

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 16 December 2019



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2019/20

### NON KEY DECISION

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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council’s progress in delivering the key Cooperative Plan priorities in line with the Future Town Future Council programme for quarter two.
- 1.2 To report on Business Unit achievements and key performance indicators across the three themes of: Customer, Place and Transformation & Support.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for quarter two 2019/20, together with the latest achievements, be noted.

- 2.2 That actions to ensure the improvement in the non-statutory compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial council buildings in accordance with the compliance contract are noted and endorsed (para 3.64 to 3.67).
- 2.3 That the improved performance in the Customer Service Centre is noted and continuing plans to sustain and improve performance are endorsed (para 3.84 to 3.90).
- 2.4 That the impact of the rise in long term sickness in relation to the overall average sickness absence levels is noted and that ongoing implementation of improved practices to support sickness absence management is endorsed (para 3.99 to 3.104).
- 2.5 That the review of the performance measure relating to number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation is noted and monitored (para 3.68 to 3.70).

**3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 Members approved the Cooperative Corporate Plan in December 2016. It reflects the Council’s continuing focus on cooperative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town through the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

- 3.2 The FTFC Programme was reviewed in March 2018 to ensure that it continued to reflect the Council’s priorities. As it was apparent that working in partnership has been embedded in the culture of the Council and there is a strong framework for future collaboration with other public sector bodies, the Partner of Choice Programme was closed. The development of partnerships continues as part of day-to-day business and any new shared service proposals will be considered and implemented within the Financial Security Programme.
- 3.3 At the Executive meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Members requested that officers scope a potential new FTFC workstream called ‘Place of Choice’, to

incorporate strategic areas of focus that are key to addressing broad place based challenges across the town. This work is now underway and will incorporate our work with partners in relation to culture, health and climate change amongst other key matters.

- 3.4 Council services are organised into nine Business Units across three themes: Customer, Place and Transformation & Support. This structure is focused on delivering the right services, to the right standards, at the right time for the town’s residents and businesses, using the most cost/resource effective delivery models.
- 3.5 In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across these (Council Service) themes is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement.
- 3.6 A complete set of performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme, and the customer, place, and transformation and support themes) is attached as Appendix One. Summaries of performance measure result status are outlined at paragraph 3.8 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.60 (Corporate focus).

**Future Town, Future Council Programme progress update**

- 3.7 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.8 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April to September 2019. The overview of FTFC focused results for April 2019 to September 2019 is outlined below:

| <b>Number of Measures Reported</b> | <b>Meeting or exceeding target</b> | <b>Amber Status<br/>(within a manageable tolerance)</b> | <b>Red Status<br/>(urgent improvement action required)</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 13                                 | 13                                 | 0   | 0  |

- 3.9 Programme delivery updates for the FTFC programmes together with an outline of any focused activity being implemented to keep the programmes on track are set out in the following paragraphs.

## **External Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes**

### **Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Programme**

#### **Programme Outcomes**

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance – one completed by 2021 and one to begin 2019/20

3.10 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused 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

#### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.11 Mace held a public consultation in quarter two to get feedback on the latest proposals for the regeneration of SG1. The event was well attended with over 500 people engaging in the process. A business event and staff engagement sessions were also held for the consultation of SG1, and an exhibition stand was on display at the Annual Business Event at the Novotel in July.
- 3.12 The Regeneration team have also been working closely with Mace to look at options to accelerate the hub. Proposals have been presented and feedback has been given which will inform the business case for the hub. Mace and SBC held a "kick off" meeting in October to scope out the work-streams and identify resources. It is anticipated that a report will be presented to the Executive in this financial year, to show what options are available for accelerating the hub ahead of the baseline programme outlined by Mace and, subject to the outcome of the feasibility work, seek approval for the scheme to progress earlier than planned.
- 3.13 Construction work has begun on the Queensway North site concentrating on the new retail, leisure and office space that the scheme offers. In partnership with Reef Group the Council are exploring leases and management of residential stock with a rental management company.

- 3.14 Work continues on the relocation of the bus interchange following the approval of £9.6m funding by the LEP (subject to governance). Discussions with contractor, Wilmott Dixon, have taken place regarding the RIBA Stage 4 designs. Additional design work is required to the ancillary accommodation and this is also underway. Traffic modelling work with Hertfordshire County Council is on-going in preparation for a planning permission application, which is due to be submitted in quarter three.
- 3.15 Proposals for designs and construction have proceeded to the next stage for the Town Square and North Block, with construction works due to start in November.
- 3.16 Construction of a new CCTV control room nearly is progressing and will facilitate the move from Swingate House to Cavendish Road. The decant of Swingate House is progressing, the Citizens Advice Bureau has successfully moved to Daneshill House and Age Concern to the indoor market. A recent opening event was held for the latter, which was attended by the Leader, Mayor and other Councillors.
- 3.17 The Wayfinding project has now completed this quarter with floor signage and map panels being implemented.

