

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 6 October 2020



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER ONE 2020/21

### KEY DECISION

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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter one 2020/21.

### 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 one 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That impacts of the Government directive on housing rough sleepers during Covid-19 are noted and that future Housing First plans are endorsed (para 3.80 to 3.86).

- 2.3 That impacts on the Council's Housing Options Service from the Government directive on evictions and the COVID-19 pandemic are noted and that future Housing First Plans are endorsed (para 3.74 to 3.79).
- 2.4 That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on rent collection rate are noted and action plans endorsed (para 3.87 to 3.95).
- 2.5 That the impacts of COVID-19 on the following areas are noted and plans endorsed:
- Community Safety issues (para 3.99 to 3.105)
  - Job Creation through the Business Technology Centre (para 3.107 to 3.111)
  - Ability to inspect food establishments (para 3.112 to 3.113)
  - Issues with the letting of council garages (para 3.114 to 3.120)
  - Collection of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates (para 3.152 to 3.154)
  - Ability to identify and remove HRA/GF savings (para 3.155 to 3.157)
- 2.6 That the level of void loss is noted and improvements are endorsed (para 3.95 to 3.98).
- 2.7 That the changes in the process to recruitment are endorsed (para 3.144 to 3.145)

### 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. Partnership working is also crucial to the delivery of both the Place of Choice programme and COVID-19 recovery, (para 3.42 to 3.57).
- 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'. Progress against the agreed actions has begun reporting from Quarter 1 of 2020/21. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge.
- 3.4 At the Executive meeting on 8 July 2020, the Executive agreed both the deliverables for each of the FTFC programmes and the town and Council's recovery plans which have very strong synergies. Progress against the agreed actions will be monitored and reported on through future reports.

#### **Customer, Place and Transformation and Support**

- 3.5 Council services are organised into eight 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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 3.11 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.70 (Corporate Focus).
- 3.8 Towards the end of Quarter 4 2019/20, COVID-19 began to impact on both FTFC programme activities and on council services. Where COVID-19 impacts on performance can be evidenced these are highlighted throughout this report.

## COVID-19

3.9 Given the extensive measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, the Council's Directors have provided an overview of current performance and look ahead for future quarters.

- **Adapting services:** With the support and strategic direction of Members, a range of Council teams have worked at pace, with flexibility and commitment to support the town and Council through the effects of the pandemic and the associated economic, social and health effects. Many services have been adapted to ensure they could continue to provide support for local people and in particular those who are the most vulnerable. This will remain the case during the year and may require the Council to scale up or adapt support for residents at short notice in order to respond to the effects of the pandemic, which has already impacted upon the performance of some services as outlined within this report.
- **Responding to the pandemic:** We have used an Incident Management structure and team to respond to the pandemic and have actively supported the county wide resilience efforts. This will continue throughout the financial year. Members will not be surprised to read that this has and continues to present a significant resourcing challenge for our senior team and a number of specialist colleagues including, for example, those in Environmental Health. We anticipate this will remain a key priority in the months ahead, with resourcing plans in place to manage the business continuity of vital services in a time of disruption. Officers will continue to prioritise resources to ensure team members can focus on work that may be required to support responses to any potential local outbreaks. The ongoing response along with the impacts of any local outbreak should one occur may result in further service disruption.
- **Delivery of priorities:** The Executive has approved the Future Town Future Council programme for the 2020/2021 financial year, and the Council's Coronavirus pandemic Recovery Plan. The Council is also working with partners through the Recovery Taskforce on the development of a broader recovery plan for the Town. The Business Units are striving to remain focussed and engaged on delivery of the agreed priorities, from creating new affordable housing, to driving forward the regeneration of the town centre and other key priorities including climate and sustainability, transport, cooperative neighbourhoods and wealth building.
- **Performance effects:** As set out in this report, the wider effects of the pandemic are and will continue to cause issues for residents, communities and businesses within the town. This is reflected in areas of current demand or increasing need or pressure for different services

such as homelessness support and advice, Council Tax and Housing Benefits, income and rents. These and other services areas will remain under focus by our Senior Leadership Team during the year.

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

- 3.10 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes for 2020/21 is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.11 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April 2020 to June 2020. An overview of FTFC focused performance for April 2020 to June 2020 is outlined below:

<b>Number of Measures Reported</b>	<b>Meeting or exceeding target</b>	<b>Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)</b>	<b>Red Status (urgent improvement action required)</b>
13	9	0	4

- 3.12 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

- 3.13 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Developing the Town Fund investment plan which will be overseen by the Stevenage Development board
- Working with the LEP to ensure Growth Deal funding is secured for specific schemes
- Supporting and enabling the start of Phase 1 of the £350m+ SG1 project in conjunction with Mace, including Swingate House and the former police station site
- Completing a business case for bringing forward the Public Sector hub development, to enable acceleration of the broader SG1 scheme

- Completing works on the Town Square and Town Square North Block projects.
- The transformation of Queensway through the completion of the first phases of work as part of the Reef development
- Beginning construction of the new Bus Interchange, subject to permission being granted
- Developing long term plans to support development around the station area
- Developing the funded CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) on-site Training Hub as part of the Stevenage Works initiative in conjunction with Job Centre Plus and North Herts College
- Delivering the 2020/21 Marketing Strategy, focussing on inclusive engagement

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.14 Following the successful submission of the planning application for the SG1 scheme last year, the Council and it's developer Mace are continuing with discussions and queries regarding the application.
- 3.15 Further to the appointment of the contractor to undertake demolition works to progress the SG1 scheme, Mace are drafting revisions to the development agreement to facilitate the demolition works to the former Police station site. With the vacant possession of Swingate House complete, the next stage is preparing this site for demolition.
- 3.16 An initial meeting was held regarding the financial modelling for the hub and the information that will be required to progress to the next stage. The project group are producing a study which will look at desk capacity and floor usage to help inform the next stages of work.
- 3.17 Planning approval for the bus interchange was granted in quarter one, with a number of pre-commencement conditions. The Regeneration team are working closely with the contractors on design works and further preparations to progress the scheme.
- 3.18 Work is continuing with the developer Reef, to appraise options to develop the Marshgate site. An initial proposal has been produced and further work is underway to understand the implications of the scheme prior to a proposition coming forward to Members.
- 3.19 Physical works to the Town Square projects have continued this quarter, despite the impact of COVID-19. The lift shaft pre-construction works have been completed and the lift shaft installations works have begun on the North Block site as well as works to the façade and roof being progressed. The second phase of works to the Public Realm has been completed with festoon lights and bespoke lighting now fitted. These features pay homage to the New Town's heritage. A section of paving across the main town square has now been handed back and the next phase is underway.

