

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date 10 June 2020



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER FOUR 2019/20

NON KEY DECISION

Authors Chloe Norton | 2018/2501
Contributor Charlie Smith/Katrina Shirley, Assistant Directors | 2457/2018
Lead Officer Matt Partridge | 2456
Contact Officer Richard Protheroe | 2938

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council’s performance across key priorities and themes for quarter four 2019/20.

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 four 2019/20, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That actions to commence implementation of the Corporate Landlord Review, and to ensure the new approach to certification of health and safety compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial council buildings in accordance with the compliance contract, are noted and endorsed (para 3.55 to 3.58).

- 2.3 That impacts of the Government directive on housing rough sleepers during Covid-19 are noted and that improvements with non-secure tenancies are noted and endorsed (para 3.62 to 3.67).
- 2.4 That further improvement plans for the Customer Service Centre are noted and endorsed (para 3.92 to 3.103).
- 2.5 That ongoing implementation of improved practices to support sickness absence management is endorsed (para 3.116 to 3.123).
- 2.6 That issues with the letting of council garages due to Covid-19 are recognised and plans to improve the process of garages lettings are noted (para 3.86 to 3.90).
- 2.7 That issues with the current relet process for sheltered voids are noted, and plans to improve are endorsed (para 3.83 to 3.85).

3 BACKGROUND

Future Town Future Council Programme

3.1 Members approved the FTFC 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 over the next five years through the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme as seen in Figure 1.

Future town future council



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 is 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. 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 March 2020, the Executive agreed the suite of strategies to be included within the scope of a new FTFC programme, 'Place of Choice'. Associated actions for 2020/21 have been identified and progress against these will be reported from Quarter 1 of 2020/21. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge.

Customer, Place and Transformation and Support

- 3.4 Council services are organised into nine Business Units across three themes: Customer, Place and Transformation and 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 3.10 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.51 (Corporate Focus).
- 3.7 Towards the end of Quarter 4, Covid-19 began to impact on both FTFC programme activities and on council services and this is highlighted throughout this report. It should be noted however that as most performance results are cumulative and relate to the whole year (2019/20), the effect of Covid-19 is less evident at this stage than will be the case when results are reported at Quarter 1 of 2020/21.
- 3.8 In the context of Covid-19, a review of the Future Town Future Council programme has been undertaken for the year ahead, to help identify which planned projects can be delivered or where necessary adapted, noting that FTFC will be a key element of the Council's recovery programmes. Executive Members and the Opposition Group Leaders have supported this review. This work is being finalised and the focus and key deliverables for each FTFC programme will be reported to the Executive in July, alongside the Annual Report for 2019/20.

Future Town, Future Council Programme progress update

- 3.9 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes for 2019/20 is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.10 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April 2019 to

March 2020. The overview of FTFC focused results for April 2019 to March 2020 is outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)
13	11	0	2

- 3.11 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

- 3.12 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

- 3.13 The contractor to undertake demolition works to progress the SG1 scheme has been appointed, via our development manager Mace. A decision was made to suspend the mobilisation of the demolitions due to contractual risk with the developing Covid-19 situation and issues with labour and supply chain; however the Regeneration team are in regular discussions to move this project forward when appropriate.

- 3.14 Presentations have been made at an Informal Executive meeting and SLT regarding the outline vision for the hub, as well as initial meetings with health partners. A draft specification has been written for the new Museum and the project team are seeking external advice to support the specification, to ensure that the Council's aspirations can be achieved. The specification will be shared with Members for comments when it is in good enough form.
- 3.15 Construction work has continued on both the Town Square and North Block. Paving for the first phase in the Town Square, including the access route next to Primark, has completed. The construction team have now moved on to the second phase which gives over half of the event space. Scaffolding has been erected on the North Block, significant progress has been made with the façade and an extensive amount of progress has been made on the former McDonald's frontage. Weekly project meetings are being held with the contractor on site to monitor the delivery of both projects.
- 3.16 The first official meeting of the Stevenage Development board was held at the end of March with the newly appointed Chair. The officer team have commissioned consultants to support the creation of the town investment plan. The first key stage is to create a holistic baseline context of Stevenage in terms of place and economic strengths and weaknesses. This will help to inform options for potential schemes for the investment plan.

