

**Meeting** EXECUTIVE  
**Portfolio Area** The Leader  
**Date** 14 July 2021



## 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT

### NON-KEY DECISION

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### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the content of the Council's draft Annual Report 2020/21 at Appendix A, and to consider arrangements for final publication.
- 1.2 To highlight the Council's performance across a number of key themes and priorities during 2020/21.
- 1.3 To consider the focus for the Co-operative Future Town Future Council programme for 2021/22.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive notes progress on the delivery of the Co-operative Future Town Future Council (FTFC) programme and considers the overall performance and achievements of the Council during 2020/21.

- 2.2 That the content and publication of the Council's draft Annual Report 2020/21, as set out at Appendix A to this report, be agreed
- 2.3 That delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP), following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve any final changes to the Annual Report prior to its publication.
- 2.4 That the proposals to refocus the FTFC programmes in 2021/22 be agreed, including the proposal to deliver a number of the internal facing priorities through the new Transformation programme.
- 2.5 That the proposed Co-operative Future Town Future Council programme deliverables for 2021/22 be noted and deliverability of the programme be kept under review.
- 2.6 That the suite of 2021/22 performance measures and targets, as set out at Appendix B to this report, be noted.

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The customer Annual Report 2020/21 reviews, and informs the community of, our progress in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan 'Our Co-operative Council - Future Town Future Council' during 2020/21.
- 3.2 Members approved the current Co-operative Corporate Plan in December 2016. It reflects the Council's continuing focus on co-operative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town through the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) programme. At the Council meeting on 24 February 2021, Council agreed to continue with the current Corporate Plan beyond its original 5 year term, subject to further review in Autumn 2022.
- 3.3 The Corporate Plan sets out nine key commitments, which to date have been mirrored by nine individual FTFC delivery programmes:

<b>Corporate Plan Theme</b>	<b>FTFC Programme (2020/21)</b>
Create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work and play	Town Centre Regeneration programme
Increase the number of social & affordable homes in Stevenage	Housing Development programme
Work with our communities to improve our neighbourhoods	Cooperative Neighbourhoods programme
Improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience	Connected to Our Customers programme
Provide high quality homes to our tenants and leaseholders	Excellent Council Homes programme
Have stronger partnerships with key agencies to deliver our priorities	Place of Choice programme
Be a financially resilient Council with enough resource to deliver our priorities	Financial Security programme
Have the right people, skills and knowledge	Employer of Choice programme
Become a smart Council with improved performance	Performing At Our Peak programme