- 3.20 The Town Fund project group are working at pace with the Stevenage Development Board to establish a potential long list of projects that best align with this funding opportunity. An initial kick off meeting with central government gave positive reception to the work undertaken to date. The Town Fund Investment Plan will be submitted in accordance with Government guidance.

## **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

- 3.21 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Completing work on 10 new homes at Ditchmore Lane and continuing to work on delivering a further 240 homes, including sites at Shephall Way, Kenilworth Close, North Road and Symonds Green
- Seeking planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes
- Procuring the design team for the Oval scheme masterplan, undertaking consultation on the designs and setting out a timetable for the development
- 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 additional affordable homes
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to deliver homes outside the HRA

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.22 The Ditchmore Lane scheme has received building control sign off and handover is complete. A number of sale completions are to be made during quarter two and the remaining unit is continuing to be advertised.
- 3.23 Work is continuing on the North Road site, with foundation work completed and work scheduled to begin on the drainage and ground floor slab. Procurement of an estate agent has taken place which will allow further input into design and marketing from an early stage.
- 3.24 The schemes at Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have continued to progress during quarter one. At Shephall Way the roof structure is now entirely complete and roof tiles have also been affixed, making the build wind and water tight. At Symonds Green brickwork has begun on site, with the final concrete pour scheduled.

- 3.25 The Project team are continuing their work on detailed designs for Kenilworth Close and will be submitting a revised (value driven scheme improvement) proposal for the Malvern Close element of the scheme. These proposals seek to increase the marketability of the finished homes, and achieve programming and construction costs savings for the Council's benefit. Further work on reviewing the design proposals for the main site, to achieve further programme and construction cost efficiencies are continuing. A newsletter has been drafted and will be distributed to local residents.
- 3.26 The Housing Development team is working to develop a design framework for The Oval. The intention is to develop designs that allow for a phased delivery of the scheme which will attract the necessary investment to deliver the regeneration of this area and add to the Council's sustainability aims for its public and community facing assets. It is anticipated the framework will be delivered in quarter three.
- 3.27 Work is progressing on developing a revised business case for the Wholly Owned Housing Development Company. A meeting between the Housing Development team and the Strategic Director (CF) has ensured all parties are in agreement with the direction of travel with the aim being for the new business plan to be approved. An Executive report will be brought forward in December 2020.

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

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council and residents, and help to give people pride in the place they live
  - Residents feel that they can work with the Council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area
  - The town's community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs
  - Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required
- 3.28 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Implementing the Co-operative Neighbourhood working model, to enhance co-operative working across council services in neighbourhoods
  - Beginning to roll out elements of the new sustainable model for the provision and management of community centres
  - Public realm investments in Bedwell and Longmeadow, which will be determined by the community and seek co-operation from local groups, businesses and partner agencies, subject to funding becoming available
  - Replacing and installing new litter bins across Roebuck and Old Town
  - Progressing the Garage Programme

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.29 Work on the Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model has been progressed during quarter one with development proposals being agreed with the Strategic Leadership Team. A progress report was presented to the Executive in July 2020 that outlined how the new model is to be rolled out during quarters 2 and 3 and the role of Ward Members and officers.
- 3.30 Further development of the Co-operative Compact Partnership, as well as the integration of elements of the Hub & Spoke model, have been incorporated into a forward plan in line with the agreed recommendations of the community centre review. Following the Government's announcement to re-open community centres to the general public as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Communities and Neighbourhoods team continue to work with the Community Associations and SBC's Facility Management Team to ensure that the buildings are safe to occupy. Also ensuring that centres and groups are well prepared for the measures they will have to take, such as the completion of risk assessments and operational plans.
- 3.31 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the neighbourhood improvements programme has been temporarily suspended as it became difficult to undertake effective community engagement. The capital programme is now on hold until April 2021.

### **Excellent Council Homes Programme**

#### **Programme Outcome**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers
  - Effective investment in council homes through planned programmes of work
- 3.32 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Finalising the Housing Older People's Strategy in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council
  - Delivering Phase 2 of the 5-year MRC programme
  - Refurbishing a further 4 lifts as part of the lift refurbishment programme
  - Consulting with residents about the sprinkler retro-fitting programme, mobilising the contract and commencing works
  - Continuing to improve services to the customer through the housing on-line application; a review of the end-to-end repairs process; building on the use of mobile working applications; and evaluating the outcome of the innovation labs
  - Supporting homeless people by delivering the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Action plan and responding to the Government's initiatives for rough sleepers in light of Covid-19

- Completing recruitment to vacant posts within the new Business Unit structure and evaluating how successful the new structure has been in terms of the service delivery/customer satisfaction and staff satisfaction
- Introducing a series of 'innovation labs' to involve staff in influencing further digitalisation of the housing offer
- Assessing and evaluating the Housing All Under One Roof Transformation programme to inform further service improvement opportunities

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.33 Significant progress has been made on Northgate Self-Serve (Housing Online) with phase 1 services live from May, excluding the 'Contact Us' functions for Repairs and Housing Options due to back office capacity. These are ready to go live but remain hidden until resource is available. "How To" videos have been created for customers and training has been provided for internal teams. The Rapid project has continued to progress steadily, with quarter one focusing on the building and testing of the Caretaking app.
- 3.34 The flatblock refurbishment programme has been impacted throughout quarter one by the pandemic, and contractors and Council staff have worked to ensure adherence to government guidance. This led to works being limited to external areas and the start dates for several blocks being postponed and rescheduled. Towards the end of the quarter as restrictions have begun to ease, and work has resumed.
- 3.35 The lift refurbishment programme has also been impacted by the pandemic. Contractors and staff reviewed risk assessments to ensure they reflected Government guidelines and maintained social distancing, whilst delivering the programme. Due to some sites not being suitable for socially distanced work to take place, the schedule of works was amended accordingly and work resumed on site in June.
- 3.36 Following the successful recruitment of a project manager for the sprinkler programme, the project has begun to pick up pace and project dates have been outlined by the contractors. The contract for these works will be signed and executed in due course.
- 3.37 The current draft of the Housing Older People's Strategy was shared with internal stakeholders in April. Feedback was received and has been reviewed and incorporated into the document. A team building/stakeholder event for SBC and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) colleagues was planned for Q4 19/20 but was delayed. The team are waiting for feedback from HCC concerning a similar, remote event that was held. It is anticipated that this report will be brought to the Executive in December 2020.
- 3.38 Following the government announcements that all rough sleepers were to be accommodated when the COVID-19 pandemic broke, the team negotiated a deal with a local hotel in Stevenage. This booking has now ended and those who were rough sleeping have been accommodated elsewhere. The pandemic has highlighted the need for there to be a longer term solution to

