Safety compliance of (non-domestic) council buildings (statutory), April 2018 to March 2019: target 100%, achieved 91%.
- 3.83 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 was 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 until December 2018. A new contractor is now in place and officers will work closely with them to ensure timely certification and completion of tasks.
- 3.84 Performance of the new contractor is being monitored on a weekly basis. Regular checks are happening to ensure that outstanding tasks are completed and that a high level of compliance is achieved. Officers continue to monitor activity and ensure that the receipt of compliance reports meets the agreed targets. Performance results are predicted to improve once the contractor has fully mobilised.

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Customer Theme – Reporting

Community Safety

- 3.85 The Community Safety team have been unable to report against their performance measures corporately for 2018/19. This has been due to the Police implementing a new Crime Recording System called ATHENA and adopting a revised approach to reporting. The accuracy of performance figures is now being assessed prior to formal reporting for 19/20.

Place Theme

- 3.86 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 3.27 respectively.)

Place Theme - Highlights

Planning and Regulation

- 3.87 Planning applications have been determined throughout the year within corporate and statutory targets.
- 3.88 As of March 2019, 95.1% 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.
- 3.89 New licensing regulations were introduced on 1 October 2018 for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Mandatory licensing is no longer limited to just HMOs of 3 or more storeys. The requirement for the HMO to be occupied by 5 or more persons, from 2 or more households, remains unchanged.
- 3.90 To date, 177 additional properties are the subject of a licence application; this is in addition to 48 that were licensed prior to October 2018. Despite the change in legislation the Council are still achieving 96.89% of HMO's being broadly compliant with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004).

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Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)

- 3.91 Coveted green flag awards continue to fly at Fairland's Valley Park, Hampson Park and Town Centre Gardens. The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces. Council officers worked together with the volunteer groups of each park to maintain the parks and successfully retain the awards.
- 3.92 Refuse from Stevenage households is now collected in bulk from Cavendish Road following new arrangements agreed with Hertfordshire County Council. Collection crews no longer need to travel to tip waste collected resulting in reduced time to complete collection rounds and associated financial savings (estimated £90k).
- 3.93 Repairs satisfaction surveys are currently recorded via text message. Customers advised a 96.13% satisfaction level with the service provided for April 2018 to March 2019.
- 3.94 In 18/19, average end-to-end completions for all categories of repair (routine, urgent and emergency) have been within target timescales and have been consistent throughout the year.
- 3.95 The repairs service continues to monitor revised service delivery arrangements introduced to ensure that the materials required are available at the time of repair and performance has improved because of this (ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time, April 2018 to March 2019 target 95%, achieved 98.68%).
- 3.96 The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids has significantly improved compared to performance in 2017/18:
- Voids General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids, April 2018 to March 2019: target 32 days, achieved 27.86 days.



Figure 3: Voids GN – The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids

- 3.97 Collaborative working between officers of the Repairs Team, Tenancy and Lettings continues to improve, supported by the move of the Repairs Team to Daneshill House.

Place Theme – Areas for Improvement

Major Works Voids Re-let Times

3.98 Rental income loss associated with void properties at March 2019 is marginally below the budgeted position for the year, which is positive. This however remains an area of improvement focus until performance demonstrates that all re-let times are within target, with a particular focus on major works voids:

- Voids General Needs Major Works: The time taken to re-let major works general needs voids, April 2018 to March 2019: target 65 days, achieved at 31/3/19 80.67 days.