## **Housing Development Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

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

- 3.18 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Completing and letting 54 new affordable homes across a number of schemes and 11 private sale homes
- Starting work on a further 295 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

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.19 The open market acquisitions programme has been scaled up this financial year. The ambition is to purchase properties to be converted for those with

additional accessibility requirements as there is a current lack of suitable stock, as well as being utilised for additional temporary accommodation. In this last quarter, a further eighteen open market acquisitions have been completed. The Housing Development team are working with colleagues from Legal shared service to complete the purchase of additional properties.

- 3.20 The handover of Ferrier Road was delayed to October due to a shortage of roofing supplies delaying the programme in the summer. The eight houses, six flats and one private sale have been advertised and residents moved in shortly after the end of the quarter. A local resident's event is being planned to allow those living in close proximity to the development the chance to have a look round the development prior to them being let.
- 3.21 The Burwell Court and Ditchmore Lane developments are progressing well and are on target for anticipated handover in December.
- 3.22 The procurement approach for the Kenilworth Close (236 homes) scheme was agreed at the July Executive and the tender for the principal contractor is now live. The procurement is on-track to be completed by the end of quarter three with a report due at January Executive to confirm the appointment. Hoarding around the demolition site has been erected and utilities have been disconnected at the community centre. The Housing Development team are currently working the demolition contractor and utility suppliers to disconnect the existing buildings in preparation for demolition and asbestos removal will begin in quarter three.
- 3.23 Principal contractors were appointed at the schemes at North Road (21 Homes), Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) this quarter. SJM & Co Ltd scored highest in the procurement exercise for Shephall Way and Symonds Green, whilst Taylor French Developments have been appointed at North Road. All 3 schemes are anticipated to commence on site in quarter three with the duration of the projects being 12-18 months.
- 3.24 Architects Kyle Smart have been appointed to both the Shephall View and Brent Court Garage Sites. An initial design brief meeting has taken place and the architect is currently working to bring forward more detailed designs.

## **Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council, residents and partners, 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
- The Council's Community Centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs

- Staff better understand the town's communities and so are more able to facilitate the change that is required

3.25 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused 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

### **Programme Delivery Update**

3.26 Neighbourhood improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood continued this quarter. A 'lessons learnt' paper will be completed at the end of the year to focus on successes from the project and highlight any areas for improvement going forward.

3.27 A series of ward walkabouts with elected members and relevant SBC officers have been completed, which have highlighted areas in need of attention, informed future projects and celebrated recent successes. An All Member Briefing session was arranged for October to discuss the feedback from the walkabouts and a chance for Members to meet the Community Development team.

3.28 Planning is now underway for the roll out of CNM in Bedwell and Longmeadow. The Community Development team held meetings with ward members to discuss delivery/engagement plans for each ward. An outline of project plans for both wards and an overview of CNM delivery to date was shared. Further engagement with the wider public will be arranged in partnership with the ward members to determine local priorities.

3.29 Consultations regarding current and future community centre use and facilities took place this quarter with over 340 responses recorded and 42 focus group consultations. All responses will inform a report that will be presented to the Executive in January 2020 looking at an In-Depth Model Exploration.

3.30 A high level scoping paper has been drafted to develop a Stevenage approach to Community Wealth Building. The University of Hertfordshire will support phase 1, which will include a desk-based analysis of Stevenage spend. Interim support has been enrolled to focus on this area of work. It is anticipated that this will be discussed further at full Council in January.

- 3.31 Work has begun on developing the model for future Neighbourhood Management. The AD (Communities & Neighbourhoods) is working directly with Stevenage Direct Services and Housing & Investment in regular meetings exploring joint ways of embedding area based working in practical delivery. The new emerging model is to be considered by the Executive in December.

## **Excellent Council Homes Programme**

### **Programme Outcome**

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

- 3.32 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- 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
  - The launch of a new online account where customers will be able to access housing services 24/7
  - Providing staff with the right business tools and software to enable them to work more effectively out in the community
  - Completing the final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review
  - Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Initiative Strategy and Housing Older Persons Strategy

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.33 The major refurbishment programme (MRC) is a £55 million 5 year programme which commenced in 2019. The programme scope is to refurbish the external envelope of the Council's flat blocks as well as installing new windows and doors, thermal insulation and carrying out roof repairs or renewals where necessary. Also included in the work will be the grounds surrounding the blocks and refurbishing entrance paths, bin stores and communal lighting. The majority of year one works are currently being completed and expected handover by the contractors is anticipated in November. Resident feedback on the standard of work will be captured on completion of works to the block.
- 3.34 Progress continues on a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach with Communities & Neighbourhoods and SDS. More details on progress can be seen in paragraph 3.31.
- 3.35 Improvements to the desktop integration (DTI) letters held in the Northgate system has completed this quarter. This, coupled with targeted staff training on language and tone in letters written to customers, has meant that the Housing and Investment teams are becoming more consistent in letter writing



across the business unit. This has seen an improvement in communication with customers.

