

Meeting Executive

Date 14 September 2022

APPENDIX A: FTFC PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER ONE 2022/23

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This is a written update on progress on live projects in quarter one 2022/23 and forecasted plans for quarter two 2022/23.
- 1.2 To note the progress achieved by all programmes in quarter four 2021/22 and forecasted progress for quarter one 2022/23

2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY UPDATES

Transforming Our Town Programme

2.1 The demolition of site Plot K (Former Police Station and Towers Garages) has completed, and the site has been handed back to the Council. Plot A (Swingate House) demolition clearance works is also complete. The project team are working closely with development partner Mace to progress both sites.

2.2 The bus interchange was operational from 26 June 2022. The team continue to provide support to Estates and Facilities on the day-to-day operation and exploring potential occupants for the two available units.

2.3 Enabling works began on the vacant bus station on 27th June, immediately after its closure, following approval at the Planning and Development committee meeting. The first week on site saw the removal of the barriers and bus shelters.

2.4 Alongside the physical changes, a school competition was launched for young people to come up with a name and to design a matching logo for the bus station space. The winning entry will be turned into a plaque to be displayed at the space. This competition has been judged and the winners will be announced in September when children return to school.

2.5 Contractors Huber for the multi-storey car park (MSCP) and cycle hub are on site and works are progressing well. Hoarding for the site has been commissioned and is being progressed with designers. The cycle hub has progressed on its design, and procurement and costing processes are underway.

More Social and Affordable Housing Programme

2.6 Final reservations are progressing at the North Road (21 Homes) scheme with sales expected to complete imminently. The scheme will enter the defects period which will still require pro-active management from the team. All General Fund capital forecasts have been received in line with the capital strategy.

2.7 Work has progressed at the Symonds Green (29 Homes) site with roof work being installed on the rear section of the build and internal works have continued. A tour of the site with local ward Members and a local school have also been planned.

2.8 Completions on the private sale elements of the Kenilworth Close scheme along Stirling Close continue, with 7 completions having now taken place. The affordable homes on Stirling close are due for handover shortly and Members of the Housing Management team viewed the site ahead of preparing the letting materials.

2.9 On the main site, work continues at pace with extensive brick and block work being carried out across the site. Some glazing is also being installed. Work is also underway to pull together materials for marketing the retail units.

2.10 The second round of consultation for the Shephall View & Brent Court sites took place in early June, with a further 40 residents expressing feedback in regards to the proposals. A large proportion of the feedback was positive in relation to the designs. A further workshop has taken place with Housing and Investment teams, with the ambition of a planning application being submitted in quarter two.

2.11 Work started on site at the Dunn Close (27 Homes) scheme this quarter. Work to the foundations of the site continues, as well as confirming drainage designs. Work has also been ongoing to make improvements to the local woods that borders the site, including introducing a formal woodland walk for the local community.

2.12 The units at Oaks Cross have now been delivered at the site, and work to the externals is underway. A tour of the scheme for members of the Housing Development Working Group has been arranged prior to the official handover which is anticipated in quarter two.

2.13 The Courtlands scheme within the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) land purchase has been completed and demolition has begun on site.

Co-operative and Neighbourhoods Programme

2.14 Priorities for the Co-operative Neighbourhood programme were shared at an informal executive meeting to outline the proposed scope of the programme for 2022/23. Discussions with the new Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Working are underway regarding the next steps for the programme.

2.15 Work to deliver the Digital Neighbourhood Newsletters continues alongside the contractor Granicus, and internal colleagues from Communications & Digital & Transformation. Initial drafts of the newsletters have been created highlighting key projects in each neighbourhood area.

2.16. Following a successful funding application to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Proptech Engagement Fund, a preferred supplier (Novoville) has now been selected and project initiation discussions have commenced. The secured £125,000 funding will support a digital engagement offer as part of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme.

2.17 The Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) held the final themed meeting of Business and Employment. The interim draft report has been reviewed and the final report will be available in quarter two.

2.18 Phase three and four of the flatblock refurbishment programme has continued to progress. Delivery will continue into quarter two, alongside customer satisfaction activities and events. The pandemic continues to affect material and labour supply to the programme, but this is being monitored closely by the contractors.

Making Your Money Count Programme

2.19 The Council's financial outturn position has been confirmed and work is now focusing on the 2022/23 monitoring as well as early work on the 2023/24 budgets. Preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) refresh is starting and will be presented to Executive in September 2022. Early preparation for the draft 2023/24 budgets (revenue and capital) have commenced, but there continues to be challenges due to resilience in the Finance team. The Technical Accountant and the Assistant Director (Finance) have now been recruited to and work is now ongoing to fill the other vacancies within the finance team.

2.20 Fees and Charges workshops commenced in June 2022 and there were further workshops during July with the assumption of a report being produced by September Commercial Insourcing Executive Committee on the likelihood of areas where fees and charges could be further increased or new charges created.

2.21 Progress on the closing of accounts continues to be on track. The 2021/22 accounts are being prepared and are aiming to have them ready by the 31 July 2022. The 2019/20 accounts are with the auditors and the only outstanding issue being the work undertaken by CIPFA around Infrastructure Assets. The 2020/21 audit is progressing with the testing stage to be completed by quarter two.

