

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
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CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2023/24

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 2 2023/24 and provide an update on progress against the suite of Community Measures, the Cost-of-Living Action Plan and current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Members information, a presentation will be provided at the Executive meeting which will cover updates in relation to delivery against Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the Quarter 2 performance data.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the service performance against 35 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 2 2023/24 through the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A) be noted.

- 2.2 That the Council’s performance as demonstrated through the 13 Community Measures (Appendix B) be noted.
- 2.3 That the performance challenges in relation to voids (section 4.4.2) be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
- 2.4 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In July 2023, the Executive agreed to the continuation of the strategic priorities of the Future Town Future Council (FTFC) Corporate Plan for another year. To ensure that the Council’s approach to performance management in 2023/24 remains representative of existing and future programmes of work, the corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect resident priorities and new regulatory and legislative housing requirements.
- 3.2 The Council’s approach to performance management indicates a clear link between performance and the strategic objectives in the FTFC Corporate Plan. By aligning performance measures and milestones under the 5 strategic priorities a ‘golden thread’ linking what the Council delivers, to the fulfilment of its strategic outcomes can be clearly seen. By taking this approach, the Council is seeking to simplify and streamline how performance monitoring and progress is communicated to Members and residents.
- 3.3 In addition, to ensure that the Council’s continued significant investment (£24.6 million) in its social housing stock in 2023/24 is appropriately highlighted, in July 2023 the Executive agreed to amend the FTFC priority of ‘More Social and Affordable Housing’ to include a focus on the provision of good quality homes. Therefore, the strategic priority of ‘More Social and Affordable Housing’ has been amended to include ‘Good Quality’ (see Figure 1).

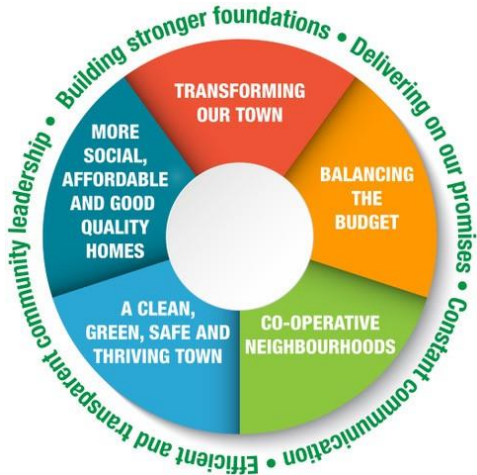


Fig 1.

- 3.4 The new Corporate Performance Suite for 2023/24 contains 35 measures which are aligned with the 5 FTFC strategic priorities. The 35 measures are complemented by 64 statutory and local measures which will be managed internally and overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.5 The Council’s streamlined approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to proactively adapt service delivery

models, where necessary, and support and drive forward additional improvements in services when required.

- 3.6 There are 17 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance in 2023/24. These measures will provide a starting point from which to assess and compare performance in future. The remaining 18 measures are relevant to the Council's focus on what matters to residents and progress against the FTFC objectives.
- 3.7 Within the suite of measures, there are 13 'Community Measures', which focus specifically on 4 themes: climate change; anti-social behaviour; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. The 4 themes have been identified in response to analysis of resident engagement and tenants' surveys between 2021 and 2023 and seek to highlight what really matters to residents. The survey analysis is presented alongside the Quarter 2 performance in Appendix B. Progress against the Community Measure themes will be shared with residents through the delivery of engaging social media campaigns throughout the year.
- 3.8 In-line with the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy update presented to the Executive in September, the 'Making Your Money Count' strategic priority has been amended to 'Balancing the Budget' from Quarter 2. All supporting performance documents and the corporate performance system have been updated accordingly.
- 3.9 All local authorities continue to operate in a challenging financial, economic and social environment. A recent report by the Institute for Government estimated that the core spending powers of councils had fallen by 35% since 2010. In relation to General Fund services, the Council has reduced expenditure by c£12m since 2010. This is alongside ongoing workforce pressures, inflation challenges and areas of substantial and increasing service demand (such as homelessness support).

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 QUARTER TWO CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

- 4.1.1 As outlined in section 3, the corporate performance suite has been aligned with the five FTFC priorities set out in Figure 1. In addition, during 2023/24 progress against performance measures will be presented alongside key programme milestones. By taking this mixed-method approach, the Council will be able to present a holistic overview of performance activity. This will help demonstrate to residents that the Council is on track to deliver key projects, programmes and service improvements associated with FTFC, as well as highlighting performance against key service delivery targets.
- 4.1.2 Key highlights from the FTFC programmes are summarised in section 4.2. For further information on the aims and objectives of the FTFC programme in 2023/24 please refer to FTFC Plan on a Page, which was presented to the Executive in July 2023 as Appendix B of the Quarter Four Corporate Performance Executive report: [Future Town Future Council Summary \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk).
- 4.1.3 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 2 below. For the purposes of this report only commentary for Red

Status measures is provided. The full set of current corporate performance measures results and FTFC milestones are attached at Appendix A.