- 3.36 The Housing Older People Strategy comprehensive consultation programme has now been completed. The project team are in the process of analysing the consultation response and other related information. This material will be used to start shaping the draft strategy.
- 3.37 The Sprinklers contract has been out to tender. The submissions have been evaluated and an award report has been written and approved by a Strategic Director and the relevant Portfolio Holder. The Compliance team have appointed a project manager role to deliver the programme which will commence during quarter four.
- 3.38 The final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review were launched in September. Support is being provided by the Human Resources Team and finance colleagues to focus on adapting the structures to reflect the new ways of working in Housing & Investment. The Housing and Investment teams continue to be kept informed about changes and progress to the programme via regular newsletters, blogs on the intranet as well as away days.

## **Connected to our Customers Programme**

### **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, better used to provide useful insight, and the technology reliable
  - 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
- 3.39 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- New website testing and launch
  - Finalising procurement of the digital platform and plans for implementation.
  - Phased implementation of digital platform capabilities starting with a replacement Customer Records Management System (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 the Council's 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 the Council wants to work from the new Public Sector Hub

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.40 Content continues to be developed for the new website including the microsites linked to Stevenage Borough Council. Accessibility testing of all the Council's website pages and content has commenced so that the new website will be compliant with the new accessibility legislation. The new website once launched will incorporate the new housing online account service which is being developed through the Excellent Council Homes programme.
- 3.41 The procurement process for an integrated digital solution provider has been concluded and the confirmed supplier Firmstep has commenced project initiation for the replacement of the existing CRM. The new software will enable integrations between systems, to join up council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels.
- 3.42 The technical infrastructure requirements for implementing Firmstep have been scoped and the implementation of the capabilities beyond the CRM is being collated into a series of projects linked to the service modernisation agenda. The first service area to benefit from the new integration capabilities will be the Environmental Services team. The integrations will be created as SDS deploys their new back office system; the procurement for this system is due to conclude imminently. Real-time integrations for self-serving customers and CSC staff for waste management issues are scheduled to be in a test environment in quarter four i.e. reporting missed bins, booking for bulky waste collections.
- 3.43 The Council recognises there are significant engagement and communication requirements to move staff and customers towards online service delivery. These requirements have been scoped in order to develop a comprehensive engagement project plan and communications plan. These plans will include specific actions and interventions to ensure that non-digital provisions are enhanced for customers that are unable to readily access services online.
- 3.44 The Council is developing a draft Customer Promise based on the values of the organisation; this will be used as the basis for a new customer offer for CSC service delivery. Work has commenced on describing what this new customer offer is for telephony, digital interactions, in-person interactions and community neighbourhood working. These service delivery descriptions in the short, medium and longer term (as envisioned at the Public Sector Hub) will

form the basis for a service plan for CSC to transition its resourcing and service delivery ambitions from current state to future state.

