

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date 15 June 2022



CORPORATE PRIORITIES FOR 2022/23

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 For Members to consider the council’s high level priorities and areas of focus for 2022/23 to inform what is published within the July Annual Report and then reported on through the quarterly performance reports during the course of the year.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive considers and, subject to resulting discussion at the meeting, agrees its proposed priorities for 2022/23.
- 2.2 That these priorities are included in the Annual Report for 2022/23, to be reported to Executive in July.

2.3 That the priorities form the basis of the Future Town Future Council programme and inform the corporate performance suite for 2022/23. Progress against delivery of the Council's priorities will be reported to Executive on a quarterly basis.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Members approved the FTFC Cooperative Corporate Plan in December 2016, and then updated it in July 2021. This framework sets the Council's focus on cooperative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town through the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 - Future Town Future Council Programme

3.2 Subject to Members consideration it is proposed that the Council should retain the existing areas of focus for 2022/23.

3.3 In considering the priorities for the coming year, thought has been given to a number of local and national themes. These include:

- I. Government policy, including the emphasis on Levelling Up, continuing impact of BREXIT, changes in housing regulation, and focus climate change and carbon reduction. A separate report on this meeting agenda goes into further details concerning the key legislative changes and their likely impacts on SBC and its activities
- II. External factors including the impact of the war in Ukraine, the cost of living crisis and the associated economic consequences.
- III. Local priorities including the regeneration of the town centre, building more homes for local people, providing support for people at risk of homelessness and refugees, and what residents have told us that matters to them through engagement such as the Resident Survey and other consultation activities.
- IV. Existing council priorities, achievements and areas for improvement.

- V. The long-term central government funding settlements for local government which will require Councils to identify and deliver further savings and new surplus income.

3.4 Further to the points highlighted at 3.3 above, consideration has been given to the broader context that the Council is now working within beyond the impacts of Covid and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In particular, there have been notable changes to the Council's resourcing position over the last 5 to 10 years including the following:

- £5.3m reduction in Government Grant
- £6.1m of inflationary pressures funded
- £1m of new initiatives absorbed within the budget base
- Circa 8k increase in the local population
- Circa 2,600 additional properties across the Town
- 25 key Strategies / Policies signed off and in the process of being implemented
- Commitment to and delivery of multi-million pound Town Centre Transformation and Housing Development programmes and associated company structures
- Increase in activity at County level including the formation of the Growth Board and the Corridor Boards

With the aforementioned in mind, the Council should be rightly proud of its achievements in recent years especially with regards to maintaining key project delivery whilst responding to the Covid pandemic. The need to address the General Fund budget gap was recognised when the budget for 2022/23 was approved earlier this year and work is being undertaken to develop options for Members to consider ahead of a related report being presented to the Executive in September 2022.

The issues the Council is facing with regards to the recruitment and retention of staff are being experienced by most Local Authorities at both tier levels. Officers are continuing to seek ways and means to address these challenges linked to the ongoing implementation of the Workforce Strategy. Maintaining a healthy, committed and motivated workforce will remain key to our ongoing success.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The priorities presented in this report have been informed through discussions held with the Leader and the Portfolio Holders. Where possible they also reflect the current and anticipated national and local contexts. The separate item on this agenda concerning and assessment of the Government's Legislative Programme for 2022/23 highlights potential related impacts for the town and the Council during this year and beyond.

FUTURE TOWN FUTURE COUNCIL PRIORITIES

4.2 The proposed high-level priorities and areas of focus for each of the pillars of the Future Town Future Council programme are set out below:

4.3 Transforming Our Town Centre

- Moving the 9 Town's Fund projects to delivery phase following completion of Business Cases
- SG1 – transition to delivery, including detailed design of the public services hub
- Delivery of Multi-storey Car Park & Cycle hub
- Opening of the new Stevenage Interchange
- Delivery of Bus Apron / Garden Square phase one
- Delivery of exciting and engaging comms & marketing campaigns to support the programme and projects

4.4 More Social and Affordable Housing

- Delivery of housing schemes at Helston House, Oaks Cross & Phase 1 at Kenilworth Close
- Ongoing support for tackling homelessness through providing additional housing supply for the flagship Housing First programme
- Developing proposals for new housing schemes in places including the Oval
- Developing applications for consideration by the Planning and Development Committee for sites in Brent and in Shephall View.
- Provide support towards the delivery of the garage improvement programme

4.5 Co-operative Neighbourhoods

- Continue the development of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme, including transitioning the core deliverables of the programme into business as usual activities
- Continue to develop innovative ways of capturing and analysing resident feedback, utilising this to drive neighbourhood priorities and improving communication and engagement
- Further develop the Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach as part of the council's transformation programme
- Ensure the successful delivery of the Equalities Commission & Community Renewal Funding as aligned programmes