Homelessness, not just in Stevenage but countywide. Proposals to develop a Housing First model have been agreed by the Executive and the Housing Options team are now modelling what this might look like in Stevenage as it will need a partnership approach to ensure successful delivery.

## **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 protected, and better used to provide useful insight
- The Council uses technology to meet its ambitions and make its workforce more modern, efficient and responsive to customer needs.
- A simple and clearer website with more self-service choices

3.39 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Improving the online offer for residents and businesses by delivering a simple, clearer website and straightforward online self-service options for key council services
- Developing and implementing the Council's channel management approach and enabling people to use digital services.
- Supporting the overall customer service offer and efficiency by improving back office processes and technology within the Council
- Developing the digital platform to support the Coronavirus response and those who are vulnerable
- Ensuring the new website is compliant with digital accessibility regulations
- Developing a new Digital Strategy that will set out how the Council will embrace digital change to support corporate priorities

### **Programme Delivery Update**

3.40 Development of the digital platform has been slower this quarter owing to additional time spent on some digital services that were developed urgently to help the Covid-19 response and disruptions to normal working patterns. However, progress was made and development and testing took place for the following functionality:

- Waste and recycling processes such as missed bin collections
- Environmental nuisance reporting such as fly-tipping
- Online car park season ticket processes

- 3.41 Single sign-on functionality for housing customers and 75 new web based forms were also in development ahead of the launch of the new Council website in September.

## **Place of Choice Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents
- Building resilient communities, reducing crime and disorder and helping people feel safe
- Making Stevenage a 'destination and creative' town
- Unlocking opportunities for the local economy and our residents, ensuring that future regeneration and growth in Stevenage works for everyone
- Achieving net zero Council emissions by 2030 and leading work to achieve this aim for the town, its businesses and residents
- Establishing Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport
- Enhancing Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats, whilst increasing awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife

- 3.42 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

### ***Healthy Stevenage***

- Launching a new Young People's Healthy Hub project to reduce physical inactivity, improve mental wellbeing, and provide advice and support for residents aged 11-16 years old.
- Improving the way we evidence and evaluate the impact of health and wellbeing projects and interventions working closely with the University of Hertfordshire.
- Communicating better with local residents and professionals to raise awareness of local health improvement projects and services via a wider variety of communication channels.
- Continuing to work with health and physical activity partners to deliver the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022.
- Continuing to collaborate and integrate our work with other key health and wellbeing strategies across Hertfordshire.
- Improving the way we work with local communities in co-designing health and wellbeing projects and services.

### ***Community Safety***

- Working with partners to deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.
- Cooperatively working to break the cycle of substance misuse and offending.
- Tackling perceptions of ASB through a media campaign highlighting how Stevenage is a safe place to live, visit and work in.
- Increased cooperative work in the community to tackle ASB.
- Improving awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.

### ***Stevenage Re-Imagined***

- Implementing arts and heritage installations in the planning phase.
- Implementing the Creative Use Scheme pilot in the town centre, giving local artists/artisans/creatives the opportunity to utilise underproductive/empty buildings in Stevenage town centre.
- Developing new cultural proposals and initiatives in the town centre and across neighbourhoods.
- Undertaking Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership needs analysis & early commissioned delivery.
- Piloting new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage.
- Working co-operatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on the above projects.
- Developing a series of options that could potentially form part of the Council's Town Deal Proposition to Government

### ***Community Wealth Building***

- Launching an Inclusive Economy Charter as part of the Council's commitment to Community Wealth Building, ensuring local people and businesses can benefit from opportunities created.
- Supporting Herts Growth Board to develop a policy statement and action plan for community wealth building across Hertfordshire.

### ***Climate Change***

- Adopting the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, co-produced with the community, and supporting county-wide climate actions through the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
- Securing commitment from local businesses and residents through the Climate Change Business Charter and Community Pledge list.
- Developing and implementing the SBC Carbon Management Plan.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

- Refreshing the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.
- Working towards the designation of Stevenage as a 'Sustainable Transport town'.
- Delivery of sustainable transport projects included the Town Centre Regeneration Programme (permission for the bus interchange as referred to in paragraph 3.15; and scoping options for the multi-storey car park, cycle hub and cycleway improvements).
- Updating the Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document and Strategy.
- Developing the options for the cycle hire scheme.

### ***Biodiversity***

- Developing Shackledell Grassland as a designated local nature reserve.
- Developing site specific hedgerow management plans.
- Protecting woodland sites through improved vertical structure in woodlands (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).
- Developing new orchard and grassland habitats (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).

## **Programme Delivery Update**

### ***Healthy Stevenage***

- 3.43 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership has seen improved evidence and evaluation related to health research in Stevenage working in partnership with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC), the University of Hertfordshire (UoH) and HCC Public Health. This has been integrated into action planning for the delivery of projects and services.
- 3.44 A new community response project, So Active, has been launched this quarter. This aims to revitalise the health and wellbeing of keyworkers, older people, children and adults through a variety of physical activity and digital literacy interventions online and outdoors. This is being delivered in partnership with local fitness coaches and instructors already working across the town prior to the pandemic.

### ***Community Safety***

- 3.45 This quarter in particular has been challenging for the Community Safety team due to the national and international impact of Covid-19. Awareness

surrounding domestic abuse and homelessness has meant all services have been stretched. However the team continue to provide vital services to some of our most in need residents.