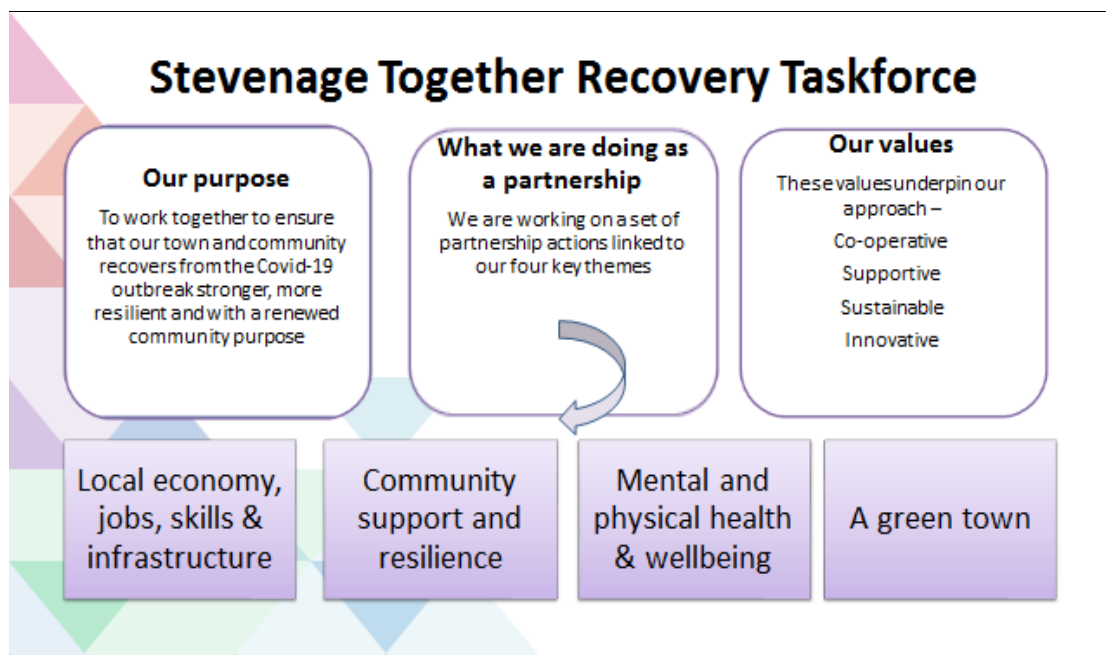
- 3.4 The Senior Leadership Team and Executive Members have given consideration to how best to deliver these Corporate Plan themes for the period 2021/22-2022/23, and as a result it is proposed that the programmes are consolidated instead into four external-facing programmes and one internal-facing enabling programme, as follows:
- Transforming Our Town
  - More Social and Affordable Homes
  - Working Co-operatively Within Our Neighbourhoods
  - A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town
  - Making Your Money Count
- 3.5 Climate change and community wealth building will be cross cutting themes across the 5 programmes.
- 3.6 In determining the above, the FTFC Board and Members have focussed on:
- Continuing to deliver the Council's town centre regeneration and housing development ambitions through now well-established programmes.
  - Embedding the Co-operative Neighbourhood approach into the way the Council works strategically, operationally and structurally. In addition, elements of the Excellent Council Homes programme relating to major works investment will be incorporated into the Working Co-operatively Within Our Neighbourhoods programme, along with 'Clean and Green' services, as both of these make an important contribution to the quality of local neighbourhoods.
  - Continuing to track the development and delivery of our key environmental and community based strategies through the Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town programme.
  - Drawing together the service prioritisation, commercialisation & insourcing, and productivity-focussed transformation activities under one Making Your Money Count programme.
  - Incorporating the transformational elements that were formerly included in the Connected to our Customers, Excellent Council Homes, Performing at our Peak and Employee of Choice programmes into the emerging Transformation programme, which will be the subject of a report to the August Executive meeting.
- 3.7 Council services are organised into eight Business Units across three themes: Customer, Place and Transformation and Support. In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC programme throughout the year, performance across these (Council Service) themes is monitored, to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement. Key performance results at Quarter 4 were reported at the Executive meeting on 9 June 2021, and Members were advised of the improvement plans identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team into 2021/22.
- 3.8 The customer Annual Report 2020/21 outlines what has been delivered throughout the course of the year against the outcomes and aims within the FTFC Corporate Plan programme, as well as celebrating achievements across the range of Council services, many of which in 2020/21 have resulted from the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It also

summarises key activities that are planned for 2021/22. Further details of these achievements and plans are also presented in the remainder of this Executive report.

### **Covid-19 Response**

- 3.9 The effects of the pandemic have required the Council to adapt services to provide support for residents and to manage the impacts of the pandemic.
- 3.10 Significant areas of activity have included:
- Stevenage Helps was set up in 3 days and provided emergency food provision, referrals to partner agencies as well as advice and support.
  - Covid Marshalls have been recruited and help to support and advise people on following social distancing rules.
  - The Outbreak Management Team have played a key role in undertaking track and trace activities, ensuring businesses are COVID secure as well as giving advice and support.
  - The Housing Service responded to the Government's "Everyone In" initiative and housed a significant number of rough sleepers. The No More Service offered their services to these individuals to help them maintain their accommodation and make positive changes to their wellbeing.
  - The Independent Living Service continued to keep in close contact with residents to monitor their welfare and provide support.
  - The Revenue and Benefits team processed over £21m of business rate reliefs and £20m of business grants.
  - Officers worked closely with Herts Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Chamber of Commerce and Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) to provide assistance and advice to local businesses.
  - Working closely with our leisure contractor, including putting financial support in place and helping to secure over £1.38M for leisure recovery in Stevenage.
- 3.11 During 2021/22, the Council's focus will be on:
- Continuing to deliver the Covid-19 recovery plan for the town and Council, working in partnership with Stevenage Together.
  - Developing and implementing plans to adapt and recover Council services following the Covid-19 pandemic.
  - Developing and implementing proposals for the Stevenage Economy Taskforce to help create jobs and skills opportunities for local people.
- 3.12 The Council is taking a co-operative approach to recovery through the Stevenage Together local strategic partnership. The partnership, acting as a Covid Recovery Taskforce, is focussing on a number of key areas, many of which will be supported by delivery of the external facing strands of the FTFC programme (specifically Transforming our Town, More Social and Affordable

Homes, Working Co-operatively Within Our Neighbourhoods and A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town).