FTFC Programme	Baseline measure for 2023-24	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data	Milestones Reported Qtr. 2
More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (19 measures)	8	8	2	1	0	4
Transforming Our Town (0 measures)	The primary focus of this strategic priority is FTFC programme delivery. Performance is monitored through delivery of project milestones. Please see section 4.2.					11
Co-operative Neighbourhoods (3 measures)	3	-	-	-	0	3
A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town (7 measures)	5	1	0	0	1	12
Making Your Money Count (6 measures)	1	4	1	0	0	1
TOTAL (35)	17	13	3	1	1	31

Fig 2.

4.1.2 At the time of writing, there is one indicator for household waste that cannot be reported in Quarter 2. This is because this measure is calculated via an external source and can only be reported once the outturn figures are received. The data for Quarter 1 is now available and was green.

4.2 FTFC PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at the Executive in July 2023, with highlights including:

- Consultation for Ellis Avenue took place in October 2023 and the planning application will be submitted by the end of the year. This scheme will deliver approximately 14 units.
- The Brent Court garages scheme was successful in achieving planning committee approval. This will deliver a 96-unit Independent Living Scheme and provide an opportunity for older residents within the local area of

Stevenage, to downsize to high-quality supported housing. This, in turn, will free up much-needed 2, 3 and 4-bed council properties for families in housing need.

- Funding secured and the order raised for Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging facilities in Neighbourhood Centre car parks.
- A Stevenage Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) summit was held to launch the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme, bringing together key partners, employers and 60 young people. Work is now underway to build on the success of this event, with an ambition to hold a second event in Spring 2024.
- Improvements have been made to the cycle network in Stevenage with artwork installed in underpasses near the football ground in the following themes: STEM, active travel/nature and Stevenage FC.
- New online services have been developed for Trade Waste and Cemeteries. The development of further online services continues.

4.2.2 Service performance highlights for Quarter 2 include:

- Over 81% of Council services non-housing complaints were responded to within deadline (target 75%)
- 88.2% of customers accessing the Customer Service Centre (CSC) were satisfied with the service.

4.2.3 Further details on the projects included in the FTFC programmes and corporate highlights can be found in Appendix A.

4.3 COMMUNITY MEASURE HIGHLIGHTS

4.3.1 As mentioned in section 3.7, in July 2023 the Executive agreed to a focus on resident priorities as expressed through 13 'Community Measures', specifically: anti-social behaviour; climate change; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. The Novoville/Proptech (2022/23), Resident Survey (2021) and Tenants Survey (2021) analysis has been provided alongside the Quarter 2 data to help provide context (see Appendix B).

4.3.2 The 'Key Facts' section of Appendix B will be updated each quarter to provide Members and Residents with a clear oversight of performance in the areas that matter to them most. The intention is that these short statements will inform discussion and help drive improvement. Progress in these areas will then be shared more widely through engaging social media campaigns and promotion through the Council website and the Chronicle magazine.

4.3.3 Community Measure performance highlights for Quarter 2 include:

Anti-Social Behaviour

- **There has been a 15.7% decrease in ASB cases** when comparing Quarter 2 in 2023/24 with the same period last year. This decrease is in response to the strong joint working between the Council and partners as part of the SoSafe Partnership. This includes proactive policing evidenced through initiatives such as 'Clear, Hold, Build', which are tactics used by the Police to pursue gang members, to maintain a grip on an area to prevent other groups from taking control and helping communities to become less susceptible to the draw of organised crime groups. Further work with

residents and Members to build on the success of this campaign and design and implement strong locally led plans to tackle ASB is currently being discussed.

Climate Change

- A key priority within the Council's Climate Change Strategy action plan is the planning policy for zero carbon homes, exploring opportunities for renewable technologies across council buildings, and provision of energy efficient housing (including retrofitting of current council housing stock). In Quarter 2, **55% of Housing Stock had an EPC rating of C or above**. Delivery of the EPC rating C programme will cost on average £5,000 per property to fund and these costs have been included in the recent Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Business Plan review.

Provision and Maintenance of Homes

- The Council has provided **394 new homes since 2014 with an accumulative target of 397 in place for Quarter 3**. This proactive approach to building new homes is underpinned by the Council's ability to turnaround planning applications within statutory targets. In Qtr 2 the Council continues to demonstrate good performance in this area:
 - **100% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks**
 - **80% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks**
 - **81.1% of other applications determined within 8 weeks.**
- The Council seeks to maintain a high percentage of homes that meet the national minimum Decent Homes standard. In Quarter 2 **84.39% of Council homes fulfilled the national DH standard**. Government consultation on the proposed changes to the Decent Homes Standard is due to commence in 2024 and will form part of the Regulator of Social Housing proposed Safety and Quality Consumer Standard. Early indications suggest that the review will consider a range of changes and there will be financial implications for the Council. These will be addressed in the Council's Consultation response and considered as part of planned work for 2024/25.