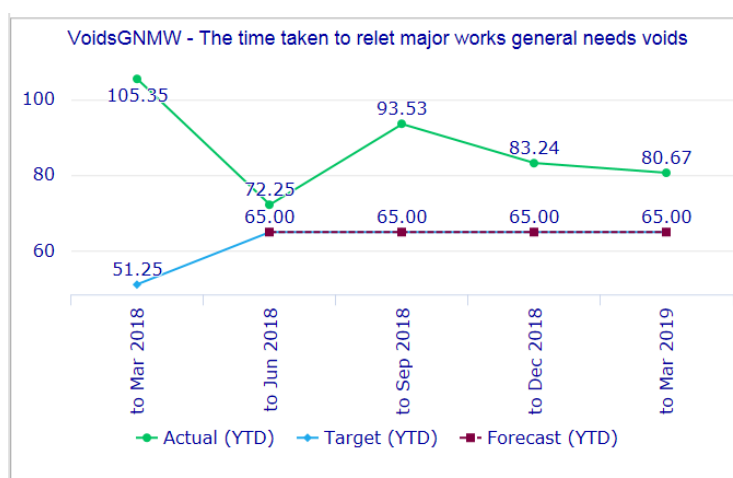


Figure 4: Voids GNMW – The time taken to re-let major works general needs voids

It should be noted that latest figures for this measure (May 2019) show an improvement since the year end, with re-let times being well below the 65 day target.

- 3.99 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.
- 3.100 Further work to improve the Housing Repairs service is ongoing. Plans include working more efficiently by reviewing processes, working collaboratively and becoming more digital making use of technology.
- 3.101 The ultimate aim of the improvement programme is to ensure that the Repairs function is operating successfully and serving its customers well. This will enable repairs to take on further work in house when deemed appropriate in due course.

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Household Waste Sent for Re-use, Re-cycling and Composting

- 3.102 The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting is currently estimated to be just under the target (39% estimate against a target of 40%). The actual data will not become available until July 2019 and, depending on the outcome, this may become a further area for improvement during 2019/20. An update will be given within the Quarter 1 report.
- 3.103 In the last quarter, two hundred and seventy households were invited to participate in a pilot for the use of recycling bags instead of the blue and black boxes currently provided. A survey was sent out to all households in the trial areas and approximately 40% of households responded to the survey. 54% of respondents preferred the bags to the boxes and SBC collection crews also reported that they found the bags as being easier to use. Additional feedback has been taken into consideration and further options are being explored.
- 3.104 SDS is currently working with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Plan) who will be undertaking some work which will include consideration of how the Council can increase its recycling figures.

Transformation and Support Theme

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

Transformation and Support Theme - Highlights

Customer Services

- 3.106 The Council regularly appears in the top ten performing Councils nationally for customer satisfaction with the Customer Service Centre (CSC) walk-in and telephony services (captured through Govmetric). Customers like how they are treated by advisers and appreciate the time given to them during a call. Overall satisfaction with the CSC was 88.5%.
- 3.107 The proportion of calls to the CSC that were resolved by the CSC adviser that initially answered the call was 64.3%.
- 3.108 A new CSC staffing model was developed and implemented for 2018/19. This provides opportunity to grow posts to support the stabilisation of performance, the development of skills in the team and support for new working practices relating to transformation projects. The new resource model has enabled proactive planning of training and coaching to improve efficiency for telephone, walk-ins and email channels.
- 3.109 The percentage of complaints progressing to stage two and three that are upheld (Cust1) improved significantly:

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- The percentage of complaints that progressed to stage 2 or 3 and were upheld April 2018 to March 2019: target 40%, achieved 34.6% (i.e. 37 complaints upheld out of a total of 107 escalated to stages 2 or 3).

Technology

- 3.110 Ensuring our IT infrastructure and core services are resilient and high performing remains a top priority for the ICT Partnership. A number of ICT improvement projects have been delivered to further strengthen resilience across the partnership. This includes extending the new telephony system across the entire ICT partnership and a new back-up power supply for the Council's data centre.
- 3.111 IT security has also been high on the agenda throughout 2018/19. The Council now has a new Security & Network team, working on all data security improvements. The ICT Partnership achieved its PSN re-certification in 2019 and the team continue to treat data protection, security and protection as the highest priority.
- 3.112 A new P2P microwave link is being procured and will be installed during the Summer. This will remove the single point of failure between Cavendish Road and Daneshill House and will ensure ongoing connection between the sites.
- 3.113 The necessary hardware and software required to upgrade the Council's Operating System to Windows 10, improve our hosted desktops and enable the rollout of Office 365 has been procured. The installation, adoption and deployment of the new hardware and software together with an array of further infrastructure enhancements is planned to be delivered during 2019/20. This will result in improved IT performance and services for both customers and officers.
- 3.114 During 2018/2019 enhanced ICT governance arrangements were put in place which included the introduction of a new Programme Management Office (IT PMO) and ICT Steering Group that jointly control, prioritise and support the timely delivery of IT projects across the Partnership. The IT PMO has provided the required capacity and capabilities to effectively deliver an array of IT projects across the partnership.
- 3.115 Work is well underway on the development and adoption of a single ICT strategy and investment programme for the ICT Partnership covering the next three years. This will set a clear direction for the service and provide a key reference point for timely future funding decisions. The adoption of a single IT strategy across the two councils 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.