### **Future Town, Future Council Programme Annual Update**

- 3.13 This section (paragraphs 3.16 to 3.66 below) outlines the programme outcomes, 2020/21 successes and 2021/22 deliverables for each FTFC programme.
- 3.14 Officers in conjunction with Executive Members have conducted a review of the FTFC programmes for the coming year and have engaged with Executive Members via informal briefings, to help shape the direction for the year ahead; to identify priorities; and to test the progress and deliverability of key projects in the context of Covid-19 and the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account financial resources.
- 3.15 This review has been used to inform the FTFC deliverables that are set out below, many of which, as stated above, are also factored into the Council's Covid-19 recovery plans.

### **External Facing Programmes**

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

- 3.16 **Programme Aims**
- Create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work and play

### 3.17 Programme Outcomes

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme
- A healthy, sustainable and vibrant town centre for the 21st Century
  - Reflecting on our new Town's heritage
  - Enhancing sustainable transport
  - Transforming the town centre for businesses, residents and visitors
  - Upskilling and providing opportunities
  - Supercharging businesses of our national and international base

### 3.18 Key programme successes during 2020/21 included the following:

- The Stevenage Development Board submitted the Stevenage Town Investment Plan and has succeeded in securing funding of £37.5million. This is a significant achievement, and brings about once in a generation investment to our efforts to revitalise and regenerate the town.
- The SG1 planning decision has been approved, leaving Mace clear to proceed with the development (subject to signing the S106 agreement).
- The £50m Queensway North scheme has neared completion, despite the pandemic, with the first of the three residential blocks now available to view. A range of new brands have shown interest in the retail blocks including Cakebox, PureGym, Chateau Café and a new restaurant, with more to follow.
- Construction of a new bus interchange on the corner of the Leisure Centre has begun, that will provide a significant upgrade on the existing station. It will improve accessibility across the town and travel links with the expanded railway station, as well as offering new heated, covered waiting facilities and amenities including a café.
- Improvements have been made to the town square including new paving and granite benches. Bespoke streetlights, with festoon lighting on the trees and surrounding structures help to create an attractive new area and event space.
- Works to the North Block in the Town Square have been completed and the building has been leased.

### 3.19 For the period 2021/22 – 2022/23, deliverables relating to town centre regeneration will be incorporated into the 'Transforming Our Town' programme referred to in paragraph 3.4 above.

### 3.20 During 2021/22 this programme will focus on:

- SG1 preparation and Phase 1 to start on site, and developing plans for SG1 acceleration.
- Delivery of Queensway North Development.
- Delivery of Town Square and the new North Block.

- Delivery of the Bus Interchange.
- Development of business cases and plans to implement the £37.5m Towns Fund programme for Stevenage.
- A programme of communications and engagement.
- Developing proposals for the regeneration of Marshgate.
- Supporting plans for a thriving life sciences cluster in Stevenage.

## **Housing Development Programme**

### **3.21 Programme Aims**

- Increase the number of social and affordable homes in Stevenage

### **3.22 Programme Outcomes**

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

### **3.23 Key programme successes during 2020/21 included:**

- 9 social and affordable homes were delivered at Addison House and this will bring the total to 270 homes completed since the programme began. A number of other schemes are in development.
- A further 10 homes were delivered at Ditchmore Lane for private sale, bringing in receipts that will enable re-investment elsewhere in the town.
- Work has begun on site on the Kenilworth Close scheme which will provide over 200 homes, including a flagship older persons housing scheme.
- The Council has received a total of £3.6m through sales and grant funding as part of the Council's Housing Development Programme.
- Council approved the establishment of a Wholly Owned Company to provide new homes.

### **3.24 For the period 2021/22 – 2022/23, deliverables relating to the Council's housing development activities will be incorporated into the 'More Social and Affordable Homes' programme referred to in paragraph 3.4 above.**

### **3.25 Next year this programme will focus on:**

- Delivering 21 new homes at North Road.
- Delivering 29 new homes at Symonds Green.
- Develop a pipeline of new homes to 2025 /2026.
- Continuing to deliver the regeneration of Kenilworth Close - by end of 2021/ 22 we will have completed the Malvern Close element of the site,

as well as the first homes at site A4 (bordering Stirling Close). Substantial progress will also be made on blocks A1 (flats and retail) and A2 (independent living scheme).

- Developing options for housing and bringing forward new homes at a number of Council-owned sites (subject to planning).
- Achieving sales of individual units at North Road and Malvern Close.
- Developing proposals to access funding for accelerating affordable housing including engaging with Hertfordshire Growth Board on acceleration options.
- Setting up and operating the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to provide new homes in Stevenage.