## Internal Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes

### Financial Security Programme

#### 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.

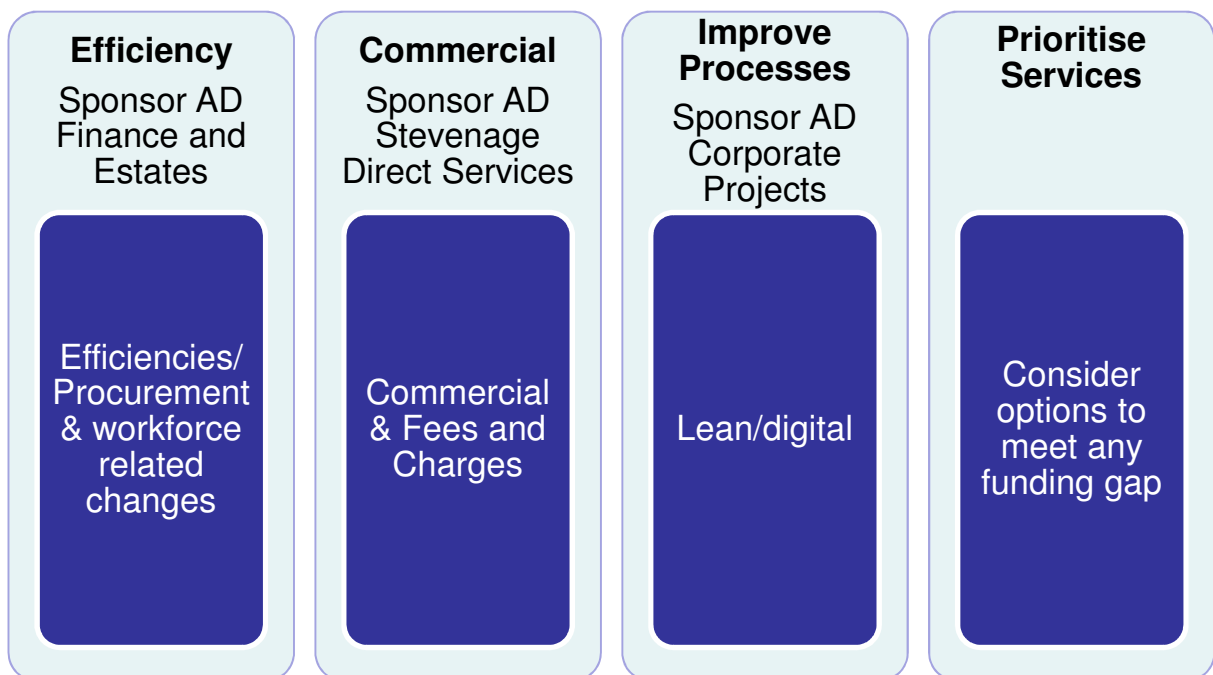


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.45 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Identifying Financial Security options that meet the three year target (£2.2 million General Fund and £1 million Housing Revenue Account) and as amended by the report to the September Executive for the General Fund MTFS and the November Executive for the HRA.

- 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
- The financial security options should include the output from the 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
- Identify 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 in November 2019

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.46 The General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was updated and approved by the Executive in September. A General Fund Financial Security Target of £1.9million was approved for the period 2020/21- 2022/23. The Leader's Financial Security Group has oversight of the development of the 2020/21 – 2022/23 savings package.
- 3.47 A commercial and insourcing strategy is currently in development to reflect the Council's ambitions to become an exemplar authority that is financially self-sufficient delivering high quality services with and for its customers and communities. A timeline for delivery is being reviewed by the AD (Stevenage Direct Services) as well as options for the recruitment of a commercialisation manager.

### **Employer of Choice Programme**

#### **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
- 3.48 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused 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 (L&D) Strategy

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.49 Work continues on the new Corporate Intranet, including the launch of Single Sign On functionality this quarter. Further development work continues with Invotra to streamline the news and features functionality and make it more user friendly following feedback from staff. Day to day management of the intranet has now passed to the communications team.
- 3.50 During quarter two, progress has been made with the Council's Competency Framework for grades 1-9 and the re-launch of Corporate Values. A communications plan has been developed and agreed and the launch is anticipated to take place in quarter three. The Customer Charter will come forward separately as part of the Customer Strategy through the Connected To Our Customers programme.
- 3.51 The review of Standby and Callout is now agreed and consultation completed with the Trade Unions. Implementation commenced in August 2019, with each Business Unit implementing on individual timelines according to their needs. It is anticipated that full implementation of new standby and callout arrangement will be complete by end of March 2020.
- 3.52 The Annual Leave Purchase Scheme Policy was launched in September. This was promoted to staff via the intranet and a drop in session for all staff members took place. A total of 29 applications were received during the first month and these will be processed during October.
- 3.53 This year the L&D strategy will focus on the development and upskilling of the 4<sup>th</sup> Tier (those reporting to AD's). Agreement on the leadership tone for 4<sup>th</sup> tier and what development they need both in terms of leadership and management skills, and also on internal governance arrangements was discussed at a recent SLT awayday and will be developed in due course.
- 3.54 The current framework for recruiting agency staff is due to expire in 2020. An options appraisal for the procurement of a new framework has been prepared and is due to be presented to SLT in November 2019.
- 3.55 Preparations continued for the launch of First Care (Third Party Sickness Reporting Facility). Test data migration took place in September with full launch on 7 October. Work is also underway to procure a new digital Health and Safety System with procurement documents prepared and a tender is planned to commence in October.

## Performing at our Peak Programme

### Programme Outcomes

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

3.56 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused 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

### Programme Delivery Update

3.57 Work has completed with the majority of performance measure 'owners' to review the calculation of corporate and housing measures and establish the potential to reduce manual data collection processes. This work is in line with an Internal Audit on Data Quality carried out in 2018/19.