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
- 3.17 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

- 3.18 The open market acquisitions programme was scaled up during the 2019/20 financial year. The ambition was to purchase properties to be converted for those with additional accessibility requirements as there is a lack of suitable stock. Other additional properties are now being used as temporary accommodation. During quarter 4, a further six affordable homes had been secured through the acquisitions programme, bringing the total for the financial year to thirty six. The Housing Development team are working with colleagues from Legal Services to achieve completion on the pipeline of additional properties during 2020/21.
- 3.19 The Burwell Court scheme handed over in February 2020 and homes were in the process of being occupied at the end of the quarter. This scheme delivered 15 units of affordable accommodation. Members of the Housing Development and Regeneration Executive visited the site on the 24th of January 2020, followed by an open day for local residents to view the building on the 28th of January 2020.
- 3.20 Work is currently ongoing at the Ditchmore Lane development, with internal and external finishing being carried out. All but one of the properties have received formal offers with total receipts being in the region of £2.2m
- 3.21 Demolition work at the Kenilworth Close scheme was nearly complete at the end of the quarter, with the contractor scheduled to finish in April. The developer Hill has been successfully appointed, and an initial meeting has been held with them regarding the future development.
- 3.22 The schemes at North Road (21 Homes), Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have all continued to progress this quarter. The necessary pre-commencement planning conditions have been submitted for the North Road site and required tree works have taken place. Materials are onsite to continue the brickwork at the Shephall Way site and work is being undertaken to complete the ground works at the Symonds Green site.

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
- 3.23 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

- 3.24 Neighbourhood improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood continued this quarter. Projects delivered included renewal of street furnishings.
- 3.25 Initial consultation for the roll out of CNM in Bedwell and Longmeadow began this quarter. Community Development Officers have been engaging with local businesses, community organisations and schools to assess where partnership working can be utilised. Activities including regular ward patrols by Neighbourhood Wardens, attendance at residents groups and community events as well as bespoke engagement events are being planned by the team.
- 3.26 Following the review of the Council-owned community centres which was presented at December Executive, implementation of the agreed recommendations has begun. Further development of the Co-operative Compact Partnership as well as incorporation of elements of the Hub & Spoke model have begun with supporting work programme being developed by the Community Development team. Discussions surrounding the renewal of leases have begun with the Estates team. Officers have met with all the Community Associations to outline what this means for each individual centre.
- 3.27 In March four recommendations were approved by Executive in relation to community wealth building. These are summarised as:
- 1) Developing an Inclusive Economy Charter by end of June 2020,
 - 2) Piloting a Community Balance Sheet,
 - 3) Facilitating a cross departmental working group, and
 - 4) Sharing best practice at a regional and national level.
- 3.28 The Charter will include space for communities and other stakeholders to pledge their support, and the balance sheet will be developed as part of the Cooperative Neighbourhood Programme. The Charter will be presented to the Executive in July 2020.
- 3.29 To guide this work, two overarching diagrams have been developed showing the model of working and intended outcomes. These include an Inclusive Economy Wheel. Both will help to frame leadership work with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

- 3.30 In readiness for the roll-out of Cooperative Neighbourhoods, a strategic board has been formed and governance, strategic and operational documents necessary for the development of the Area Based Working Operating Model have been prepared. The majority of staff briefing sessions have been completed and the prototype neighbourhood team for St Nicholas and Martins Wood is mostly formed.

Excellent Council Homes Programme

Programme Outcome

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

- 3.31 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

- 3.32 The major refurbishment programme (MRC) is a £55 million 5 year programme which commenced in 2019. The majority of year one works have been completed with contractors undertaking remaining snagging items prior to handover. Consultation with affected leaseholders for the next phase is taking place to ensure meaningful engagement occurs prior to the commencement of works.
- 3.33 Progress continues on a new area-based working model with Communities & Neighbourhoods and Stevenage Direct Services.
- 3.34 Resident consultation for the sprinkler programme took place in February. The session was well attended and received positive feedback. Mobilisation meetings were held with the principal designer and a revised survey schedule will be agreed that takes into account resident feedback and the Covid-19 Emergency.
- 3.35 Three lifts were renewed through the lift refurbishment contract this quarter (Shephall Way flats and George Lighton Court). All are now in service and discussions are taking place to consider the delivery schedule for 2020/21.