Corporate Services and Transformation

- 3.116 The HR and Payroll system, 'MyView', has now been live for two years (April 2017). The system has provided staff with opportunities to update contact

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information, access payslips and request leave. In 2018/19 self-service requests for mileage and expenses claims were added to the system. Future developments include the establishment of a learning and development module, which will be explored in the next financial year. Information is used by Human Resources to maintain accurate information and is providing more accurate performance data.

- 3.117 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 99.8%.
- 3.118 Agency Usage: The use of agency staff has achieved target at March 2019. 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 2018 to March 2019: target 12%, achieved 11.9%.

Finance and Estates

- 3.119 To support robust financial management a range of procurement and contract management training was delivered to council officers during 2018/19.
- 3.120 Housing Benefit Claims and changes are now being processed in just 5.96 days and have consistently improved during 2018/19:
- Time taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events (NI181): April to June 2018 achieved 10.35 days, July to September achieved 8.88 days, October to December achieved 8.12 days, January to March 2019 achieved 5.96 days.

Transformation and Support Theme – Areas for Improvement

Customer Services

- 3.121 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) was identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at March 2018 Executive. This focus has been retained until performance demonstrates further improvement across the full set of CSC measures. Performance in relation to a number of CSC measures is given below:
- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds, April 2018 to March 2019: target 55%, achieved 49.6%.
 - CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre, April 2018 to March 2019: target 6%, achieved 14.3%.
 - CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes, April 2018 to March 2019: target 80%, achieved 75%.

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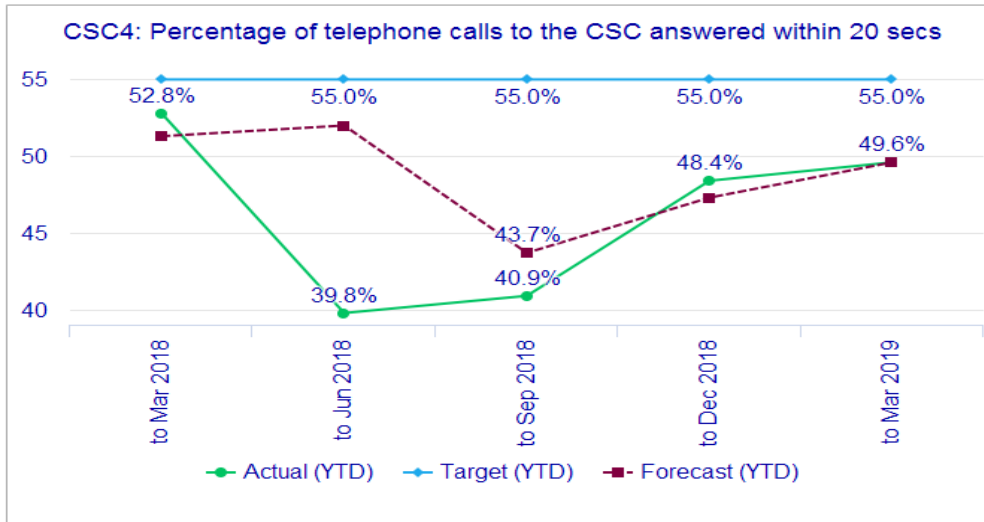


Figure 5: CSC4 – Percentage of telephone calls to the CSC answered within 20 seconds