### **Excellent Council Homes Programme**

#### **3.26 Programme Aims**

- Provide high quality homes to our tenants and leaseholders

#### **3.27 Programme Outcomes**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers
- Effective investment in council homes through planned programmes of work

#### **3.28 Progress during 2020/21 included the following:**

- Phases one and two of the £45m Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) programme are complete and officers have worked with contractors to finalise the accounts to provide necessary information for billing. Phase three is in progress.
- Twelve lifts have been refurbished as part of the lift refurbishment programme.
- The Housing Online Service, which will provide housing customers with access to housing services online, was launched.
- The Council launched its “Housing First” approach, which focuses on the importance of access to safe, secure accommodation for homeless people and the role it can play in allowing them to move forward in their lives.
- In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Housing for Older People Strategy was approved, which will enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer.



- 3.29 As referred to in paragraph 3.6 above, deliverables relating to investment in the housing stock will be incorporated into the 'Working Co-operatively Within Our Neighbourhoods' programme in 2021/22; and deliverables relating to transformation will be incorporated into the Transformation strand of the Making Your Money Count programme.

### **Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme**

#### **3.30 Programme Aims**

- Work with our communities to improve our neighbourhoods

#### **3.31 Programme Outcomes**

- Clean and green neighbourhoods.
- Residents feel that they can work with the Council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area.
- Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required, including through community plans.
- Public spaces to be seen as community assets – officers to work with the local communities to rejuvenate the spaces in a co-operative and co-productive way. This will encourage their use, make them more attractive, engender ownership and responsibility, and result in them being better cared for by the Council and residents.
- The community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs.
- Improved quality and safety of the Council's built assets in neighbourhoods including council housing, garages and community buildings.

#### **3.32 Key successes during 2020/21 included:**

- The neighbourhood improvements programme has delivered a number of projects, but difficulties with community engagement continue to be experienced due to the pandemic. Projects that have progressed include art installations, putting in place heart defibrillators in the community and targeted work in areas highlighted by the local communities.
- The Co-operative Neighbourhoods (CN) way of working was launched aiming to put residents at the heart of decision making by making services more responsive to the strengths, needs and aspirations of communities and localities.
- Work has progressed on the Council's Community Engagement Strategy, including the development of an engagement proposal form and a guide

of 'How to Develop a Community Plan'. This will include a list of the bespoke engagement tools currently used by the Council.

- Work to refurbish 140 garages at a cost of £300k has neared completion and has included new roofs, fascias and guttering, new doors and repairs to the hardstanding areas. The Council has already seen void rates fall from 45.5% to 25.3% across the refurbished sites and another 17 garages have been reserved for new tenants.

3.33 For the period 2021/22 – 2022/23, deliverables relating to the Council's co-operative neighbourhoods activities will be incorporated into the 'Working Co-operatively Within Our Neighbourhoods' programme referred to in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.6 above.

3.34 During 2021/22 this programme will focus on:

- Embedding the Co-operative Neighbourhood Model as a modern, agile operating model for the delivery of council services in local areas.
- Completing community plans for each of the 6 neighbourhoods, informed by communities drawing from the principles of the Community Engagement Framework and championed by ward members. SBC will seek to work in a co-productive way with local groups, businesses and partner agencies.
- Supporting residents in becoming more active members of their community who make a positive contribution to the town and local area.
- Developing and maintaining a Corporate Community Engagement Plan for the next 18 month period.
- Creating a more streamlined approach to increase and enhance volunteering within the Council.
- Working with the Social Inclusion Partnership to support funding bids contributing to the recovery of VCSE sector.
- Implementing a Community Centre Forward Strategy through the Locality Review Programme and continuing to offer support to Community Associations to aid recovery from the pandemic.
- Delivering the Housing and Garage Major Improvement Programmes and the Locality Review Programme, to improve the quality of council homes, garages and community buildings.
- Developing 'Clean and Green' targeted initiatives and enforcement campaigns in neighbourhoods pro-actively tackling fly-tipping, littering, dog fouling etc.
- Improving recycling facilities and opportunities at neighbourhood recycling banks and flat blocks.

## **Place of Choice Programme**

**(renamed the Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town programme from 2021/22)**

### **3.35 Programme Aims**

- Improve the quality of life of Stevenage residents and enhanced experience for visitors

### **3.36 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 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

### ***Community Safety***

#### **3.37 Key successes during 2020/21 included:**

- Following consultation with residents and partners, the new Community Safety Strategy has been finalised.
- Work continued to find a solution to protect and sustain the support for young people around substance misuse and offending in discussion with the other Hertfordshire districts.
- Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) safe spaces provision has been significantly increased.