3.36 The Online Housing Service was scheduled to go live during quarter 4 with a soft launch; however, there was an issue with the single sign on process. This has been quickly rectified and launched in early April 2020.

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

3.37 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 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 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

3.38 Progress with the new website has continued this quarter with more than 98% of new web pages completed. A discussion with the supplier took place to agree the remaining development works required to deliver the new website and they are applying time and cost estimates for undertaking the remaining works.

3.39 The new integrated digital solution, Firmstep, launched in the CSC in February, replacing the existing customer relationship management system.

The new software will enable integrations between systems, to join up council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels. This continues to be enhanced with more functionality being developed including; integration of web forms, a 'My Account' function for the website and missed bin and replacement container processes are being tested. This last piece of functionality will integrate with the new Bartec Environmental Services system that went live in Q4 for back office staff for the Waste and Recycling service.

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.

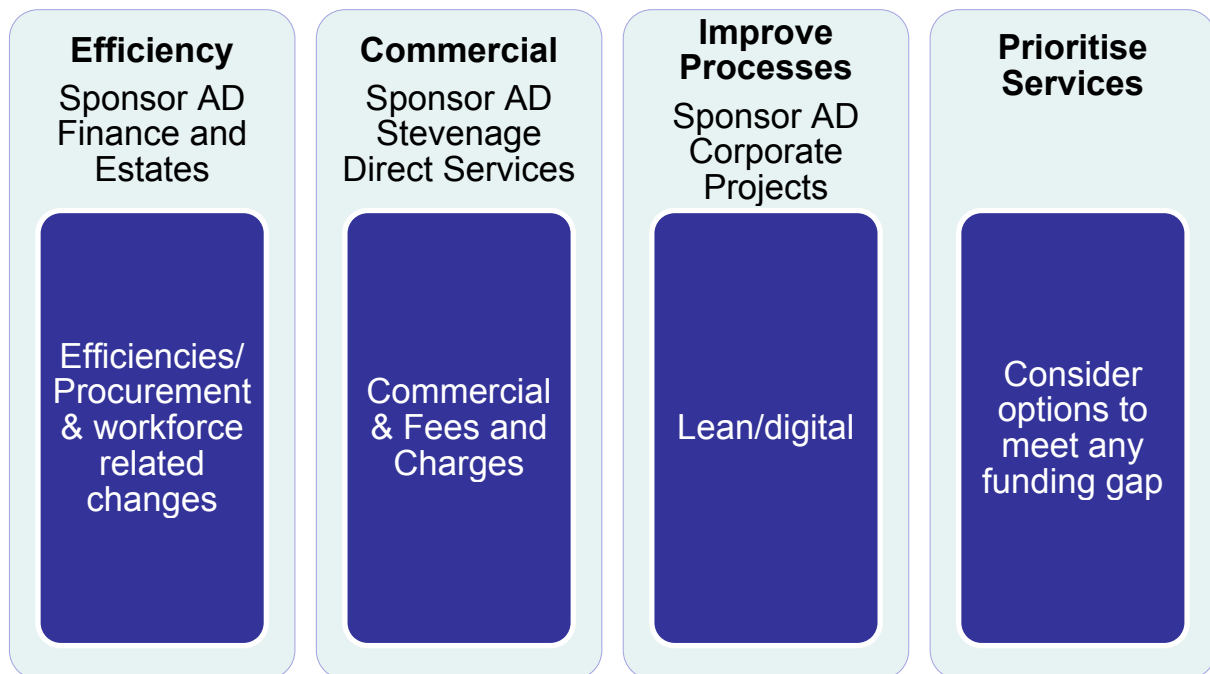


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.40 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 Local Asset 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

- 3.41 The 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) budgets were agreed in January and February. Also agreed were the Council Tax Setting, as well as the Capital Strategy and the Annual Treasury Management Strategy, including Prudential Indicators.
- 3.42 The recruitment processes for a new Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) and Commercial Manager have been completed during this quarter. A timeline for delivery will be further progressed on the Council's commercial and insourcing strategy following the take up of these posts in due course.
- 3.43 Due to the impacts of Covid-19 in Quarter 4 it is now necessary for the Finance Team to undertake a review of the MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategy). The related report is on the agenda for this meeting.