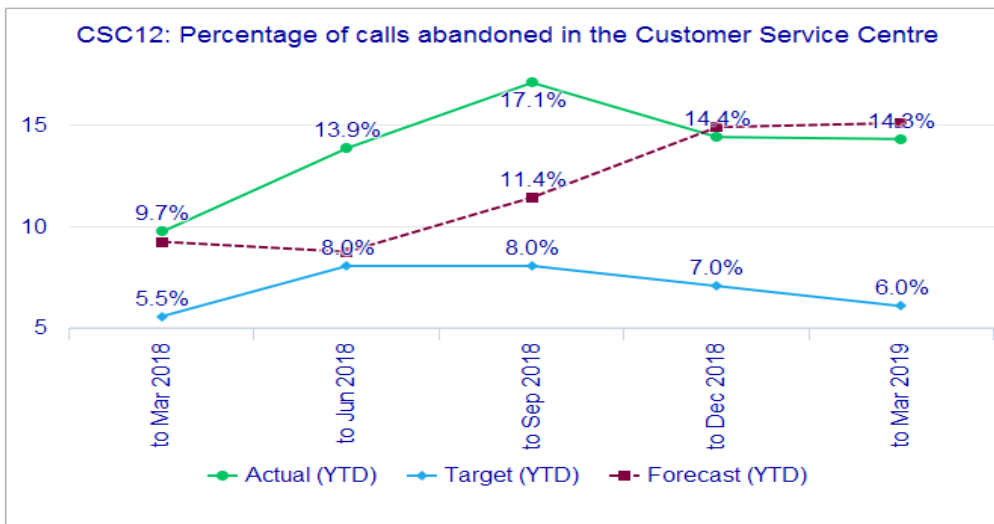


Figure 6: CSC12 – Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre.

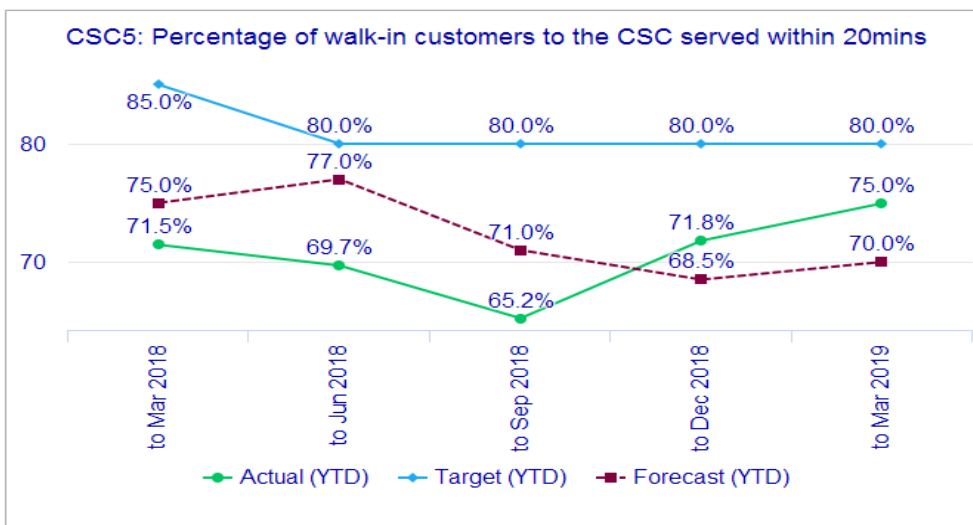


Figure 7: CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the CSC served within 20 minutes

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It should be noted however that performance has improved since the year end, with all the above measures being on track to meet targets at the end of Quarter 1 of 2019/20.

3.122 Customer Service Centre (CSC) 'walk-in' performance improved due to upskilling of advisers for the Benefit Service phone line, which gave more flexibility in using specialist resource for the walk-in service. Future plans to further reduce waiting time during 2019/20 include pilots for appointments based services for some service areas.

3.123 Plans to stabilise and sustain future CSC performance include:

- A continued focus on improving capacity of the service:
 - Further work to improve our approach to recruitment, including a review of the person specification, design of recruitment campaigns and assessment centres.
 - Implementation of a Workforce Management System to provide quicker forecasting and scenario planning to improve resource management.
- Implementation of a revised service delivery model, resulting from the following:
 - Along with all other services, the CSC will be reviewing how it operates, maximising new technology and new ways of working.
 - The implementation of digital self-service will mean that customer advisers will need to adapt the way they work to provide assisted and mediated access for customers. This facility is critical as it demonstrates digital skills to the customers which are critical life skills these days in a digital age.
 - The CSC will play a significant role in the Council's channel shift ambitions – moving simple transactional contacts online and removing avoidable contacts. This will release capacity and skill sets to provide quality conversations and in-depth services for those most in need.