#### **3.38 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:**

- Embedding and implementing the Community Safety Strategy action plan including:
  - The introduction of the No More Youth Service to help divert young people from becoming involved in crime and ASB
  - Developing the work of the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service to provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery

- Working with partners to encourage reporting of crime and address perceptions of crime, and develop new initiatives to tackle emerging community safety issues such as the safety of women and girls.

### ***Culture and Leisure***

3.39 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- A Heritage Bike Ride was created in partnership with Cycling UK. This provided the community with a safe and healthy way to enjoy the cycle ways and cultural sites in Stevenage.
- In conjunction with Junction7 Creatives, a welcoming space for exhibitions workshops, poetry events and more opened in the town centre.
- Successful virtual events were held, including the Stevenage Pride awards which had over seven thousand views online.
- Providing a digital presence for the Stevenage Museum, including a 100 objects online exhibition.

3.40 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- Undertaking a visioning exercise for the future offer of leisure and culture across the town and using this to inform a Leisure Management Options Appraisal and implement an agreed procurement strategy.
- Developing new museum plans and activity for re-location.
- Developing plans for a new wet/dry leisure facility and replacement for Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre.
- Delivering an Arts & Heritage programme including the 75<sup>th</sup> New Town anniversary and the delivery of Creative Use Schemes and arts and heritage trails.

### ***Healthy Stevenage***

3.41 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- The launch of the Young People's Healthy Hub (YPHH), which will provide a number of activities for young people, as well as a dedicated counselling service for eleven to sixteen year olds.
- Launch of the community response project, So Active. Its key aim was 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.

3.42 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- Launching the Diabetes Prevention Service through the Healthy Hub.

- Further progressing plans for the development of a Young People's Healthy Hub.
- Supporting health partners with the development of integrated care system plans with a particular council focus on supporting activities to reduce health inequalities emerging from Covid-19.
- Further work with sport and physical activity partners to tackle obesity.
- Further driving work with mental health partners to tackle mental ill health and social isolation.

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

3.43 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- Launch of the Council's Cooperative and Inclusive Economy Charter. The Charter aims to support a fairer society and more resilient economy, and provides some practical examples of how to achieve this. These include shopping locally, developing local supply chains, supporting the development of cooperatives, and offering work placements and apprenticeships.
- Advanced discussions with Hertfordshire Growth Board to develop a policy statement and action plan for community wealth building across Hertfordshire.

3.44 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- Development of a Social Value Portal for council procurements.
- Supporting a County-wide adoption of a Community Wealth Building approach - including an early county-wide CWB project scope / bid against Hertfordshire Growth Board project funds.
- Sourcing support to grow and develop community and social enterprises.
- Further developing Stevenage Works as a programme to drive employment and training opportunities for local residents and young people, drawing on and adding to the current CITB programme.
- Driving the commitment of anchor institutions to community wealth building in Stevenage.

### ***Climate Change***

3.45 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- Approval of the Council's Climate Change Strategy and emerging action plan. It was co-produced with the community, and supports county-wide climate actions through the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.

- Stevenage signed up to the Race to Zero online platform in December 2020 as part of the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) global Race to Zero campaign. The Council also signed up to the revised UK100 pledge. This shows the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and working towards Stevenage wide net zero carbon emissions by 2045.
- Reduction of the Council's carbon outputs by over 560,000 Kg, by switching to a zero carbon electricity provider, and development of a carbon costs plan for 2021/22.

3.46 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- UK100 Pledge – working towards COP26 Climate Change Summit and pledging to at least one inclusive climate change action (Glasgow, November 2021).
- Implementing the Climate Change Action Plan.
- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) – continued development of partnership, co-produce four key Action Plans for: water, biodiversity, carbon and transport.
- Developing a Communication and Collaboration Plan with our residents, businesses and the LEP. The Plan will be a medium term approach to support our collective goal across the community of Stevenage for zero carbon by 2030.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

3.47 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- Adoption of the Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The document sets the new parking requirements and will help to reduce the level of car-use by residents and users of new developments, by reducing the provision of parking spaces where appropriate.
- Stevenage was provisionally accepted into Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Travel Town (STT) programme. It is hoped that the STT programme will help to deliver a range of projects to help initiate a modal shift in transportation use in the borough.
- Approval for consultation on the Stevenage Connections Area Action Plan. The final document will become part of the Development Plan for Stevenage and will guide how the area around the Rail Station can provide a welcoming gateway to the town, support sustainable transport, promote a more efficient use of the land, and enable greater connectivity across the town.

