

<b>Meeting</b>	Executive
<b>Date</b>	18 July 2023

## **APPENDIX C: FTFC PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE FOR QUARTER FOUR 2022/23**

### **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 This is a progress update on Future Town Future Council programme activity in quarter four 2022/23.

### **2. PROGRAMME DELIVERY UPDATES**

#### **Transforming Our Town Programme**

2.1 A successful preview event, prior to its official opening in May, was held for the multi-storey car park (MSCP) and cycle hub with members of the Development Board and Councillors.

2.2 Event Island Stevenage has been fully handed over to the newly formed Events Working Group which consists of officers from Leisure, Events, and Town Centre Management. An events programme for 2023 has been planned and been approved by the Senior Leadership Team. The new programme will begin to be implemented from quarter one 2023/24.

2.3 Morgan Sindall have been appointed as delivery partner to the Sports & Leisure Hub project. Next stages include a feasibility study, invites to assemble the project team and pricing of the pre-construction services agreement (PCSA). The project has four core elements; land assembly, design and build of the new facility, decant and operations work and communications and engagement with residents.

2.4 An Opening Event for the first phase of the Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC) launched at the North Hertfordshire College Stevenage Campus in March. The repurposed space includes rebranding, refurbished laboratory, state of the art industry equipment and upgrades to lighting for sustainability improvements. The first phase of the project is to develop and deliver a range of new T Level and Apprenticeship qualifications across Science, Engineering, Digital, and Sustainable Technologies subjects. The project is being delivered in partnership with North Hertfordshire College and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Hertfordshire LEP).

## **More Social and Affordable Housing Programme**

2.5 Work has continued at the Symonds Green site (29 Homes) with final internal decorations and snagging taking place ahead of completion. External works to the amenity space are being finalised, as well as the marking out of the under-croft parking. Handover of the scheme has experienced some continued delays due to Hertfordshire Highways work to access the site being delayed. It is anticipated the scheme will complete in quarter one 2023/24.

2.6 On the Kenilworth Close site, work continues to both the A1 (mixed tenure & retail) and A2 (independent living) sites. A1 internal works have continued at pace and there are currently three reservations of the private sale element of this block which is anticipated to handover on quarter two 2023-24. A2 flooring work is progressing well with Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) ducting being installed on the second floor.

2.7 At the time of writing, the planning application for the Shephall View & Brent Court sites is awaiting a decision, with the expectation that it will be seen at either June or July Planning Committee. The associated tender exercise for the scheme is scheduled to finish shortly, with an Executive decision on the outcome anticipated for Summer 2023.

2.8 Work continued at the Dunn Close (27 Homes) scheme this quarter. The first floor slab is anticipated to be installed within the next week month, however, there has been delays to the progress of the brickwork due to the adverse weather this quarter impacting progress. It is expected that the scheme will be wind and watertight by quarter two 23/24.

2.9 Public consultation for The Oval scheme took place. Extensive consultation with the community centre and church has taken place in relation to the new future proposal at the site. The design for the scheme continues to be developed utilising the feedback from these consultations. The next round of consultation is anticipated to be carried out in June. The team have successfully been able to access £45K in grant funding from Homes England and will continue ongoing dialogue with them in relation to grant funding at the scheme.

2.10 The Courtlands scheme within the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) continued to progress on site with foundation work now completed. This has enabled brick and blockwork to progress at the site. Procurement documents for the Estate Agent have been drafted and shared with colleagues in the Shared Legal team and the procurement exercise will commence once the documents are approved by them.

## **Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme**

2.11 A centralised programme of Team & Elected Member meetings and Ward Walkabouts has been created and programmed to begin after the local elections in May. This has been shared with and approved by the Portfolio Holder. Additionally, meetings have been arranged with all Strategic & Operational Leads of the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme to discuss the future approach for the programme.

2.12 Work to deliver the Digital Neighbourhood Newsletters continues with over 4,000 residents signed up to the platform and approximately 250 new subscribers continue to be added each month. Two newsletters have now been distributed to residents. The first, an introductory general newsletter was sent in January, and this was followed by a first Neighbourhood edition that was sent out ahead of the pre-election period in March. This was shared with 4,200 residents and resulted in a 50% clickthrough rate.

2.13 Following a successful funding application to the DLUHC Proptech Engagement Fund, the preferred supplier (Novoville) have undertaken further consultation and the new responses are being analysed and compared to the original responses. Potential themes and projects that are highlighted from this analysis will help to form the basis of Community Plans for each area.

2.14 The final report from the Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) has been produced and initial recommendations have been provided ahead of the sharing of the final report. The report is due to be presented to the Executive in July 2023.

2.15 Phase four and five of the flatblock Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) programme has continued to progress, as well as Phase six which is addressing the blocks added to the programme since its original inception. Satisfaction surveys and consultation events are being undertaken on a rolling basis.

2.16 The impact of Brexit, the War in Ukraine and increases in costs of fuel and raw materials continues to be felt putting cost pressures on the MRC programme. Also, the additional blocks and those blocks which have had to be carried over to later phases (due to the recent pandemic) have meant a formal extension of the MRC contract term to enable the contractors to deliver the remainder of the project beyond August 2023.