Sickness Absence

3.124 The management of sickness absence was identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at March 2018 Executive. This focus has been retained until revised policy and practice indicates a sustained reduction on levels of sickness absence. The year-end position is shown below:

- Pe4a: Sickness Absence rate threshold for twelve months to March 2019 per fte: target 8 days, achieved 8.86 days.

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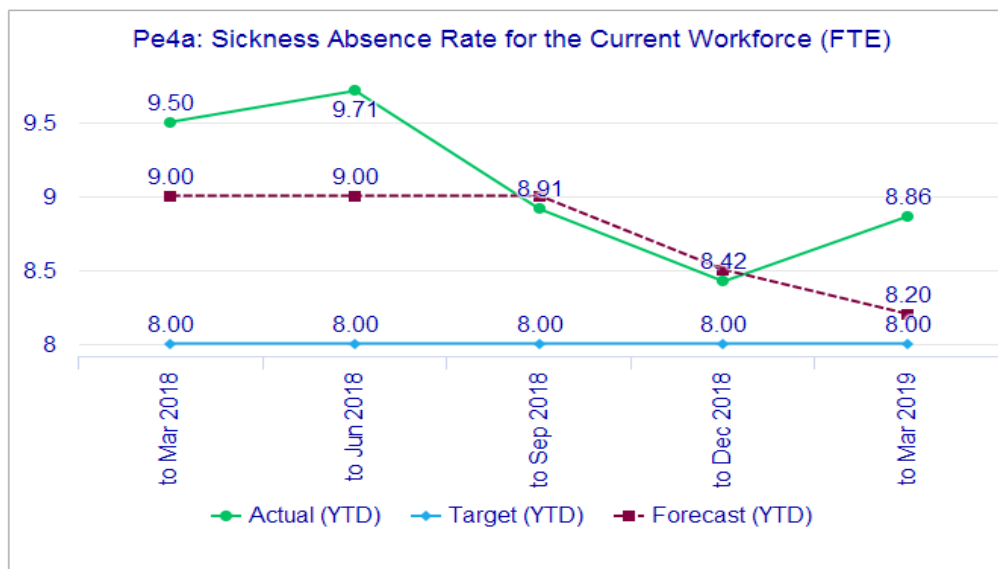


Figure 8: PE4a: Sickness Absence rate for the current workforce (days per fte)

- 3.125 At the end of quarter 4, average sickness absence within 6 of the 9 business units was below the corporate target of 8 days. The three business units that were above target were Stevenage Direct Services (11.68 days), Finance and Estates (11.06 days) and Housing and Investment (9.12 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.
- 3.126 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.
- 3.127 There has been an increase in the number of long-term complex health conditions being managed. This has required a stronger focus on long-term absence management, which now accounts for 59% of sickness absence.
- 3.128 The Council is also in the process of preparing to implement the services of a third party sickness absence provider, who will provide a nurse led sickness reporting facility for all employees, which will provide advice and challenge on fitness for work to both individuals and managers and ensure consistency of approach/advice on sickness absence.
- 3.129 Realistic but differential stretch targets are to be applied to the nine business units during 2019/20 to help ensure the corporate target of 8 days is achieved.

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4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Performance and Achievements of the Council during 2018/19

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 2018/19 (Appendix 2) 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 giving 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 2019/20

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 2019/20. The full suite of 2019/20 measures and targets can be seen in Appendices 3a and 3b.

4.10 Performance Improvement Plans

4.11 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.

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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 2018/19 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.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Council Corporate Plan: Our Co-operative Council; Future Town Future Council December 2016 Council
- Executive Report March 2019 – Corporate Performance for Quarter 3

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Council Performance Measures 2018/19
- Appendix 2: Council Annual Report 2018/19
- Appendix 3A: 2019/20 Performance Measures & Targets (Current)
- Appendix 3B: 2019/20 Performance Measures (New)