2.22 A further eleven new customers have signed up to the Council's trade waste collection, providing an additional £10,500 of annual revenue. The current focus is to support the collection of Aged Debt of which an additional £8000 aged trade waste debt has been recovered since the figure reported last quarter.

2.23 The Council's events brochure and filming offer have both launched. Between April and May 2022 seven filming enquiries were made including one for a BBC drama. Through the events sponsorship brochure, headline sponsors have been procured for events including Stevenage Day and the Pride of Stevenage Awards.

2.24 The transformation programme Phase 1 (Customer Services) is in progress. In line with plans agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process, key changes will be introduced this financial year with the goal of improving the customer experience and delivering a budget saving in Customer Services. In Q1:

- Bulky waste digital service has gone live
- The customer services opening hours have been amended
- Messaging has been drafted for new Digital First phone options and is due to go live early in Q2. Digital First communications plan is drafted
- Technical work has progressed on digital complaints and garage lettings.

2.25 Detailed analysis work is underway to support the design of a Phase 2 programme (Service Delivery) for implementation in 2023/24. The programme will create a "Customer Hub" and four specialist teams (Localities, Advice and Support, Income & Debt, and Lettings & Bookings). A business case will be prepared for Executive in September 2022.

A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town Programme

Clean and Green

2.26 Officers from the Stevenage Direct Services (SDS) team had a stand at Stevenage Day in June to help highlight the litter campaign and raise awareness. It was well attended, and visitors had the opportunity to have their photo taken with Wombles Great Uncle Bulgaria and Orinoco.

Healthy Stevenage

2.27 The Nightlight Crisis Café launched in partnership with HertsMind Network, Healthy Hub Stevenage (Adult), Govia ThamesLink and wider key stakeholders. The café, situated in the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre on Lytton Way, has been set up to offer people who are feeling distressed a person to talk to in a relaxed, non-clinical setting, which aims to help those in need of immediate support. Staff will offer a non-judgemental listening ear for emotional and practical support and to signpost or refer to other local sources of therapy or advice.

2.28 Community engagement took place with residents in Shephall as part of a pilot for Hertfordshire Whole Systems Obesity (WSO) Programme. This pilot which looks at a place based approach enables residents to understand social determinants of health outcomes related to healthy weight and inequalities. 101 Shephall residents completed community engagement survey with residents also attending community event. Key health and

wellbeing themes have been identified supporting strong position to start phase 2 in co-producing and continue engagement with residents.

2.29 The 8th annual walking festival was held during National Walking Month in May. 65 people participated in the family trail at Fairlands Valley Park. 370 walkers participated throughout the week including 71 new walkers.

Community Safety

2.30 The Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service registered as a charity this quarter. "Friends of SADA" currently has three trustees and a patron who have been working hard to promote the work and services of SADA, collecting and applying for funding to support more survivors and their families. The charity held its first event in June and further events are currently in discussion.

2.31 A successful funding bid from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was awarded to support the Council's work to deter fly tipping. The funding enabled the ASB team to purchase 4 new cameras as well as contribute towards promotional material for events and fly tipping posters and signs. Since April 2022 fines for fly tipping, including household waste increased to £400.

Stevenage Re-Imagined

2.32 The joint funded Arts Council England\Lottery funded arts 7 cultural programme for Stevenage Day took place this quarter. Activities included flag making and dance workshops, a Stevenage Day parade, storytelling tent, arts and crafts stalls and a world music stage. An evaluation of the event will be provided to Arts Council England in due course.

Community Wealth Building

2.33 The process to formally incorporate the Social Inclusion Partnership as a Multi-stakeholder Co-operative is underway. This would enable the partnership to become a funding vehicle to support the acquisition of funding to support the further development of the Community Wealth Building agenda in Stevenage.

2.34 The first meeting of the Council's Community Wealth Building steering group was convened on the 31st May, chaired by the Leader of the Council. An update was provided on the status of the Community Renewal Fund, Social Value Portal and Stevenage Works. Meetings will be held bi-monthly, with the next meeting focusing on the outline proposals around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) as well as providing an update on service areas.

Climate Change

2.35 A Climate Change annual update paper was presented to Executive in June 2022. The Executive considered a report providing an update on the Council's Climate Change Strategy and initiatives.

2.36 The recruitment of a Climate Change Programme Lead Officer for the Council is underway. This role will take the lead in delivering the essential targets which have been set in the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and to reflect the ambitions of the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change.

Sustainable Transport

2.37 The Preferred Options report for the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan is currently being drafted and will be going to Executive in September to be approved to go out to public consultation.

2.38 Officers remain in regular contact with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) officers, to progress the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan. This will ultimately be presented to HCC's Highways & Transport Panel in January 2023. A work programme, governance structure, protocols, stakeholder engagement and communications plan are all being progressed well with a "Learn and Share" event being planned for October 2022.

2.39 Regular dialogue has been established with Cycling UK Stevenage to keep momentum and progress on a wide range of cycling related projects in the town. The last progress meeting was held in June 2022 and set a series of action points.

Biodiversity

2.40 Following satisfactory inspection by the Forestry Commission, of three Community Orchards delivered in 2021/22, funding has been received from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund as part of the Council's Biodiversity activities.