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
- 3.44 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 Strategy

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.45 Work is underway on the Learning & Development (L&OD) Strategy based on identified learning needs analysis. A policy has been written and a map of L&OD is currently being developed. All Assistant Directors have committed to developing learning plans for their business units.
- 3.46 First Care (Third Party Sickness Reporting Facility) launched in October. Further functionality on this platform was rolled out during January 2020 through the First Care insight portal.

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
- 3.47 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

- 3.48 Work continues to improve the use of the performance management system, Inphase. Support has been given to the Housing and Investment team to streamline performance reporting and also to enhance the monitoring of areas such as temporary accommodation.
- 3.49 The annual review of performance measures and targets is underway and the suite of corporate measures for 2020/21 will be presented to Executive in July 2020 alongside the Annual Report. The process has also included consideration by Assistant Directors and their management teams of new

operational measures, with a view to implementing a programme to incorporate these into Inphase during 20/21. This will help to improve the use of the performance management tool at a business unit level, in line with the devolved governance model.

Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement

3.50 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 March 2020 is outlined below:

3.51

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
44	33	3	7	1*

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

3.52 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement for April 2019 to March 2020 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support.

A: Customer Theme

3.53 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

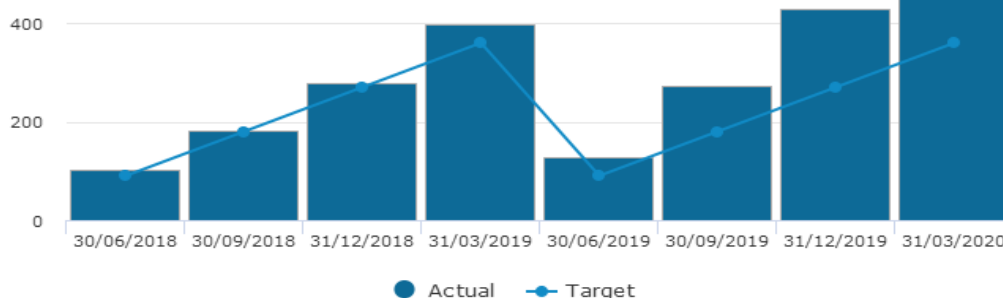
- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

Housing and Investment

Highlights and Achievements

3.54 At the end of 2019/20 the target for homelessness preventions was 360, however the team achieved 525 preventions; this is in comparison to 399 in 2018/19. This is a significant achievement but highlights the increased pressure which is being placed on the service.

BV213: Homelessness preventions



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

- 3.55 The percentage of health and safety compliant assets (statutory definition) has fallen this quarter. This is because many buildings have been closed as a result of Government Covid-19 guidance. The contractor has furloughed staff and reduced their service to emergency compliance works only.
- 3.56 Buildings that are not in use have been decommissioned by the Compliance team and the Facilities Management (FM) team are procuring a contractor to monitor and maintain closed buildings.
- 3.57 The Compliance team are unable to provide a result for 'Assets 5b: Percentage of (Council) assets known to be Health and Safety compliant (as per SBC enhanced definition)' for the third consecutive quarter. The Compliance team have audited the report provided by the contractor and not been able to verify the figures reported. In the absence of reliable information no data is able to be reported.
- 3.58 The contractor has now given notice to terminate the contract by the end of June 2020 and the service has been transferred to the FM team to be included within the Corporate Landlord review. Officers have recently completed a review of compliance across the Council's assets and will set the related standards going forward. A working group are pulling together the plan to provide an alternative service using other contractors and in-house staff. This is being drawn up by the Estates and FM team.
- 3.59 It should be noted that performance measures 'Assets 5a' (statutory) and 'Assets 5b' (non statutory) 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. These services relate to the provision of regular compliance servicing and related maintenance of fire, water, electrical, gas, air conditioning and minor building works. 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: Decent Homes