- 3.46 Stevenage (also known as Survivors) Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service now has 16 safe spaces and move on accommodation, using a Housing First type model across Hertfordshire, to assist those fleeing domestic violence. Recruitment is currently underway for specialist support workers to provide clients with the bespoke support required for each individual case.
- 3.47 The No More Service which supports individuals whose lives are negatively affected by drugs, alcohol and/or offending has seen a 157% increase in referrals this quarter. The team have provided intensive support to those homeless individuals who had been accommodated as part of the Government's rough sleeper project in a bid to reduce the impact on substance use, health and general wellbeing.

### ***Stevenage Re-Imagined***

- 3.48 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many physical artistic and cultural events have had to be postponed or cancelled during quarter one. However the team were able to offer a Virtual Stevenage Day via collective effort across the Council and contributions from community partners, as well as a week of VE Day 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary activity via social media. Also incredible community spirit has been seen through the "Covid the Cobra" initiative by Stevenage residents. In recognising its importance, the Council has begun plans to ensure its legacy, as demonstrated by an online poll to ensure co-operative working.
- 3.49 The Core Group of the Arts and Heritage Forum has formalised into Junction 7 Creatives CIC, now serving as the council's community partner for the Arts & Heritage Strategy, with a memorandum of understanding being developed to solidify the co-operative relationship.

### ***Climate Change***

- 3.50 A substantial move forward with calculating the baseline carbon output of the Council has been made this quarter, including its building and vehicle fleet emissions. This is a key stage in recognising not only the amount of carbon the council is producing but from which sources.
- 3.51 This will enable the council to assess the best ways to reduce its output and feed into the future climate change action plan. This key piece of data will be the starting point to monitor and reduce carbon emissions and reach the target to be net carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.52 Officers completed a successful consultation with a range of stakeholders from local businesses to the general public and school children. This consultation will feed into the next stages of the Strategy and Action Plan and

has given the Council a good understanding of what the public think and want in relation to climate change.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

- 3.53 Planning and Development Committee granted planning permission for the relocation of the town centre bus station in June. This is a crucial step for sustainable transport in the town as well as enabling progress with the town centre regeneration scheme. The new bus station will be located closer to the train station, forming a sustainable transport hub enabling more multi-part journeys to be taken entirely on sustainable modes of transport instead of partially by car. The new station will be future-proofed to enable electric busses to charge on-site, will have safe bicycle parking and will provide a more comfortable and modern waiting environment for passengers. The new facility will also include a café and shop mobility store.
- 3.54 The new Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) recently underwent consultation and is now being prepared for adoption by the Executive. The SPD will provide a new set of guidelines for future developments with an up to date focus on sustainability to reduce the domination of cars being imbedded into designs. The SPD will also give policy support to many of the schemes included within Future Town, Future Transport.
- 3.55 Progress has been made with numerous schemes outside the control of the Council. New signalling related to the installation of the fifth platform at Stevenage train station was completed prior to Covid-19 lockdown which means the overall scheme has incurred only minor delays.
- 3.56 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) colleagues have been engaged to consider the design and delivery of schemes to improve the cycle network. Officers jointly attended site visits to identify projects which are due to go through HCC's internal decision-making. In addition, housing developers have agreed to deliver significant extensions to the existing cycle network through S106 agreements. Subject to signing the legal agreements, this should see high quality cycling links to developments to the north and east of town.

### ***Biodiversity***

- 3.57 An application has been submitted along with supporting documents, for Local Nature Reserve designation for Shackledell Grassland. The Grassland already has Local Wildlife Site status, but being a Local Nature Reserve will offer the site a higher status and greater protection.

## **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.

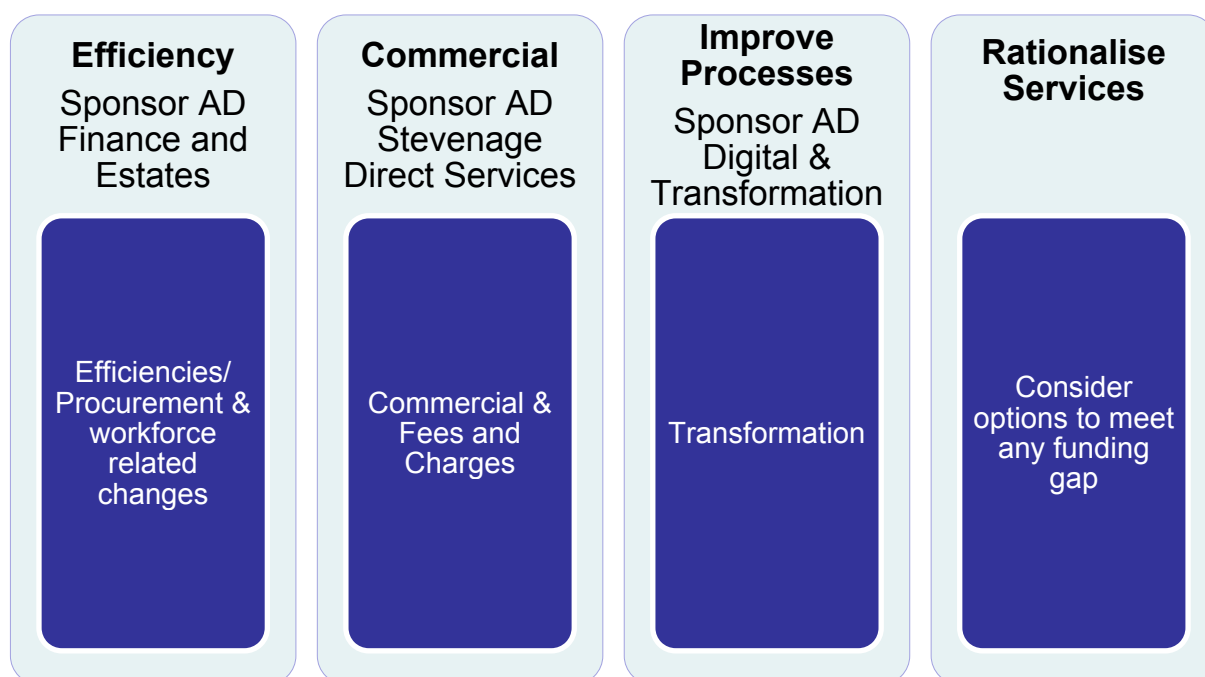


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.58 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Reviewing the Medium Term Financial Strategies, including assessments of the impact of Covid-19 on General Fund and HRA budgets and identification and implementation of mitigating actions.
- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2021/22-2023/24 via the Financial Security workstreams
- Further developing and implementing the Council's Commercial and Insourcing Strategy
- Continuing to undertake an appraisal of the Council's assets across all Stevenage neighbourhoods, to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy
- Undertaking a Transformation Opportunity Assessment as a key first stage in the transformational approach to addressing the funding challenge
- Identifying options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions

## **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.59 Monthly monitoring, analysis and reporting on the effect of Covid-19 on the Council's finances has continued to take place, both in terms of lost income (including car parking) but also the impact of additional costs (B&B etc) and the impact on how the Council delivers its services.
- 3.60 Members have been regularly kept informed of ongoing developments, and relevant returns have been sent to Government detailing the scale of the Council's losses. Lobbying has also taken place via SDCT, LGA, DCN to argue for appropriate grant funding to cover the additional costs and lost income that has been incurred. The Council has been allocated some funding however the estimated costs SBC has incurred are currently around three times this figure.
- 3.61 A new group (Finance & Resources Cell) has been meeting (remotely) fortnightly to discuss these impacts, and how they will impact on the MTFS and moving forward looking at the early discussions around setting next year's budget; any reports or analysis coming out of these meetings will ultimately be reported to the Leader's Financial Security Group later this year. The Financial Security Monthly meeting is proposed to become the Transformational and Finance Recovery Cell.
- 3.62 The recruitment and appointment of a new Commercial Manager was successfully completed this quarter and it is likely that the Financial Security programme will form part of their remit. Over time commercialisation should help the Council achieve its objectives for Financial Security objectives. An updated commercial strategy was prepared and presented to the Strategic Leadership Team in preparation for the August Executive 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
- 3.63 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Developing a new Workforce strategy and supporting work programme to ensure that our workforce and workplace are developed and engaged to deliver our services now and in the future. The strategy will focus on ways of working, workforce communication, workforce inclusion and diversity and workforce development

- Working closely with the business to ensure that our workforce have the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver now and in the future
- Preparing for new ways of working having learned from the experience of operating the services during the Covid-19 pandemic and also to prepare the council for its planned move to the public sector hub
- A renewed focus on branding of SBC as an employer through on-boarding and external recognition
- Continuing to support areas of the organisation as they go through business unit reviews
- Refresh of induction and introduction of on-boarding concepts
- Developing tools to enable staff self-service
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Firstcare absence management system

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.64 Activities throughout quarter one have been primarily focussed on supporting the Council's response to COVID 19 and COVID recovery planning, which has resulted in the temporary pausing of many of the elements of the Employer of Choice Programme as discussed with the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.65 Analysis has been undertaken through learning lessons about how the workforce is working differently during the COVID 19 response. This will support the team's work to ensure colleagues are ready to move into new ways of working in time for the move to the civic hub in due course. Additionally, the HR team have been successful in a bid to receive free workforce planning consultancy from the Local Government Association and be part of the national working group on workforce planning.
- 3.66 Work commenced during the quarter to consult with staff and start the development of a new Workforce Strategy to set out the vision for future ways of working, reflecting on the experience of rapidly adapting during the COVID 19 pandemic. This will also include other key strategic themes aligned to support other key strategic ambitions – i.e. commercialisation, transformation and the Connected to our Customers programme. The new strategy is the subject of another report to this Executive meeting and the HR team are working to have the new strategy agreed and ready for launch during quarter three.

### **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
- 3.67 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Ongoing development of the use of the Inphase system
- Reviewing the scheme of officer delegations in respect of Executive powers

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.68 The 2020/21 performance suite of measures and targets was finalised during the quarter and subsequently agreed at the July Executive meeting. The Inphase performance management system was re-procured in and work has commenced on scoping the re-design of the system to improve its usability.

### **Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement**

- 3.69 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 2020 to June 2020 is outlined below:

3.70

<b>Number of Measures Reported</b>	<b>Meeting or exceeding target</b>	<b>Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)</b>	<b>Red Status (urgent improvement action required)</b>	<b>Missing Data</b>
41	29	3	8	1*

\*CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC, is unable to report until Q2 due to COVID-19 delaying development of the new digital platform, Firmstep. Other developments have taken priority e.g. CSC online appointments system

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

#### **A: Customer Theme**

- 3.72 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

#### **Housing and Investment**

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

- 3.73 These measures have been removed from the corporate performance suite for 2020/21. The compliance team are working to create a suite of measures for compliance works.

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

- 3.74 Due to the impact of COVID-19 there are a number of clients residing in hotels. The team are working to move as many clients out of the hotels in order to reduce costs. This is being achieved by direct letting social housing to accepted households that are in the Council's temporary accommodation, therefore freeing up stock for the clients in hotels to move into. A number of clients have also been assisted by the team to move into the private rented sector.
- 3.75 Once the government restrictions on evictions have been lifted the team will be able to complete any necessary evictions from our emergency/temporary accommodation stock, thus reducing our numbers placed. For any evictions that take place, children's services are notified through the joint housing protocol and they are responsible for ensuring that there is suitable accommodation for any families as per their responsibilities under the Children's Act.
- 3.76 Key officers are meeting every 6 weeks to review B&B spend, monitor B&B usage and to agree what actions are being taken to reduce this. Having additional staff to assist with achieving preventions for a backlog of cases that built up during lockdown should also assist to ease the numbers in emergency/temporary accommodation.
- 3.77 The Housing Options team have seen 121 rough sleepers approach for assistance. Many are still being accommodated; however, some have left the accommodation provided to non-occupation, eviction or refusal.
- 3.78 The Housing Options team are continuing to source accommodation at pace which is evident by the Housing Supply team in July alone assisting 14 households into private rented sector accommodation.
- 3.79 Housing First proposals will be brought to the Executive during quarter 3. The team have submitted proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding which totals approximately £900,000 for accommodation, security and Severe Weather Emergency Provision. There is no guarantee the full amount will be received, the Council may only be allocated a proportion of what has been bid for.
- NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter, June 2020 target 120, achieved 182

#### **Spotlight: Homelessness Preventions**

- 3.80 Due to the sheer demand on the Housing Options Service having to accommodate a significant number of rough sleepers since 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, the team have not been able to achieve the target for the quarter.