3.58 Work is underway to improve the use of the Inphase system in relation risk management; to create performance measure dashboards for 4<sup>th</sup> tier managers; and to enable the Communities and Neighbourhoods Business Unit teams to monitor operational performance measures agreed through their service planning process.

## Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement

3.59 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme and the Customer, Place and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix One. The overview of corporate focused results for April 2019 to September 2019 is outlined below:

3.60

| Number of Measures Reported | Meeting or exceeding target | Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance) | Red Status (urgent improvement action required) | Data still to be reported |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------|
| 42                          | 38                          | 1  | 2   | 1*                        |

\* Data cannot be verified for Assets5b: Percentage of assets known to be health and safety compliant (as per SBC definition)

3.61 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement for April 2019 to September 2019 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation & Support.

## **A: Customer Theme**

3.62 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

### **Housing and Investment**

#### **Highlights and Achievements**

3.63 Delivery of a major refurbishment programme to the Council's flat blocks (incorporating the MRC, lift replacements and retrofitting of sprinklers) is now included in the scope of the Excellent Council Homes programme and delivery updates on these aspects are summarised in paragraph 3.33. Progress in relation to other elements of the overall housing major works investment programme includes the following:

- 246 street properties have been completed to date and there has been 100% satisfaction based on the 171 returns received.
- Standard window, door and insulation works have been identified, which will be delivered across the town.
- In terms of the heating refurbishment programme, works have progressed well at Pinewoods, Wellfield Court and Grosvenor Court despite some difficulties encountered due to additional fire stopping works being required. The lessons learned from this this will be applied to future works.
- Splash Drive was the first MRC block to be fully handed over by Mulalley in Phase 1.

#### **Spotlight: Health and Safety compliant non-domestic/non-commercial Council buildings (falling under the compliance contract)**

3.64 The percentage of health and safety compliant assets (statutory definition, KPI 5a) has been maintained at 100% during this quarter. The compliance team continues to work with the contractor to ensure this level is maintained.

3.65 The Compliance team are unable to provide a result for 'Assets 5b: Percentage of (Council) assets known to be compliant (as per SBC enhanced definition)' for quarter two. The team are reviewing the contract to secure an improved performance. An improvement plan is being put in place.

3.66 Whilst there is evidence that the servicing and inspection of assets has improved (visits to complete both statutory and SBC-defined activities are undertaken at the same time), the compliance team is continuing to work with

the contractor to ensure that the necessary assurance is given relating to 'Assets 5b' to enable performance to be fully reported in future months.

- 3.67 It should be noted that performance measures 'Assets 5a' and 'Assets 5b' relate to council premises such as civic offices, community centres, play centres, pavilions, cemetery buildings, depots etc. and refer to Compliance Services via the ComplyFirst Framework. Services under Assets 5a relate to the statutory requirements placed on us to keep our buildings safe and compliant, for example gas safety. Services under Asset 5b are very different and relate to services that in essence could be described as "planned or cyclical maintenance" such as gutter clearance. There is a low risk attached to not carrying out these 5b assets works; however carrying them out improves the performance of our assets. Officers are currently working on a corporate landlord project to map the management of compliance across all council buildings and this could impact on the future definition of these measures.

### **Spotlight: Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation**

NI156: Number of households in temporary accommodation at end qtr, September 2019 target 75, achieved 81

- 3.68 There are an additional 58 households that have not been included in the total figure on this occasion or previously but are deemed to be living in a form of temporary accommodation. This is because these cases have been accepted as being owed a homeless duty, but were placed into non-secure tenancies which cannot be a final offer of accommodation.
- 3.69 Due to the process in place at the time, discharge of duty to the 58 household above was not formally completed and as a result these are still officially designated as temporary accommodation. These cases will be reviewed and a programme is in place to rectify this starting in early 2020, which will show a decline in households in temporary accommodation as they are placed into permanent accommodation.
- 3.70 The team are looking to change this performance measure for quarter three as a result of the recently approved Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. The new performance measure will incorporate those in in non-secure tenancies, as well as the designated accommodation and bed and breakfast.

## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.71 The Communities and Neighbourhoods service featured as a national case study as part of the Localism Commission's follow-up publication 'Power Partnerships'. This focused on the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management programme, community engagement and work with the Community Centres.
- 3.72 The service secured a successful £15,000 bid to the Arts Council to develop an interactive installation on the cycle network/identified underpass.