- 3.60 The percentage of homes maintained as decent this quarter is below target this quarter. There has been a delay in the internal and external works programme due to Covid-19 and social distancing guidance e.g. not being able to work within homes.
- 3.61 The team are monitoring Government updates as they come through. The new Decent Homes contract will be mobilised when it is safe for the works to be undertaken.
- ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent, March 2020 target 76.1%, achieved 75.1%

Spotlight: Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

- 3.62 Due to Covid-19 the numbers have significantly increased following the Government directive on housing non-vulnerable rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping being accommodated, whom the council would not normally house. The council accommodated 12 rough sleepers and 29 who were considered to be at risk of rough sleeping.
- 3.63 8 Temporary Accommodation units that are being held for possible Covid-19 isolation cases and some General Need lettings were put on hold due to the Covid-19 Emergency, which have in turn led to an increased use of hotel and Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation.
- 3.64 As detailed in Quarter 2 there are a number of households in non-secure accommodation where a main homelessness duty is owed. Officers have continued to discharge the council's homelessness duty by offering permanent council tenancies or source private rented sector accommodation.
- 3.65 The team are looking into the introduction of a 'Housing First' approach within the Borough and will be bringing a report to the Executive for consideration later this year to set out what can be achieved.
- 3.66 The Government has pledged to provide long-term homes for those people taken off the streets during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has announced a £433m fund to provide 6,000 new housing units for vulnerable rough sleepers, with 3,300 delivered in the next 12 months. This includes bringing forward £381m previously announced at the Budget, with an extra £52m of new funding. While the funding for councils to support rough sleepers is positive, the council is still seeking clarity from the Government on what additional practical support will be available to local authorities to help them move people out of hotels and temporary accommodation and into housing.
- 3.67 Initial designs for a new hostel are being developed. If the project can proceed it may further reduce the need for B&B placements.
- NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter, March 2020 target 75, achieved 175

Communities and Neighbourhoods

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.68 Officers have been working with Community Associations in response to Covid-19, and have been assisting with accessing Government grants and to benefit from the Government's Job Retention Scheme.
- 3.69 Officers launched the Stevenage Helps initiative to support vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 Emergency.
- 3.70 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership successfully developed a proposal to prepare for the launch of a young person's hub, working with a number of local secondary schools.
- 3.71 The play review was completed as part of the business unit review. This has created a more cost effective operating model and a more responsive approach to working with local children and their families across Stevenage.
- 3.72 The CCTV Governance Review concluded with refreshed governance documentation and terms of reference for the CCTV partnership, led by Stevenage and including North Herts, East Herts and Hertsmere councils.

B: Place Theme

- 3.73 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 3.13 to 3.16 and 3.18 to 3.22 respectively)

Planning and Regulation

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.74 Consultation has taken place for the Draft Climate Change Strategy and over 1500 responses were received. The strategy will be presented to Executive in September.
- 3.75 Planning applications continue to be determined within corporate and statutory targets.

Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.76 Following consultation with children and young people, improvements to Shephalbury Park play area have been completed. Works are on order for

improvements to Whitesmead Rec, Burymead (The Avenue) and St Margaret's play areas, but are currently delayed due to Covid-19.

- 3.77 In quarter 2 Stevenage Direct Services launched a Recycling Bag Pilot, which continued into quarter 3. Around 270 households were invited to participate in a pilot for the use of recycling bags in place of the current plastic boxes provided. The new recycling bags are now being provided in place of the old boxes. Most residents appear happy to use the recycling bags. Constructive feedback has been received which will be used to inform future specifications.
- 3.78 In February the refuse and recycling module of the new Bartec digital system went live. The system will help the team move away from paper and manage the service electronically. Integration with corporate Firmstep platform will enable the sharing of real time information with the CSC and residents, such as missed bins and delays to the crew's schedule.
- 3.79 A community orchard in Mobbsbury Park has been restored and extended following works by the SDS Management team and Green Space Volunteers. A new 'People's Orchard' has been created on open space in Symonds Green. With supervision from SDS staff, SLT helped to clear scrub from Poplars Meadow (a local wildlife site). During Quarter 4, 40% of Green Space Volunteer hours supported the delivery of the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 3.80 A new Waste Policy was approved by Executive in February. A Cemetery policy has also been drafted and an Amenity Tree Management policy is currently out for internal consultation.
- 3.81 Repairs are being fixed promptly and the time taken to complete them continues to be ahead of 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), March 2020: target 1 day, achieved 0.94 days.
 - RepTime2: Urgent Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), March 2020: target 5 days, achieved 3.14 days.
 - RepTime3: Routine Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), March 2020: target 20 days, achieved 7.85 days.
- 3.82 The time taken to re-let Standard general needs voids has improved since last quarter (from 30.27 days to 29.97 days). Monthly performance in Quarter 4
- Voids General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids (days) March 2020: target 32 days, achieved 29.97 days