- 3.81 There has been less stock available in the private sector, due to a lack of turnaround from the ban on evictions. Despite the ban on evictions the team have however seen the same level of approaches for service as at the same quarter last year.
- 3.82 The current caseload is 689. This includes those who are seeking housing advice, but who may not currently be threatened with homelessness. The team have eight Housing Options Caseworkers with two of these funded from the Flexible Homeless Support Grant. This equates to each officer having circa 84 cases. This has resulted in the need for funding to be identified for two additional temporary members of staff to assist with the case volume.
- 3.83 Some senior Housing Options Caseworkers are funded through the grant, with one post leading on the day to day management of the Rough Sleeper outreach team and another working with the eight Housing Options Caseworkers.
- 3.84 The demand for the service has grown significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and has continued to show year on year growth. Approaches to the service are detailed below;
- Full year 2018 to 19 there were 1314 approaches to the service
  - Full year 2019 to 20 there were 1571 approaches to the service this is equivalent to a year on year increase of 20%
- 3.85 During January to April 2020 contact increased 36% in approaches, which was related to the high demand for single person accommodation following the COVID announcements regarding the placement of single non priority people. The re-opening of the courts now scheduled for 20 September and the granting of mandatory possession orders for those in private sector tenancies is likely to place a further significant demand on the service and our accommodation resources.
- 3.86 As mentioned in para 3.79 Housing First proposals will be brought forward to Executive in November.
- BV213: Homelessness Preventions, June 2020 target 90, achieved 67

### **Spotlight: Rent Collection Rate**

- 3.87 Income collection for the end of June is below target due to unprecedented challenges from the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.88 There has been an increase in Universal Credit cases since the end of March 2020 (329). The number of UC claimants stands at 1394 at the end of quarter 1, of these accounts 1065 are in arrears totalling £671,000. This number is expected to increase for at least the next 18 months, with a sharp spike expected when the government measures are lifted due to unemployment and redundancies.

- 3.89 There has been an increase in emergency and temporary accommodation arrears. The total number of cases is 154, of those 109 are in arrears totalling £64,755.84. This is due to the recent increase in homeless presentations.
- 3.90 There have been a number of cases where people have been furloughed and put on job retention schemes. The total number of recorded cases is 136, of those 130 are in arrears totalling £73,110.93. There have been 4 cases made redundant with arrears of £2,248.58 and it is expected that this number will increase.
- 3.91 The government suspension on most debt recovery has also had an impact on the level arrears. There are 156 cases on alternative payment arrangements, of those 117 are in arrears.
- 3.92 The government ban on evictions has had an impact on the level of arrears. There are 21 cases due for eviction when the ban is lifted with arrears totalling £45,946.23.
- 3.93 The current trend of increasing levels of arrears is expected to continue, work to mitigate the impact will continue. The income services collective effort is directed towards sustaining income collection and arrears recovery. The team will focus on tenancy sustainment moving forward, as a result of the current changes to welfare benefits and financial challenges faced by tenants.
- 3.94 There is a recovery action plan in place that will help to mitigate the long term impact of UC and the economic consequences of COVID-19. The recovery plan will ensure the following:
- A clear focus across Housing and Investment on challenges to income collection as a result of impact of UC and current pandemic; including the recent measures introduced by the Coronavirus Act 2020. The team will:
    - implement a plan for maximising arrears prevention across all income streams, focusing on arrears prevention and money advice
    - maximise efficient working practices and adopt mobile working solutions to maintain service delivery and reach out to all residents impacted by UC and COVID-19.
    - encourage and increase use of the digital self-service channels to ensure that they continue to deliver accessible income collection and recovery services in line with customer abilities and expectations.
- 3.95 It is expected that at the end of Quarter 2 and 3 income collection and recovery rates will still be below the expected targets as this will be the end of some of the government COVID-19 measures
- BV66a: Rent Collection Rate, June 2020 target 93.6%, achieved 90.2%

### **Spotlight: Void Loss**

- 3.96 The figure for void loss this quarter is slightly above target. Other repairs performance targets have been achieved, despite the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.97 Sheltered standard lettings have been a challenge and have impacted the void loss figure. To help to mitigate this, a new Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer has been recruited. The officer has already identified many areas of improvement and it is hoped that this will reduce void loss over the remainder of the year.
- 3.98 As at 30 June 2020, there were 33 sheltered properties Ready-To-Let with a combined weekly void loss of £2,797.56.
- VoidLoss1: Void Loss in year (£), June 2020 target £82,767, achieved £87,350

## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **Spotlight: Community Safety**

- 3.99 During lockdown Domestic Abuse and COVID breaches have increased across Hertfordshire and nationally.
- 3.100 In Quarter 1 there was a 100% increase in referrals for Domestic Abuse. The Community Safety team have increased the Safe Spaces to 16 to deal with the demand. The team have introduced an out of hours service to support the clients during lockdown for an initial three month period.
- CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 5.7, achieved 6.03
- 3.101 During Quarter 1 COVID-19 breaches were logged as ASB on police systems, meaning an increase in the ASB measure. Staff completed three closures orders, an injunction and an applied warrant to remove a caravan. Clients have been supported through the No More service. The team have also assisted with supporting the Homelessness team by attending the hotel and temporary accommodation, where clients were housed.
- CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 8, achieved 10.4
  - NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 10, achieved 15.3
- 3.102 The Community Safety team received seven high risk offender referrals for intensive support and housing, which have all been risk assessed and discussed at the Adult Offender Protocol Housing Panel.
- 3.103 The team have been supporting residents and cases until they can take legal action, arranging an increased amount of professionals meetings to help

resolve each case, using video doorbells to help vulnerable residents to feel safer in their homes. The delay in legal proceedings has resulted in a rise in complaints and queries through Yoursay.