4.6 Making Your Money Count (MYMC)

- Complete the update of the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to take account of the impact of COVID losses on-going and the cost of living crisis
- Review and update the HRA Business Plan to reflect key legislative impacts, the impact of COVID losses on-going and the cost of living crisis
- Identify sufficient MYMC options are identified to ensure that the General Fund resources match expenditure by 2024/25
- Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy - implementation of initiatives such as filming rights, trade and bulky waste pricing changes
- Review Fees and charges to support achievement of the MYMC target
- Transformation - Implementation of online first and new customer model to improve the quality, availability and speed of service for customers
- Enlargement of the Shared Revenue and Benefits service which will realise savings for the General Fund

4.7 Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town

This pillar brings together a number of the Council’s key inter-related strategies and programmes that combine to make tangible and meaningful improvements in the appearance, accessibility and sustainability of the local area, and the safety, health and wellbeing of local people.

In particular, this pillar aims to:

- Improve residents’ health and wellbeing
- Build resilient communities, reduce crime & help people feel safe
- Make Stevenage a ‘destination creative’ town
- Unlock opportunities for the local economy and our residents
- Achieve net zero Council emissions by 2030 and to work towards Stevenage becoming a net zero Town
- Improve sustainable transport across the town

4.8 Each theme is underpinned by detailed action and implementation plans that set out more detail about how they will be delivered and the outcomes they will achieve. In summary, the proposed key priorities within these themes are set out below:

Climate Change	<p>Working towards a Zero Carbon Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering c. £1.8m investment in reducing carbon in our housing stock • Continuing the roll out of new lower carbon council homes • Support over 250+ staff to use alternatives to commuting by car at least twice a week • Local Councillors committing to paperless committees • Demonstrating local changes, such as Neighbourhood Wardens to use bike and electric car clubs or walk on their
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	<p>site visits</p> <p>Working towards a Zero Carbon Town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending £100k+ on biodiversity improvements • Doubling electric vehicle charging capacity in the town • Developing a new Waste & Recycling Strategy • Develop a zero carbon Planning Policy for the Station Gateway development • Produce a Sustainable Travel Towns plan for Stevenage, an exemplar in Hertfordshire • Implement the Collaboration and Communication Plan • Complete the business case for a bike / e-bike hire scheme
Clean and Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop costed options for an enhanced schedule of works to improve the “outside my front door” appearance of the Town • Deliver a programme of cyclical works throughout the year (spring clean, grass-cutting, leaf clearance, tree planting etc.) • Retain our 5 Green Flag awards and extend the network of Community Orchards • Delivering year one of the rationalisation of the shrub bed capital programme • Increase recycling rates • Deliver Biodiversity Action Plan activities including the development of community woodland and new meadow grassland sites
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solve and reduce the nuisance caused by fly tipping, including the use of grant funded CCTV cameras • Promote the reporting of hate crime and further promote equality within the community • Provide a whole housing approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their families • Work with partners to further improve the safety of women and girls in the town • Tackle the harm caused by drugs, alcohol and offending • Review approaches to tackling issues with litter, including the greater use of fixed penalty notices along with associated communications as a deterrent
Community Wealth Building (CWB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the Community Renewal Fund programme by the December 2022 deadline • Continue to lead the ongoing related activities of the Hertfordshire Growth Board supported CWB working group, alongside colleagues from all ten districts and borough councils in Hertfordshire and HCC • Develop the economic inclusion activities of the Social Inclusion Partnership • Establish and develop a CWB Working Group for Stevenage, comprised of key internal stakeholders – focusing on our own efforts around the Stevenage Works programme,

	<p>Procurement and Social Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a CWB balance sheet to demonstrate progress in this area
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue developing new arts and cultural opportunities in local neighbourhoods, led by and in collaboration with local communities • Target work that addresses inequality of cultural engagement and representation by marginalised communities while also cutting across various socio-economic agendas – i.e. skills, job creation • Build Stevenage Museum’s research, collections, audiences, partnerships, & track record in preparation for the future museum offer • Develop the Towns Fund work plan for major place-making projects – public realm and meanwhile use. • Support the development of Junction 7 Creatives and the wider Arts & Heritage Forum partnership to increase membership • Deliver major National Lottery-funded programmes, Stevenage Day 2022 and the LGBTQ+ project. • Develop further youth-centred activities that increase access to cultural activity
Future Town Future Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Herts County Council, deliver the £13m Zebra Electric Bus programme which will use Government funding for 30 single deck, battery electric buses to cover the Stevenage Arriva network • Develop the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan • Develop the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan • Deliver Town Deal projects that increase levels of sustainable transport in the borough, such as the improvement to cycle and walking routes and installing electric charging points in the new Multi Storey Car Park • Developing the Electric Vehicle Strategy in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council including the provision of more charging points in the town • Delivery of local walking and cycling schemes • Opening of the new Bus Interchange • Ensure sustainable transport options are accessible to as many people as possible
Healthy Stevenage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the Healthy Stevenage Strategy and Action Plan • Lead on the Public Health District Partnership supported place based Health Inequalities and Health Improvement initiatives, services and programmes • Continue to develop Active Environments through Towns Fund projects and existing Sports Development activities • Continue to contribute to the Stevenage Together Local Strategic Partnership Recovery Action Plan focussing on