Spotlight: Sheltered & Sheltered Major Works Voids

- 3.83 Sheltered voids (turnaround time) and major works are red. The main reason for this is that the Choice based bidding system is not suitable for the independent living client group and that the majority of residents do not bid for themselves. For example between 1 April and 30 June 2019 the team let 13 properties (excluding flexi-care). Only 1 was let through the choice based bidding system by an applicant bidding for themselves.
- 3.84 The team are bound by the advertising and bidding cycles, so if a property has received low or no bids the team have to wait for the next cycle which can extend void times. Independent Living properties are not advertised on consecutive weeks. The plan is to remove these properties from the choice based bidding system and manage the process from the point of assessment through to the letting stage. This will be reviewed as part of the review of the allocation policy.
- 3.85 Until this is reviewed the independent Living team are and have been pro-actively trying to match people to properties, where possible with a personable approach. A good example of this was where they managed to turn a property around quickly because the current resident was willing to allow the successful applicant to view the property before she moved out. Within a 12 day period, they received the keys, completed the voids work and let the property again.
- Voids Sheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids, March 2020 target 70 days, achieved 88.89 days
 - Voids ShelteredMW: The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids, March 2020 target 70 days, achieved 103.25 days

Spotlight: Garage Void Rate

- 3.86 The void rate for garages has increased again this quarter (15.38% against a target of 12%).
- 3.87 Since 22 March 2020 no garage offers were made due to lockdown, however the team are working hard to identify void garages and match them to applicants, so once lockdown is lifted offers can resume straight away.
- 3.88 A project is also underway to modernise the current garage letting process and ensure that the available units are effectively marketed. In the medium term the intention is to allow customers to view the available garages, sign up and make payments on-line. As an interim measure, the waiting list is also be reviewed to ensure that time is not being spent making offers to customers who are no longer interested.
- 3.89 It is expected that garage arrears will increase during lockdown; the team are in contact with several tenants who are struggling financially and cannot pay until lockdown is lifted. The arrears are monitored on a weekly basis.
- 3.90 The Garages team will in future include the Awaiting Major Works garages in the void figure.

- CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock March 2020: target 12%, achieved 15.38%

C: Transformation and Support Theme

3.91 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

Spotlight: Customer Services

3.92 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) is an ongoing focus area for improvement. As forecasted in December 2010, performance was on a downward trend during quarter 4.

- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds: target 55%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 46.7%
- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 8%, April 2019 to December 2020 achieved 15.9%
- CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes: target 80%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 79.8%
- CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 61.4% (Actual data provided until January 2020 with estimated data in February and March, due to reporting from the new systems being delayed due to the Covid-19 response. Calculations have been based on historical data).

3.93 Performance in January and February was below target because severe storms caused an influx of repair related issues, which were compounded by an existing backlog of fence, gutter, roof and other similar repairs.

3.94 Historical performance data demonstrates performance in the Customer Service Centre is closely related to the amount of skilled advisers available.

3.95 Resourcing challenges from Quarter 3 continued into early Quarter 4. Performance improved in March, primarily due to upskilling of advisers, additional agency resource and diversion of resource from the walk-in service to telephone.

3.96 As at 31 March 2020 there were 26.3 FTE in post. There were 5.6 FTE agency staff in place, which equates to 21.2% of all Customer Service

Advisers (CSAs) in post. The Covid-19 response delayed planned recruitment in March but remote interviews took place in the last week in April.