- 3.73 The third Stevenage Cycle Festival was held in August, involving 10 different local organisations and over 50 volunteers. Over 300 participants took part in the led ride. As a consequence of the festival, Cycling UK Stevenage Branch ran an additional programme of family rides throughout the summer.
- 3.74 The play team had a successful summer, offering five weeks of playschemes at the three play centres and two holiday playschemes offering over 100 sessions for the children and young people to access. There were over 13,000 sessional attendances throughout this period.
- 3.75 Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse was awarded £3,000 from Stevenage Community Trust to offer play therapy as part of the wider offer for survivors and their families.

## **B: Place Theme**

- 3.76 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 3.11 to 3.17 and 3.19 to 3.24 respectively)

## **Planning and Regulation**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.77 Officers have been gaining support and direction for the emerging Climate Change Strategy and responses to the Climate Change Emergency.
- 3.78 The Council has received the Examiner's Report into the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates for Stevenage. The report supports the Council's proposed approach and rates to CIL. This is the final step before Member approval at Executive and Council in December and January 2020. CIL would be a mandatory floor space charge on new development in the borough which would be used to fund key infrastructure to support growth in Stevenage.
- 3.79 Planning applications continue to be determined within corporate and statutory targets.

## **Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.80 Green Flag Awards were successfully retained for Fairlands Valley Park, Town Centre Gardens and Hampson Park. An award was also attained for Shephalbury Park for the first time.
- 3.81 In quarter two Stevenage Direct Services delivered five free community events attracting approximately 4,000 visitors. The events included Music in the Park, Teddy Bears Picnic, Sport in the Park, Big Butterfly event and the SDS Open Day.
- 3.82 Repairs are being fixed promptly and time taken to complete them continues to be better than the target level. The team have placed major focus on a case management approach to each case dealt with. This, coupled with efforts to review and improve processes, has improved performance and productivity.
- RepTime1: Emergency Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), September 2019: target 1 day, achieved 0.85 days.
  - RepTime2: Urgent Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), September 2019: target 5 days, achieved 2.8 days.
  - RepTime3: Routine Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), September 2019: target 20 days, achieved 7.16 days.

## **C: Transformation and Support Theme**

- 3.83 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units:
- Corporate Services
  - Digital and Transformation
  - Finance and Estates

### **Corporate Services/Digital and Transformation**

#### **Highlights and Achievements**

##### **Customer Services**

- 3.84 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) was first identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at quarter three 2017/18 (March 2018 Executive). Since then, the CSC Improvement Plan has supported the recovery of performance levels and in quarter two 2019, the CSC corporate performance measures were all within target tolerance levels (i.e. green status), although, as forecasted, performance has reduced slightly during quarter two.

- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds: target 52%, April to September 2019 achieved 56.9%
  - CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 10%, April to September 2019 achieved 10.4%
  - CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes: target 78%, April to September 2019 achieved 80.2%
  - CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April to September 2019 achieved 61.8%
- 3.85 Historical performance data demonstrates performance in the Customer Service Centre is closely related to the amount of skilled advisers available.
- 3.86 Although performance measures remain above target there are still some resourcing challenges that are likely to have an impact into quarter three.
- 3.87 The new recruitment model has helped to reduce the impact on performance by reducing the time taken to recruit new advisers into the team. The improved training delivery and upskilling of CSC advisers is having a positive impact on performance.
- 3.88 Collaborative working with other service areas across the organisation is also key to driving further improvements in performance. This includes shared work space with Citizen Advice Bureau which went live in quarter two.
- 3.89 Self service facilities through the Connected to our Customers Programme are being planned to help meet service demand for walk-in customers.
- 3.90 The focus on this service area will be retained until initial performance improvement is evidenced as being sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

### **Technology**

- 3.91 Progress has been made on the joint ICT strategy during quarter two and has been approved by Stevenage Borough Council. Final approval is expected from East Herts in quarter three.
- 3.92 The security & network team have implemented new email and website security software to ensure outgoing emails are being encrypted.
- 3.93 The shared service storage hardware has been replaced and 99% of the Council's systems and data are running on it. The remainder is scheduled to be transferred shortly.

### **Our staff**

- 3.94 Following the introduction of a new appraisal approach, 'REAL Conversations', council business units have achieved the target of 100% of employees engaging in regular and meaningful REAL conversations with their managers.

These conversations typically include objectives, development, engagement and wellbeing, but they are also tailored to individuals.

- Appraisal completion rate to corporate deadlines: target 100%, April to September 2019 achieved 100%

### **Spotlight: Agency Usage**

3.95 There are three types of agency use within the Council. Firstly, there are a number of short term assignments within SDS to cover sickness and leave. It is anticipated that this will be resolved through the next phase of the SDS Business Unit Review. The second category is interim assignments to cover key strategic roles within the establishment whilst the Council progresses through the change programme of Business Unit Reviews. These will conclude when the permanent appointments are made. The third category comprises one-off project based agency assignments.