3.48 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- Securing potential funding through HCC's Sustainable Travel Towns programme, subject to review of opportunities and any constraints.
- Developing the Area Action Plan for the Stevenage Connection Gateway.
- Continue promoting cycling and walking and seeking funding for infrastructure improvements.
- Implementing actions resulting from Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership Transport plan.

### ***Biodiversity***

3.49 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- The application 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.
- Planting community orchards in Hampson Park, The Donkey Park and Wellfield open space.
- Adoption of the new Biodiversity planning commitment, which ensures new developments in the town provide a net gain in biodiversity.

3.50 During 2021/22 the programme will focus on:

- Developing additional areas of meadow managed grasslands.
- Raising awareness of the links between biodiversity loss and climate change and provide a range of opportunities for the residents to support the delivery of the town's Biodiversity action plan.
- Implementing the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document.
- Actions resulting from Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership Biodiversity action plan.

### **Internal-Facing Enabling Programmes**

#### **Connected to our Customers Programme**

3.51 **Programme Aims**

- Improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience

3.52 **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

3.53 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- The Council's new look website was launched. It provides an improved, modern website for customers that meets accessibility requirements, is mobile responsive and links with My Account (Digital Platform) and Northgate Housing Online, providing a more efficient customer experience.
- Work continued on integrated digital solutions, which will enable integration between systems, to join up council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels.

3.54 As referred to in paragraph 3.6 above, transformational elements relating to this Corporate Plan priority will be delivered through the Making Your Money Count (aka Financial Security) programme in 2021/22.

### **Employer of Choice Programme**

3.55 **Programme Aims**

- Have the right people, skills and knowledge

3.56 **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

3.57 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- Focused support for the Council's response to COVID-19 and the associated recovery planning, as well as exploring future ways of working, through learning lessons about how the workforce is working differently during the COVID-19 response.
- Approval of a new Workforce and Organisational Development strategy. Work to implement and embed the strategy will continue into 2021/2022.



- Continued work to digitalise HR processes including further developments to the core HR and payroll system.

3.58 As referred to in paragraph 3.6 above, transformational elements relating to this Corporate Plan priority will be delivered through the Making Your Money Count (aka Financial Security) programme in 2021/22.

### **Performing at our Peak Programme**

#### **3.59 Programme Aims**

- Become a smart council with improved performance

#### **3.60 Programme Outcomes**

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

3.61 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- Improved performance management reporting
- Enhancements made to the risk module of the InPhase performance management system, including a new style of reporting for the Corporate Risk Group and Audit Committee.

3.62 As referred to in paragraph 3.6 above, transformational elements relating to this Corporate Plan priority will be delivered through the Making Your Money Count (aka Financial Security) programme in 2021/22.

### **Financial Security Programme**

#### **3.63 Programme Aims**

- Ensure sufficient resources are available to deliver on the Council's priorities while remaining financially resilient to withstand the impact of COVID and/or recovery phase

#### **3.64 Programme Outcomes**

- To improve the customer journey and experience by enabling customers to engage and communicate with the Council when and how it best suits them including the provision of enhanced digital interventions
- To improve the productivity of the workforce through the introduction of streamlined processes and ways of working

- To retain wealth locally and support local employment through the insourcing of contracts wherever it is deemed viable to do so
- To ensure the Council remains financially resilient in order to continue to deliver its key priorities and operate its services for residents & businesses

3.65 Key successes during 2020/21 included:

- The 2021/22 HRA and General Fund budgets were approved at Full Council in January and February 2021 respectively. The reports included proposed growth (subject to available funding), savings proposals and fees and charges. The savings proposals related to one rather than the normal three year target due to the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances and uncertainty surrounding the medium to longer term impacts of the pandemic.
- The Council's Commercialisation & Insourcing strategy was agreed, and regular updates are given to the recently formed Commercial and Investment Executive Working Group. The strategy is focussed on ideas to find savings/generate income to contribute to the one year budget package.
- Preliminary work to consider options and concepts for the future transformation of the organisation began. This will help to deliver the Council's Financial Security programme in future years, and will also assess opportunities to enhance customer experiences.