- 3.97 Absence triggered by COVID-19 increased during March. At the point of lockdown instruction on 23 March, a third of the team were self-isolating. Home working for the CSAs began on 26th March, enabling those self-isolating, but well enough to work, to continue in their role as CSAs. Homeworking has built significant resilience within the team and sickness/self-isolation absence has reduced.
- 3.98 In Quarter 4 the new Digital Platform was implemented, which includes the implementation of the new walk-in queuing system. An appointment system has been designed, implemented and communicated to customers.
- 3.99 Forecasting volume and performance for Quarter 1 is difficult in these uncertain times. The calculations are based on:
- Scenario one - reduced volume based on continued lockdown circumstances
 - Scenario two – reduced volume through April/May and a 30% increase for June
 - Scenarios three – reduced volume through April/May and a 50% increase for June

Measure	Target	Q4 forecast
CSC 12 – Percentage of calls abandoned	<8%	1) 5% 2) 7.3% 3) 15%
CSC 13a – Calls resolved at first point of contact	>65%	1) 65.3% 2) 60.4% 3) 59.9%
EAA1 - Customer satisfaction with CSC services	> 90%	1) 90% 2) 88.8% 3) 87%

- 3.100 The key focus for Quarter 1 is to plan for recovery, ensure safety measures are in place for staff and ensure those customers most in need of critical services are prioritised.
- 3.101 Recovery planning is heavily reliant on engagement with other back office services; therefore the CSC team will be working on a collaborative approach. Key areas of contribution include:
- Provision of a timetable for recovery plans. This will facilitate resourcing plans, more accurate forecasting and the development of customer communications.

- Areas/processes that can be directed to the web for those who are able.
 - Identification of processes that can be resolved at first point of contact.
- 3.102 Additional staff through the re-deployment will be sought to support recovery. Training will take place during May with a view for readiness when lockdown measures are lifted and recovery plans are implemented.
- 3.103 The focus on this service area will be retained until initial performance improvement can be seen to be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

Technology

- 3.104 In Quarter 4 the IT team have enabled all staff, who require it, to be able to work from home due to Covid-19, majority of staff are now using remote access at any one time during the working day.
- 3.105 The team programmed and installed 100 additional home worker phones to allow teams like the CSC to work safely whilst following Covid-19 guidance.
- 3.106 Video conferencing methods have now been procured and implemented. These are available for staff day to day use, and also for public meetings such as the Executive meeting and Annual Council in May.
- 3.107 Extensive server upgrades that were planned have continued to take place, whilst in lockdown.
- 3.108 Laptops have been procured and are currently being deployed to Members which should enable them (once set up has taken place) to take advantage of the new video conferencing facilities.

Spotlight: Website Satisfaction

- 3.109 Quarter 4 satisfaction with the Council website is rated as red; this is the lowest it has been in 2019/20.
- 3.110 In Quarter 4 there was a large increase in negative comments about the 'find feature' not returning certain results including waste and recycling service collection dates. This matter has now been resolved and collection dates are available up until the end of September 2020.
- WebSat1: Customer Satisfaction with Council website, March 2020 target 0.20 rating, achieved 0.16 rating

Our staff

- 3.111 Employees are continuing to engage in regular and meaningful REAL conversations with their managers. These conversations typically include objectives, development, engagement and wellbeing, but they are also tailored to address individual matters. Since lockdown has begun all REAL conversations have taken place virtually, these have included wellbeing checks.

Spotlight: Agency Usage

3.112 Agency usage is amber for Quarter 4 and is currently 0.9% above target at 11.9%. The profile of agency usage is:

- 3.68% are workers covering on an adhoc basis at Cavendish Road
 - 6.65% are agency workers covering established posts
 - 1.55% are covering key strategic projects
- Agency usage as a percentage of the total workforce: target 11%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 11.9%

3.113 Plans to reduce agency usage, in terms of key strategic and established posts, include successful recruitment campaigns for a number of key posts across the organisation.