3.96 As explained above, agency usage is likely to remain slightly higher whilst the programme of Business Unit Reviews continues and this provides us with a flexible workforce model whilst we go through change and supports us in minimising redundancies. This figure has decreased since last quarter. The current status of this measure is amber.

- Agency usage as a percentage of the total workforce: target 12%, April to September 2019 achieved 12.78%

3.97 The figure of 12.78% agency usage is profiled as follows:

- 4.78% are workers covering on an ad-hoc basis at Cavendish Road
- 6.46% are agency workers covering established posts
- 1.54% are covering key strategic projects

3.98 Recruitment is underway for a number of key posts across the Council that will enhance capacity and key skills.

### **Spotlight: Sickness Absence**

3.99 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as red. The number of sickness days per FTE has been increasing for the past three quarters.

- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 8 days, twelve months to March 2019 achieved 8.86 days; twelve months to June 2019 achieved 9.49 days, twelve months to September 2019 achieved 9.8 days

3.100 The rise in sickness has been due to an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences (accounting for 62% of sickness).

3.101 In the last twelve months 59 staff have been off long term sick (20 working days) with 45 having returned to work. The breakdown of length of long term sickness absence is 44% of staff have been off for less than 3 months, 32% 3 to 6 months and 24% over 6 months. The breakdown of reasons for long term

sickness absence is 33.86% hospital/surgery, 29.77% anxiety/stress/depression, 21.03% cancer related illnesses, 9.34% heart, respiratory and 6% other absence.

- 3.102 The Council is currently working to introduce a third party sickness reporting service, which is due to go live in quarter three. This service will provide nurse led advice and challenge on fitness for work to both individuals and managers and ensure consistency of approach/advice on sickness absence. They will also follow up to ensure appropriate application of policy and return to work and provide regular and timely management information. Initially it is expected that the introduction of this sickness reporting service will show an increase in sickness absence levels. However, there is evidence that the introduction of such services significantly reduce absence in the longer term.
- 3.103 There are some proactive interventions in place to try and reduce sickness absence levels. These include free flu jab provisions, physio and counselling services for staff and the introduction of the annual leave purchase scheme to support an employee work life balance.
- 3.104 The Senior Leadership Team will continue to monitor the performance and management of sickness absence until revised policy and practice results in a sustained reduction in levels of sickness absence.

### **Finance and Estates**

- 3.105 The Revenues and Benefits service continues to exceed targets for Council Tax collection rates.
- 3.106 The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority has exceeded target for the quarter.
- 3.107 The time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events is 1.91 days below target.

### **Senior Leadership Team Perspective**

- 3.108 Good performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) has been achieved in quarter two, with the majority of corporate performance measures meeting or exceeding targets. Outcomes that significantly exceed expectations (measures achieving 'green plus' status) include the following:
- % of complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld
  - % repairs fixed first time and average responsive repair end-to-end times
  - % of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant
  - % planning applications determined within national target timescales
  - Number of Homelessness preventions

3.109 The Senior Leadership Team request that the Assistant Directors responsible for areas of improvement focus assess the factors impacting on performance and develop/implement plans that will provide sustainable performance improvement.

3.110 At the end of 2018/2019, the following improvement plans were identified for ongoing focused monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Embedding the new service model in the Customer Service Centre to continue to enhance resilience and increase the availability, skills and knowledge of customer service advisers
- Implementing actions to ensure that compliance of non-domestic council buildings with Health and Safety regulations is effectively monitored and recorded
- Improving practices in relation to sickness absence management
- Sustaining and enhancing improvements to the repairs and voids service

### **Customer Service Centre**

3.111 As reported in paragraph 3.84, new improvement measures in place from 2018/19 have improved and stabilised CSC performance results. There are some key activities that have supported recovery:

- Implementation of a new resource planning function
- New recruitment practices and training to upskill CSC advisers
- Review and re-design of the CSC's performance framework
- Re-focus on sickness management
- Additional management posts – increased available resource for both service and team development

3.112 Based on historical performance trends and known challenges with an increase in contact in quarter three, it is anticipated that cumulative results in quarter three may be lower than in quarter two, although performance is still forecast to meet target levels.

3.113 There are a number of training activities planned throughout quarter three, this further reduces available resource in the short term, but will increase skills and knowledge of the team and will contribute to the improved attrition figures.