2.17 The garage improvement programme has made steady progress this quarter. From January 2023 to March 2023, 95 garages have been refurbished over 10 sites and 47 void garages were made available for letting. £16,000 additional yearly income has been generated on these sites to date, with a further 26 garages to let. Significant progress has also been made with the installation of new build garages at 3 sites (21 garages).

2.18 Six garage sites have been identified as potential areas for electrical vehicle (EV) charging points to be installed and have been nominated for feasibility studies to be undertaken for them.

2.19 Due to the increase interest through digital garage lettings since its launch last quarter, a marketing plan is now in place to maximise the offer and available garages.

### **Making Your Money Count Programme**

2.20 The quarter three monitoring has been completed for revenue and capital. Capital bids for 2023/24 were assessed in January by both the Senior Leadership team and the Leaders

Financial Security Group (LFSG). Meetings were arranged with the Opposition Party in February to go through the Budgets for 2023/24, prior to the 2023/24 General Fund Council Tax Setting being agreed at Full Council. In May 2023, the LFSG was renamed the Council Financial Security Group (CFSG).

2.21 Progress on the closing of accounts continues. The 2019/20 accounts were signed off with the auditors in April, with the updated accounts going to Audit Committee on 27 March for noting. The 2020/21 accounts are currently being audited. However, these will not be completed until the auditors have available resources which won't be until August 2023. Therefore the 20/21 audit won't likely be complete until September / October 2023.

2.22 Officers signed a contract with InPost for the provision of parcel lockers across the town. This will reduce CO2 emissions and will generate a fixed annual income for the Council for each parcel locker unit installed.

2.23 Officers worked on a proposal to provide a Hertfordshire wide Telecare Service to North Herts District Council (NHDC). This proposal established the SBC offer of responding (in person) to 3500 call outs per year. The Telecare offer, whilst rejected due to NHDC budget constraints, will provide the template from which future county-wide offers will be developed. For example, the expansion of the Careline and Community Support service which is due to commence in quarter one 2023/24.

2.24 A new skips and trade waste brochure and Events brochure for 2023 was launched and circulated. Phase 2 advertising locations have been identified, including car parks and town centre locations.

2.25 The transformation programme Phase 1 (Customer Services) is concluding. In quarter 4 the service improvements have mainly focused on critical background enablers and continuous improvement following the launch of the 10 new online processes to improve the Council's offer to customers. In line with plans agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process, delivering a budget saving in Customer Services alongside key changes to the customer experience are due for 23/24. A report setting out the deliverables expected as part of Phase 2 of the transformation programme is due to be presented to the Executive in September 2023.

2.26 The new 5 Star customer services model is being embedded in the current programmes and projects and plans developed as part of organisation wide communication and organisational development work. This work aims to embed a new culture for customer services and promotion of digital services and ways of working.

2.27 The scope of work and priorities for Phase 2 of Transformation has been decided by the Transformation Portfolio Board and projects are being identified and initiated. The Phase 2 of Transformation will fully combine the transformation work across the council, enabling clear prioritisation and targeted change initiatives.

## **A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town Programme**

### ***Clean and Green***

2.28 A new community woodland was planted at Fairlands Valley Park. Approximately 4,000 tree saplings were planted in the Southfield with support from the local community, including schools, volunteers, residents and council officers. Residents were asked to vote on the name of the woodland with an official opening/naming ceremony planned for quarter one 2023/24.

2.29 As part of the Great British Spring Clean, three community litter picks were organised. Across all the litter picks, 75 volunteers took part and over 103 bags of rubbish were collected.

### ***Healthy Stevenage***

2.30 A new strategic steering group for Stevenage facilities has been created with sport's national governing bodies, Sport England, Herts Sport Partnership, local schools, Stevenage FC Foundation and Council officers. This group will meet bi-annually to discuss key challenges with facilities within Stevenage and the usage. This will also contribute to the town regeneration and the building new leisure facilities.

2.31 In partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) funding was secured for the investment and refurbishment of the tennis courts at Shephalbury Park. The £110,000 investment will help to ensure that quality facilities are available for the local community. The project is part of a nationwide investment by the UK Government and LTA Tennis Foundation, delivered by the LTA, to refurbish public tennis courts across Great Britain. This investment will see thousands of existing park tennis courts in poor or unplayable condition brought back to life for the benefit of communities across the country through renovation works, and improved court accessibility with new gate-access technology and booking systems. Works are due to begin on site in quarter one 2023/24.

### ***Community Safety***

2.31 The Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service has continued to grow and has expanded its housing provision to support Cambridgeshire and Peterborough County Council. Funding for the Housing Navigators has been extended until March 2024.

2.32 The Friends of SADA charity received a High Sheriff Award for their work with victims and survivors of domestic abuse through crisis intervention and signposting suited to individual needs. The awards took place at County Hall, Hertford and was presented by the High Sheriff Sally Burton DL.