3.114 Ad-hoc cover is planned to be reduced at Cavendish Road with the Stevenage Direct Services Business Unit Review. Consultation is planned to commence in July to develop a more flexible and resilient structure.

3.115 Highlights include the recruitment of three new Assistant Directors who will join during Quarter 1 and 2 of 2020/21.

Spotlight: Sickness Absence

3.116 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.

3.117 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as red. The number of sickness days per FTE has not been within target for the past year. It increased by 3.24% when compared to last quarter.

- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 8 days, twelve months to June 2019 achieved 9.49 days; twelve months to September 2019 achieved 9.8 days, twelve months to December 2019 achieved 9.56 days, twelve months to March 2020 achieved 9.87 days

3.118 The rise in sickness relates to an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences (accounting for 65% of sickness, an increase of 6% compared to last quarter).

3.119 In the last 12 months 93 staff have been off long term sick with 70 having returned to work. The breakdown of length of long term sickness absence is: 75% of staff have been off for less than 3 months, 20% 3 to 6 months and 5% over 6 months. The breakdown of reasons for long term sickness absence is: 37.47% anxiety/stress/depression, 22.77% hospital surgery, 10.25% cancer related illnesses, 9.29% heart/respiratory, 12.2% muscular/skeletal and 7.75% other absence.

- 3.120 The Council has introduced a third party sickness reporting service, First Care, which went live in quarter three. This service provides advice and challenge on fitness for work to both individuals and managers, and ensures 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 would result in an increase in sickness absence levels.
- 3.121 First Care advised that new clients often see a spike in absence within the first six months post implementing the service, before they then see a decline. It was originally planned that the team would undertake an evaluation of the First Care service in March 2020 with the support of the Shared Internal Audit Service. This audit has been delayed due to Covid-19 and is now scheduled to take place in six months' time.
- 3.122 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.
- 3.123 The Senior Leadership Team continues 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

- 3.124 The Revenues and Benefits service continues to exceed targets for Council Tax collection rates. However Covid-19 is impacting on customer's availability to pay, leading to increased arrears (18% of accounts had no payment in April 2020).
- 3.125 The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority has exceeded target for the quarter. Despite the increased level of retail reliefs, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is predicted to impact on businesses ability to pay any remaining business rates.
- 3.126 The time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events is 4.02 days below target. However the impact on the service from increased Council Tax Support claims and increased demand for information as a result of Covid-19 is likely to impact on this in 2020/21.

Spotlight: GF/HRA Savings Identified and Savings Removed from Budget

- 3.127 Although the results for FS1a, FS2a, FS3 and FS4 (FTFC measures) are currently green, the figures entered as actuals do not include the impacts of Covid-19.
- 3.128 The Accountancy team completed an impact assessment in the last two weeks of March; therefore having a realistic figure for the measures at the year-end is very difficult. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the ongoing savings target are currently being reviewed. The June MTFS update

projects that a number of 2019/20 and 2020/21 savings options will not be fully realised in 2020/21.

Next Quarter Focus

3.129 Good performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) has been achieved in quarter four, 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

3.130 The Assistant Directors are responsible for improving the performance of measures that fall within their Business Units.

3.131 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at March 2020, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Continuing to implement the Corporate Landlord review in respect of asset maintenance and compliance and ensuring that the appropriate contractor is procured to enable compliance with Health and Safety regulations to be effectively monitored and recorded (paragraphs 3.55 to 3.58)
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.92 to 3.103)
- Continuing to implement improved practices to support sickness absence (paragraphs 3.116 to 3.123)
- Continuing to resolve the issues with non-secure tenancies and implementing recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.62 to 3.67)
- Ensuring that issues with the letting of council garages due to Covid-19 are recognised and performance is monitored closely. Implement plans to improve the process of garages lettings (paragraphs 3.86 to 3.90)
- Implementing plans to improve the process to relet sheltered voids to reduce turnaround time (paragraphs 3.83 to 3.85)

3.132 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.

3.133 The Senior Leadership Team will also closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on performance across all service areas during Quarter 1 and most performance results will be compared to actuals in the equivalent period last year. This will help to establish the level of impact and inform where activity and resources need to be allocated.

3.134 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 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

APPENDICES

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