- 3.104 The Community Safety team applied for funding to assist with the increase in demand, but was unfortunately not successful on this occasion with bids to the Police and Crime Commissioner. The team did however receive some additional funding through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 3.105 The number of ASB cases is expected to remain high over the next quarter as the delay with court appearances will continue to affect measures such as Closure Orders. Further Covid-19 breaches may also affect crime reporting as Police activity continues around social distancing at events and through the nighttime economy. In regards to domestic abuse there are still delays with court orders leading to a delay of up to 7 months currently for court appearances.

### **B: Place Theme**

- 3.106 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 3.20 and 3.21 to 3.27 respectively)

### **Planning and Regulation**

#### **Jobs Created through the Business Technology Centre**

- 3.107 During Quarter 1 the jobs created through the Business Technology Centre (BTC) did not meet the target, however they still managed to create 7 jobs during a difficult economic time.
- 3.108 The target output for jobs created for the whole of this financial year is 60 and for new businesses is 24. These figures relate to a funding agreement between the council and EEDA for the second phase, to support an extension at the BTC. EEDA are no longer in existence and responsibility now lies with Homes England. The agreement ceases November 2022.
- 3.109 Wenta are undertaking a number of measures to support clients at the BTC, businesses across Stevenage and other centre areas, those considering self-employment, as well as those who are facing redundancy. This includes specialised business support and advice, webinars on a number of areas

including cash flow, book keeping, start-up support and redundancy support to name a few areas.

- 3.110 There are also a number of webinars supporting businesses to become more digital savvy, with support to improve sales, marketing, website development and an improved web presence.
- 3.111 Wenta have also launched a series of webinars to support those considering self-employment and for those that have been made redundant. This is promoted by Wenta through their distribution mailing lists and on social media.
- BTC1a: New jobs created through the BTC, June 2020 target 15, achieved 7

### **Spotlight: Food Establishments Compliance**

- 3.112 The food premises inspection programme was largely suspended in April on the direction of the Food Standards Agency (FSA); it was partially re-instated by the agency in mid-July. During the suspension period the only inspections carried out were of the highest risk premises where intelligence such as complaints indicated that issues of major concern existed. By definition such premises were not broadly compliant so that the proportion showing this inspection outcome has increased slightly.
- 3.113 As inspection activity assumes a more regular profile, probably during quarter 3, subject to FSA instruction, performance should stabilise at pre-pandemic levels.
- NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law, June 2020 target 95%, achieved 90.7%

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

### **Spotlight: Garage Voids**

- 3.114 The Garages team resumed garage lettings from the end of April following the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.115 Lettings continue to be delayed by the need to carry out an asbestos survey before letting the garage; these are being carried out by an external agent. The asbestos surveys continued in lockdown at a slower rate. The external agent out staff on furlough, so the team used the council's asbestos surveyor on a temporary basis for some inspections. The external agent resumed inspections from June.
- 3.116 From September the team can offer online appointments for tenants to collect their keys. Customer Services will issue keys and the delivery of keys will only be used as last resort.

- 3.117 The application update has been completed ensuring that the waiting list is up to date and we are reviewing the service as a whole in terms of processes and structure.
- 3.118 Investigation is underway into the functionality of Northgate; the team have conducted process mapping and have highlighted the process improvements that are needed to be made to provide a more efficient service. The team are waiting on costs from Northgate to be able to formulate a business case and plan to review the staffing structure to identify opportunities for improvement.
- 3.119 Once the blocks are completed under the Garages Improvement Programme they will come back into the Garages teams remit to let. A marketing campaign will be started prior to their completion.
- 3.120 There are 3 garages sites starting refurbishment in September, equating to 56 units newly available for rent. Working on a mean average of £11.60 per week, on the premise that we bring all 56 units back into management, which would equate to an additional £649.60 per week or £32,480 over the course of a 50 week year.
- CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock, June 2020 target 10.79%, achieved 14.93%

### **Waste and Recycling**

- 3.121 The impact of the lockdown with residents being at home either through furlough or home working has increased our tonnages collected for waste and recycling.
- 3.122 In the period March to July the Waste and Recycling team supported the front line refuse and recycling crews with additional resource whilst observing measures introduced regarding social distancing, hygiene etc. This on the whole was done through redeployment of SDS operatives from other areas such as Street Scene. These services were impacted due to the measures in place and having the ability to deploy staff safely, and it was also recognised some of these areas were not essential services, hence the 'diversion' from non-essential to essential (one of the benefits of an in-house operation).
- 3.123 In the event of a future local lockdown the same principles will be applied, with redeployment of staff to support front line critical services.
- 3.124 In April the team measured a 23% increase in refuse and a 53% increase in recycling against a standard month. Recent tonnages show refuse levels starting to reduce, however recycling levels remain high.

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

3.125 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Corporate Services
- Digital and Transformation
- Finance and Estates

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

#### **Spotlight: Customer Services**

3.126 In response to the pandemic and government guidelines the operating model for customer services has changed significantly. In turn there has been a shift in customer behaviour with a 10% decrease in telephone contact and increased online transactions, particularly online payments.

3.127 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) is an ongoing focus area for improvement.

- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 7.2%, April 2020 to June 2020 achieved 2.6%
- CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April 2019 to June 2020 unable to report due to reporting from the new systems being delayed due to the Covid-19 response. Calculations have been based on historical data
- EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC services, target 90%, April to June 2020 achieved 96%

3.128 Performance measures achieved targets in Quarter 1.

3.129 In Quarter 1 many advisers were set up to be able to work from home, adjusting from a site based contact centre. Face to face appointments were suspended and an appointments based service for face to face requirements was introduced at the beginning of Quarter 2.

3.130 The figures for CS13a are unable to be reported, this is due to the team focussing on other priorities e.g. the face to face appointments system.

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

3.132 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.

3.133 As at 30 June 2020 there were 27.5 FTE in post, this equates to 2 FTE over establishment. There are currently 3 advisers on maternity leave and 2 on secondment.

- 3.134 The number of agency advisers in post equates to 5.18FTE. This is 18.8% of our current establishment; the majority of these are single service advisers who are supporting the COVID-19 recovery while new members of the team are inducted and trained.
- 3.135 Forecasting performance for the next quarter is reliant on the path of recovery from the pandemic. There is no evidence available that suggests we will be unable to achieve our targets. This will be reviewed as guidance changes and recovery progresses.