3.66 During 2021/22 the programme will be renamed to the Making Your Money Count programme and will focus on:

- Ensuring delivery and implementation of the approved 2021/22 savings options and fees.
- Developing and implementing a productivity focused Transformation programme and the associated governance to ensure delivery of the 2022/23 savings and beyond. (Further detail regarding the Transformation programme will be provided in a future report to the Executive.)
- Integrating transformational projects from internal programmes such as Excellent Council Homes, Performing at our Peak, Employee of Choice and Connected to our Customers, to help maximise the use of resources and the benefit for residents.
- Identifying commercial options and insourcing opportunities which will support the Council's financial security.
- Identifying further budget options to ensure the continued viability of the Council, should the impact of COVID or associated factors on the Council's finances be worse than budgeted.

## **Key Performance Highlights**

3.67 Other achievements highlighted in the customer report at Appendix A, and not already included in the above, are set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes:

- Customer
- Place
- Transformation and Support

### **Customer Theme**

3.68 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing & Investment
- Communities & Neighbourhoods

3.69 Key successes in 20/21 include:

- Through the Major Works contracts, the following were completed: 35 kitchens, 23 bathrooms, 114 boiler installations, 14 full central heating installations, 26 electrical rewires, 4 window replacements and 14 door replacements
- The Community Safety team investigated 556 reports of fly-tipping and served seven fixed penalty notices (FPN) for failure to clear these by the perpetrators.
- 25 Community Protection Notice warnings and 17 Community Protection Notices were served for anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- The play team gave out over 2600 activity packs for children in Stevenage, as well as “pop-up” play events in the school half terms.

### **Place Theme**

3.70 The Place Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Planning and Regulation
- Stevenage Direct Services
- Regeneration
- Housing Development

3.71 Key successes in 20/21 include.

- The Environmental Health team investigated 664 noise complaints, compared to 397 the previous year.

- They also Served 39 statutory notices in relation to noise and housing issues. In addition to this they made two seizures of noise equipment and carried out two successful prosecutions for noise nuisance.
- The Planning service granted planning permission for the delivery of 782 new homes in Stevenage with permissions on a further 2,914 new homes in progress.
- 33 new jobs were created at the Business and Technology Centre (BTC) as well as supporting 25 businesses in starting up.
- 33,500 tonnes of waste were collected through kerbside collections.
- Weston Road cemetery achieved a green flag, bringing the total in Stevenage up to five.
- Green space volunteers gave 550 hours of their time on a range of environmental projects.
- A Cemetery Policy and Amenity Tree Management Policy were developed and approved.

### **Transformation and Support Theme**

3.72 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units and Services:

- Digital and Transformation
- Corporate Services
- Finance and Estates

3.73 Key successes in 20/21 include:

- The Council won a Gold Achievement award for the quality of data being provided to the National Address Gazetteer, a joint initiative by the Local Government Association and Ordnance Survey.
- The Customer Service Centre dealt with over 15,000 calls and responded to nearly 11,000 emails.
- The Elections team successfully delivered multiple elections (local, county and police and crime commissioner) despite challenges with COVID restrictions still being in place.
- The enhancement of the Council's ICT infrastructure and systems

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

### **Annual Report Purpose and Content**

4.1 The Annual Report 2020/21 (Appendix A) emphasises the co-operative approach of the Council to service design and delivery. It highlights how the Council has been able to continue to meet the needs of the community

despite the tough challenges it has faced in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and it outlines the progress against the Future Town Future Council programme.

- 4.2 The document reflects on the achievements against the Corporate Plan 'Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council' over the last year as well as giving a brief summary of what the Council aims to achieve in the forthcoming year to deliver the Corporate Plan, supporting the annual review of outcomes and priorities.
- 4.3 The Senior Leadership team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to suggest the key achievements for the Annual Report.
- 4.4 The Annual Report will be published on the Council's website and will be promoted through social media and the Chronicle magazine.

### **Consolidation of the Co-operative Corporate FTFC Programme**

- 4.5 As explained in paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6, officers propose that the Co-operative FTFC programme is consolidated and delivered through four external-facing programmes and one internal-facing enabling programme in 2021/22, rather than through nine programmes, which has been the case to date. These are as follows:
  - Transforming Our Town programme (formerly Town Centre Regeneration)
  - More Social and Affordable Homes programme (formerly Housing Development)
  - Working Co-operatively Within our Neighbourhoods programme (formerly Cooperative Neighbourhoods) - expanded to incorporate council housing investment and 'clean and green' operations, both of which make an important contribution to the quality of local neighbourhoods
  - A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town programme (formerly Place of Choice)
  - Making Your Money Count programme (formerly Financial Security) - drawing together productivity-focussed transformation activities, commercialisation & insourcing initiatives and service prioritisation considerations under one programme

### **Co-operative FTFC Programme Delivery 2021/22**

- 4.6 The 2021/22 Cooperative Corporate FTFC Programme is both ambitious and exciting. As always it also reflects the priorities that have been identified by our residents and businesses. Developing the programme for 2021/22 has been particularly challenging given the Covid-19 situation and the related impacts, some of which, regrettably, have continued into this new financial year.