3.114 As part of ongoing liaison arrangements, the CSC will be seeking a collaborative approach to managing customer demand. The CSC management team will be asking for contributions from Service Managers in the following areas:

- Provision of a timetable for large scale mail-outs
- Provision of front line support to respond to high demand, particularly when information has been sent without prior agreement
- Support in developing an approach to dealing with potentially violent and abusive customers

## **Health and Safety Compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial Council Buildings (under the compliance contract)**

3.115 It is positive to report that in quarter two the contractor achieved 100% compliance in respect of servicing and inspecting assets that have a statutory health and safety requirement (Assets 5a). However, concerns continue with regard to the provision of certification and documentation associated with servicing and inspection in accordance with the Council's enhanced definition 'Assets 5b', resulting in not being able to report performance figures for quarter two. Officers are reviewing the contract to ensure an improved performance around the non-statutory cyclical checks and repairs such as gutter clearances. Performance of the contractor is currently being scrutinised in order to deliver an improvement plan resulting in an increased level of performance.

### **Repairs and Voids Service**

3.116 As noted above, high levels of performance in the repairs service have been sustained into 2019/20.

3.117 With regards to voids, a key focus during 2018/19 was on re-let times for major works voids, which were classified as having a 'red' status throughout the year. Performance has improved significantly in relation to this type of void property.

3.118 Re-let times for general needs voids have increased slightly compared to 2018/19 but are still within target. Performance has been affected by an increased volume of voids compared to last year (circa 11%). The recent introduction of Maintenance Operatives has provided an additional, more cost effective resource, and is expected to deliver improvement in turnaround times for the remainder of the financial year due to more flexibility of the workforce.

3.119 As part of the ongoing repairs and voids improvement programme, officers are focussing on the approach to different categories of void property. These include not only the standard and major works categories referred to above (the re-let times for which are reported in Appendix 1) but also 'management voids', which are more complex in nature and tend to involve significant void periods because of the actions required to bring them up to standard. Examples include properties requiring significant notifiable asbestos removal works, meter replacement by utility companies, major environmental cleans, conversions etc. The Housing and Finance teams have put into place a process for regularly reviewing the impact of the different type of void property on the overall void loss.

3.120 The repairs and void service will provide a report to SLT in the new year on both the improvement programme and plans to deliver a 2% efficiency saving from year three of the HRA Business Plan.

## **Sickness Absence**

3.121 The management of sickness absence was initially identified as a 'spotlight' area at March 2018 Executive and has continued to be a focus for the Senior Leadership Team whilst also being subject to a Scrutiny Review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Whilst sickness absence improved throughout the year to December 2018, an increase was observed in quarter four of 2018/19 and this trend has continued into 2019/20, in the main associated with an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences. Improvement plans advised in previous performance reports continue to be implemented.

## **Improvement Plans**

3.122 In view of the above assessment and also the level of temporary accommodation becoming a red measure, at September 2019, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing focused monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Ensuring that pressure continues to be applied to the contractor to enable compliance with Health and Safety regulations to be effectively monitored and recorded (paragraph 3.65 to 3.67 refers)
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.84 to 3.90 refer)
- Reducing re-let times and developing plans to achieve the 2% efficiency saving in the repairs and voids service (paragraph 3.120 refers)
- Managing sickness absence more effectively and aligning it to council health and well-being policy. (paragraphs 3.99 to 3.104 refer)
- Ensuring that the issues around temporary accommodation are resolved and monitored (paragraph 3.68 to 3.70 refers )

3.123 The Senior Leadership Team will also keep a watching brief on one measure that moved from a green to amber status in the first quarter of 2019/20 and continues to be amber in quarter two. This is to do with the use of agency staff across the organisation.

3.124 In addition, the development and implementation of the IT strategy will continue to be monitored by the IT Shared Service Partnership Board to ensure that services are delivered that meet customer needs and are fit for the future.

3.125 The Council's approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to amend targets to ensure that they continue to reflect revisions to service delivery models where necessary and to support and drive forward additional improvements in services for the benefit of internal and external customers.



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

- 4.1 The information presented in this report is collated from the information provided to monitor delivery of the Cooperative Future Town, Future Council Programme and corporate performance for the quarter. It aims to give Executive an overview of the achievements the Council has made for the year to date, with a focus on the previous quarter and identifies plans for continued improvements in some areas to ensure the Council is fit for the future.
- 4.2 The Senior Leadership Team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to identify the key achievements.
- 4.3 A number of areas have been identified in section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement is required and outline plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

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

### **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 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

- 5.4.1 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.
- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

## **5.5 Other Corporate implications**

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

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Executive Report 10 July 2019: 2018/19 Annual Report & Performance Overview
- Executive Report 11 September 2019: Corporate Performance 2019/20 – Quarter 1

### **APPENDICES**

- Appendix One: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix Two: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2019/20