Measure	Target	Q2 forecast
CSC 12 – Percentage of calls abandoned	<8%	8%
CSC 13a – Calls resolved at first point of contact	>65%	Forecast unavailable
EAA1 - Customer satisfaction with CSC services	> 90%	92%

- 3.136 The key focus for Quarter 2 is recovery, ensuring safety measures are in place for staff and ensuring those customers most in need of critical services are prioritised.
- 3.137 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:
- Working with service areas to ensure the CSC is able to facilitate service delivery
  - Working through the recovery plan to increase access to services in all areas
  - Delivering self-service provision that is easy and convenient for customers
- 3.138 The focus on this service area will be retained until it is felt performance improvement can be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

### **Technology**

- 3.139 In Quarter 1 the IT team have been busy supporting all staff, who require it, in order for them to continue to work from home due to COVID-19, with the majority of staff using remote access in order to carry out their respective roles.

- 3.140 Laptops were provided to Members who needed them, and one to one Zoom training was provided to support Members in using the new technology.
- 3.141 Essential IT maintenance work has continued with a power-down weekend at the end of June, enabling us to carry out several important pieces of pre-requisite work for our major strategic projects that will be going live later in the financial year.
- 3.142 Project delivery schedules have been re-planned in order to maintain momentum during the current Pandemic. Several suppliers performing hands-on tasks were effectively stalled due to temporary closure of their businesses and social distancing rules. The restrictions meant it was impossible for contractors and staff to carry out non-critical works in confined spaces where more than one technician was required. IT managed the situation by bringing forward a number of other project tasks to make sure projects were able to progress whilst waiting for those restrictions to be relaxed.

### **Our staff**

- 3.143 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 begun the majority REAL conversations have taken place virtually. These sessions have included wellbeing checks.

### **Spotlight: Recruitment Time**

- 3.144 The average number of days taken from the date of the recruitment approval form was received to the date the contract offer was sent to the successful applicant was over target. This was based on the average days to recruit for 17 vacancies this quarter, all were external appointments.
- 3.145 The recruitment process has been adapted for remote working, including remote interviews. The change in process has resulted in an increased time to recruit this quarter; this time is expected to reduce as the new ways of working are embedded.
- EOCrec: Time to recruit, June 2020 target 42 days, achieved 51 days

### **Sickness Absence**

- 3.146 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.
- 3.147 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as green, this is the first time the number of sickness days per FTE has been within target for the past year.

- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 9.49 days, twelve months to June 2020 achieved 8.19 days

3.148 It is anticipated that we will see a small rise in sickness absence as we enter the winter months in line with normal trends and due to children returning to school.

3.149 Levels of sickness absence across Hertfordshire have also reduced during the pandemic. It should be noted that sickness absence levels do not include those self-isolating for infection control purposes, who otherwise would have been well enough to work.

3.150 The new workforce strategy is currently under consultation and feedback has been sought from a variety of stakeholders. The finalised strategy will be presented to Executive in October. One of the themes within the strategy is Inclusion and Wellbeing and will foster the development of a culture with wellness at its heart, support employees to maintain good mental and physical health.

3.151 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**

### **Spotlight: Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates**

3.152 Since the lockdown for COVID-19, no recovery action has been commenced. Customers contacting the council have been supported in making arrangements to reschedule payments, including end loading their payment (shifting and weighting instalments later in the year), moving a 10 month instalment profile to run from June – March instead of April – January etc. All have been encouraged where possible to make some payment on account to reduce their liability.

- BV9: % Council Tax collected (amber), June 2020 target 33%, achieved 32.6%
- BV10: % Non Domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority, June 2020 target 36%, achieved 34.2%

3.153 With the reopening of shops and more businesses re-opening in some form, recovery action commenced in July. This excluded Council Tax support cases in the first instance as the Hardship scheme was not live until August which gives up to a maximum of £150 for those on CTS.

3.154 For both Council Tax & Business rates there is an expectation that there will be an increase in hardship cases seeking relief from liability. The Council does have some additional funding for working age Council Tax support (CTS) cases through the governments COVID-19 hardship scheme and can be made for new CTS cases presenting during the year, but any surplus can be

used to support other hardship schemes as determined by the head of the shared service in conjunction with the S151 officer.

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

- 3.155 Some savings for the General Fund have been shown not to be achievable in the current year (due to COVID-19) - the two biggest being the expected increases in car parking income from Fees & Charges (£113k) and the increase from Corey's Mill Lane on-street parking tariff increase (£21k). Overall, the current estimate is that only 77% of the savings target will be achievable.
- 3.156 Some savings for the HRA have been shown not to be achievable in the current year (due to COVID-19). Savings option (£101k) for reconfiguration of caretaking and maintenance team has been delayed.
- 3.157 Savings are being continually reviewed and brought forward where possible.
- FS1A: Percentage of GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year, June 2020 target 98%, achieved 77%
  - FS2A: Percentage of HRA approved savings removed from HRA budget for current year, June 2020 target 91%, achieved 45%

### **Next Quarter Focus**

- 3.158 The Assistant Directors are responsible for improving the performance of measures that fall within their Business Units.
- 3.159 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at June 2020, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.126 to 3.138)
  - Continuing to implement improved practices to support sickness absence (paragraphs 3.146 to 3.151)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation use caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.74 to 3.79)
  - Continuing to implement Housing First plans to assist with Homelessness Preventions (para 3.80 to 3.86)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Rent Collection (para 3.87 to 3.95)
  - Continuing to implement plans and improve processes for Void loss (para 3.95 to 3.98)
  - Continuing to work in partnership to prevent Community Safety issues (para 3.99 to 3.105)
  - Continuing to work with/follow advice from WENTA about BTC job creation (para 3.107 to 3.111)

- Ensuring that compliance checks for food establishments resume (para 3.112 to 3.113)
- 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 3.114 to 3.120)
- Implementing changes to the recruitment process (para 3.144 to 3.145)
- Ensuring that improvement plans for collection of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates are in place (para 3.152 to 3.154)
- Ensuring that General Fund and HRA savings are closely monitored (para 3.155 to 3.157)

3.160 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.

3.161 The Senior Leadership Team will also closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on performance across all service areas during 2020/21 and most performance results will be compared to actuals or targets 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.

3.162 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 or COVID-19 recovery 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 1: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix 2: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2020/21