2.33 Following the official launch of the women's centre in November 2022, funding has been secured to offer a "Warm Space" at the centre. A food bank has also been added at the venue and there is staff available three days per week.

## **Stevenage Re-Imagined**

2.34 A successful meeting was held with Arts Council England, the Leader, key partners and senior officers. The meeting focussed on progress that has been made against actions in the cultural strategy, regeneration and outcomes from the funding received for Stevenage Day and Out in Stevenage projects. Further discussions are taking place to explore potential future funding opportunities that Arts Council England can support.

2.35 Recruitment is completed for a new Museum and Cultural officer who will take up the role in quarter one 2023/24. This addition will help make the arts and culture more visible in the town and develop and implement an action plan for the Stevenage Cultural Strategy to help deliver the Council's ambitions.

## **Community Wealth Building**

2.36 The UK Community Renewal Fund programme activities, delivery and evaluation are now fully completed. A breakdown of progress can be seen below:

Outputs	Target	Total Achieved	% of target achieved
People - Economically inactive - number of people supported to engage in job-searching	150	579	386%
People - unemployed - number of people supported to engage in life skills	350	798	228%
Business – Small - number of businesses receiving non-financial support	30	44	147%
Organisation - VCSE - number of organisations receiving non-financial support	30	51	170%
Grants - number of organisations receiving grants	40	88	220%
Outcomes	Target	Total Achieved	% of target achieved
People in education/training following support	50	256	512%
People engaged in life skills support following interventions	100	618	618%
People in employment, including self-employment, following support.	25	225	900%
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support.	20	92	460%
Investment attracted as a result of support.	£500,000	£517,099	103%
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support.	20	38	190%
Feasibility studies developed as a result of support	10	8	80%

2.37 A summary video, containing interviews with key stakeholders throughout the county is being completed. Herts Growth Board as a commissioning body have been provided with updates throughout the projects and a summary presentation will be arranged in due course.

2.38 The Pioneering Young Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Futures programme is now in the delivery phase. The initial phase of the project is for 18 months and provides £218,000 funding to deliver a Stevenage STEM strategy, creation of a Youth Engagement Vehicle, key STEM Sector Business Engagement and three pilot projects. The projects will help support the development of STEM skills for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Stevenage, looking at some of the generational challenges to the aspirations of young people that are positioned as obstacles preventing them from accessing higher paying jobs in the STEM sectors.

### ***Climate Change***

2.39 The Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) have approved the sixth strategic action plan on Adaptation. It gives an overview of regional activity related to climate change and sustainability and aligns messages across the county. More information is available at their new website [Current priorities \(hccsp.org.uk\)](https://www.hccsp.org.uk).

2.40 The Council has been retrofitting 209 social homes under the Wave 1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. The overall project will be completed by the end of June 2023. The Council has also secured a further £2.6m government funding to retrofit existing council-owned homes to improve energy efficiency under the Wave 2 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. It is targeted to retrofit properties with energy efficiency measures, including cavity wall and loft insulation, low energy lighting and installation of solar PV.

2.41 A scrutiny review on the Council's response to the climate emergency has been completed by the Environment & Economy Select Committee and the final report was published and presented in January. A formal executive response on behalf of the Climate Change Portfolio Holder was presented to the committee in March.

2.42 The Executive is committed to engaging and encouraging behaviour changes with residents, local communities and businesses with climate change, enhancing biodiversity, decarbonising the Council's own carbon emissions, strengthening the collaboration at a local and regional level, and improving the Council's resilience to the changing climate. The short to medium-term actions include launching the Climate Change Community Fund (aka Dragons' Den), Street Planning, Neighbourhood Green Plan, topic-specific panels with residents and communities, knowledge sharing with SMEs and local businesses, strengthening Local Plan Policies around climate change, establishing the decarbonisation pathways for the Council's assets, provide training opportunities for all staff and recruit dedicated offices to work on the climate programme.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

2.43 Preferred Options for the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan were consulted on this quarter. As of the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 447 respondents have submitted 910 individual comments. Now the consultation has closed, the findings obtained through a series of key stakeholder meetings, email responses and submissions from statutory consultees which were not uploaded on to the consultation platform will also be included. The analysis of consultation responses is ongoing and will be reported to Executive in quarter two 2023/24.

2.44 The Pedestrian & Cycling Connectivity project which forms part of the Towns Fund programme has progressed this quarter. An officer working group has been established to progress the various aspects of this project including project scope, elements include arts and heritage trail, cycling and pedestrian improvements, public realm/connectivity interventions. Topographical and transport monitoring surveys have been commissioned for the proposed public realm improvement areas. Discussions with HCC are ongoing to strengthen joint working to provide improvements to the cycleways.

### ***Biodiversity***

2.45 A review of Biodiversity action plan is underway. Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust have been engaged to develop a new plan, including development of list of potential biodiversity net gain opportunities.

2.46 Improvement works to Stevenage Brook have been completed. The Environment Agency funding has been used to improve the section adjacent to Kimbolton Crescent.