	supporting the mental and physical health of the town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the Healthy Hubs programmes to continue
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CORPORATE AND BUSINESS UNIT PRIORITIES

- 4.9 In addition to the FTFC programme-based priorities outlined above, there are also a number of priorities identified that relate to our core service delivery and corporate effectiveness. These activities are integral to ensuring the council has the right skills, resources, processes and support in place to continue to deliver excellent services for residents.
- 4.10 The proposed key cross-cutting and corporate and business unit related priorities for the coming year include:
- Determining a local response to the cost of living crisis and supporting local people and businesses, as well as considering the impact for the council and our staff
 - Embedding our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion across all services and programmes
 - In a challenging employment market and with several roles in hard-to-recruit sectors, reviewing and improving our approaches to recruitment and retention, and learning and development by implementing our Workforce Strategy
 - Continuing to improve our IT infrastructure to support effective and efficient working practices, including upgrading our network, improving our defences against potential cyber-attacks and our firewalls, improving our virtual desktop interface and user experience, and rolling out Microsoft 365 across the council.
 - Completing the procurement of a new Leisure Management Contract
 - Working towards addressing the significant pressure faced by many local people and their housing needs: including significant demand pressures for temporary accommodation, homelessness, rough sleeping and responding to government requirement in respect of provision of asylum seekers or refugees
 - Improving processes and performance of important services to tenants such as empty properties and repairs, and delivering the Major Repairs Contract within the towns low rise flat blocks
 - Ensuring compliance is maintained across General Fund and Housing Revenue Account properties
 - Deliver improvements in both the quality of garages available and the lettings process
 - Reviewing and updating the Housing Revenue Account Asset Strategy
 - Undertaking a review of the Housing Allocation Policy
 - Continually monitoring and improving the customer contact experience
 - Continuing to lead the recovery of the town from the covid-19 pandemic
 - Producing a new Corporate Plan
- 4.11 As part of this element of the programme, thought will also be given as to whether or not to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge in conjunction with the Local Government Association.

- 4.12 We will also continue to develop our approach to communication and marketing, ensuring that we celebrate our successes and use clear and consistent messaging that is appropriate for the intended audience. We will continue to use a variety of channels including social media, and multiple means through which to effectively engage with local residents to raise awareness, inform and educate as well as understand and respond to their questions and concerns.
- 4.13 More detail on our communications approach for 2022/23 will be included in the Annual Report when it is considered at the Executive meeting in July 2022.

COUNTY, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL ACTIVITIES

- 4.14 Beyond the significant range of programmes and projects outlined above, the Council is also very active at County level through its involvement with the Hertfordshire Growth Board, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Stevenage Development Board and a range of key partners including Hertfordshire County Council and the East of England Local Government Association. For example, the Leader Chairs the North East & Central Growth Corridor Board which reports directly into the Hertfordshire Growth Board and is responsible for the delivery of a number of key county level initiatives.
- 4.15 The Council is also very well connected to national agencies such as the District Council Network (DCN) of which the Leader is a Vice Chair and the Local Government Association (LGA). By way of another example, the Deputy Leader is a member of the LGA Culture Tourism and Sport Board.
- 4.16 Accordingly the Council is well placed to influence and inform local, county level, regional and national policy agendas.

SUMMARY

- 4.17 Once finalised the priorities outlined above will be summarised within a “plan on a page”. This document will not outline the detail that sits behind each priority but will serve to highlight the breadth and scale of our commitment to continuing to improve the lives of local people and how the Council performs.
- 4.18 As always it is recognised that new matters are likely to arise during the year which may warrant a response. Such matters will be considered as they arise along with any related implications to existing approved activities and priorities.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no new direct financial implications related to the recommendations outlined within this report. However, officers responsible for delivery of the priorities identified will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications which arise during the course of the year.

5.1.2 It is recognised that some of the priorities will require external revenue and capital funding to be identified in order for them to be fully 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 delivering the priorities over the coming year will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 There are no new direct equality and diversity implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year will need to identify and consider any resulting equality and diversity implications. Where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for 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 delivering the priorities, programmes and services identified 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 Delivery of the priorities outlined may impact on the development of future policy or procedure.