- 4.7 The Council's Senior Leadership Team has reviewed and revised this programme for the year ahead, identifying clear priorities and deep commitment towards its delivery. These are reflected in the areas of focus for 2021/22 outlined earlier in this Executive Report. The Senior Leadership Team has focused all available resources upon delivery of the confirmed priorities, whilst striving as always to maintain effective and efficient frontline services for residents along with maintaining our financial stability.
- 4.8 Considerable uncertainty remains for the year ahead in particular with regards to the return of key income streams and it will therefore be necessary to keep the deliverability of the FTFC programme under review. A number of projects are contingent on the formation of business cases, additional funding or grant funding being secured to support their implementation (for example, health, transport and wealth building projects, where bids have been submitted to support particular initiatives or activities).
- 4.9 Further to this some schemes will require significant and as yet unidentified forward funding in order for the grant monies that have been secured to be realised such as the Town Deal projects. The ability of and capacity within our vital support services to aid the delivery of key programmes and projects will also be key throughout the year.
- 4.10 If and when new priorities emerge during the course of the year, we may need to review and revise the original FTFC programme in order to accommodate. Any resultant proposed changes to the FTFC deliverables for 2021/22 will be reported to the Executive through the quarterly Corporate Performance Reports.

### **Council Performance Measures 2020/21**

- 4.11 The pandemic has had significant impacts on residents and businesses in the town, which continues to be reflected in areas of increasing demand or pressures in different service areas such as homelessness support and advice, Council Tax and Housing Benefits, income and rents, and the capacity of Environmental Health team, who have played a leading role in Local Outbreak Management. In addition, as with similar organisations, Directors expect there to be high demand for particular services such as homelessness, non-essential repairs and works to properties, following the third national lockdown. These impacts have been considered when determining appropriate measures and targets to monitor performance throughout 2021/22.
- 4.12 The full suite of 2021/22 measures and targets can be seen in Appendix B. The flexibility of the Council's approach to performance management enables the Senior Leadership Team to amend performance measures and targets in year to drive forward additional improvement in services and to adapt in response to external factors and internal changes to service delivery.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 As referred to in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 above, a number of projects are contingent on the formation of business cases, additional funding or grant funding being secured to support their implementation; and some schemes will require significant and as yet unidentified forward funding in order for the grant monies that have been secured to be realised.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for the various work programmes and improvement activity will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

### **5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Corporate Plan Our Co-operative Council: Future Town Future Council. This helped to determine any negative, positive or disproportionate impact our outcomes and priorities might have on people in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken in respect of individual programmes and services referred to in this report as appropriate.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, there is a risk to FTFC programme delivery as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and this will be managed through ongoing review of the overall programme throughout the year, as referred to in paragraphs 4.8 to 4.10 above.

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. Risks to individual FTFC programmes and projects will be kept under review through this approach.

### **5.5 Other Corporate implications**

5.5.1 The Council's Corporate Plan is the keystone in the Council's policy framework. It sets out the Council's strategic priorities and informs the corporate improvement and change programmes.

5.5.2 The Corporate Plan impacts on some Council services and its priorities should be reflected in all relevant Business Unit planning processes.

5.5.3 The Annual report 2020/21 highlights the Council's co-operative approach to services. It ensures the Council continues not only to communicate its

improvement priorities and co-operative vision to the people of Stevenage, but also to listen, engage and involve them in the realisation of this joint vision.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- [Council Corporate Plan: Our Co-operative Council; Future Town Future Council December 2016 Council](#)
- Executive Report October 2021 - Corporate Performance - Quarter 1 2020/21
- Executive Report December 2021 - Corporate Performance - Quarter 2020/21
- Executive Report March 2021 - Corporate Performance – Quarter 3 2020/21
- Executive Report June 2021 - Corporate Performance - Quarter 4 2020/21
- Executive Report June 2020 - Coronavirus Recovery Plan - Review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Impact of Covid-19 on the Council's General Fund Revenue Budget
- Executive Report July 2020 – Coronavirus (Covid 19) Incident Update Report and Recovery Plan

## **APPENDICES**

- A Appendix A: Council Annual Report 2020/21 **[TO FOLLOW]**
- B Appendix B: Corporate Performance Suite and Targets 2021/22