Good Local Services

- Under its new leisure arrangement with Everyone Active, the Council is keen to see young people participating in outreach programmes. In Quarter 2, **19,804 children used Everyone Active facilities and participated in programmes**. Everyone Active delivered a range of projects and activities aimed at under 16 year olds between April and September. These include:
 - Home Education Programme at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre (44 children aged 5-16 and 13 SEN children aged 5-13)
 - Holiday Activities in August including Multisport sessions, Junior golf and netball camp
 - After school activities including Tennis, Dodgeball and Table Tennis
- In 2022/23, 21.4% of residents indicated that access to Services (e.g., Council house maintenance, customer services, waste collection etc) was of importance. In Quarter 2 **99.65% of waste bins were emptied**.

4.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.4.1 As highlighted in Figure 2, there is one area identified for improvement. Figure 3 below outlines the actual performance and the target that was set for the performance measure. The paragraphs that follow set out the reasons why performance has been below expectation and the activities in place to reach target for Quarter 3.

<u>MEASURE NAME</u>	<u>BUSINESS UNIT</u>	Actual – Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Target Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual – Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target – Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Target – Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD
More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes						
RV3: Number of Voids returned by contractor	Housing Property Services	104	150	110	150	195

Fig.3

RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor

- 4.4.2 To provide insight into voids backlog performance, it has been necessary to introduce a new approach to monitoring the number of voids given to the Council’s Contractor and compares this to the number of voids returned.
- 4.4.3 The Contractor started work on the voids programme at the end of January 2023. In June 2023, the decision was taken to pause the voids programme for a period of time, to allow the Council and its Contractor to review arrangements. The voids programme was remobilised in Q2.
- 4.4.4 The Contractor has now scaled up the programme by bringing in additional resources through its existing and new supply chains. They plan on clearing the current backlog over Quarters 3 and 4.
- 4.4.5 In Quarter 2 there were 142 new voids properties, 109 properties were given to the contractor and 33 properties to the internal voids team. In this same period 92 properties were handed back completed by the contractor and 18 by the internal team, some of these properties handed back were still in progress from Quarter 1. All the voids dealt with by the internal team were Temporary Accommodation voids requiring visual electrical checks only. These types of voids are now being managed within the Temporary Accommodation team.
- 4.4.6 Ongoing dialogue is taking place with the Contractor to explore further options to expedite the voids programme. Current forecasts from the contractor suggest that the backlog of voids will not be cleared until the end of the financial year.
- 4.4.7 At the time of writing there were 99 void properties being worked on, 92 of these are with the Contractor.

4.5 COST OF LIVING

4.5.1 The Cost-of-Living (CoL) Action Plan for Stevenage was approved by the Executive in October 2022. The plan sets out how the Council and its partners would respond to the cost-of-living crisis, and seek to mitigate the potential

impacts on residents, businesses, Council employees and Council finances. The activities delivered through the Action Plan have been mainstreamed into service delivery across the Council and with partners. This recognises there is a significant amount of “business as usual” activity for the Council and partners that is specifically targeted at supporting people facing financial, housing and other difficulties. This approach also recognises that the crisis will continue for some time, impacting people in different ways at different times.

- 4.5.2 One of the key mechanisms for monitoring the impact of the Cost of Living is through measuring rent arrears. In Quarter 2 rent arrears are stable although 2.5% higher than last year. Case management is provided by the Income Officers, with each one being triaged and the tenant signposted to support provided by the Welfare Benefit and Debt Advice Team, and partners such as Citizens Advice. The team is also proactively supporting tenants to access the Alternative Payment Arrangement mechanism when required. To further enhance these services, the Council have recruited an Income Officer to support households in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation. The dedicated support for tenants from this role will help ensure that more intense support and case management can be provided. The Council continues to promote its Council Tax Support Scheme to residents. Data shows that 4% less residents are accessing the service compared to the same period last year. This is thought to relate to the change in the process as to how to apply, which used to be through a claim for Housing Benefit. To get a better understanding of issues and provide support for residents a Welfare Benefit and Debt Advisor will sit in the Job Centre one day a week from Quarter 3.
- 4.5.3 A key outcome of the Action Plan has been the co-ordination of Council and community services. Vineyard Foodshed run by the Vineyard Church, is the main foodbank for residents and the Council provide regular grants from the Household Support Fund and have previously provided them with emergency storage and help moving food around. Several initiatives have been set-up using Local Community Budgets (LCB) this includes with the Grace Community Church in Shephall and support for their partnership with Barnardo’s children’s centres.
- 4.5.4 The Council are also providing funding to Holy Trinity, St Hugh and St John Churches and the Salvation Army for their warm space cafés and craft clubs. Community Support initiatives are widely promoted on the Council’s website with dedicated pages covering the Stevenage Warm Spaces Network (launched in November 2022). The information is also promoted via community noticeboards, direct mail, the Chronicle magazine and through Community Associations, recognising that not all residents have digital means to access information.

4.6 TENANCY SATISFACTION MEASURES

- 4.6.1 In addition to the 10 housing compliance measures introduced in response to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requirements, the Council are also required to report against 12 Tenancy Satisfaction Measure (TSM). The purpose of the TSM’s is to understand tenants’ satisfaction with the provision of Council services in relation to tenant engagement, home maintenance, repairs, ASB, complaint handling and communal spaces. An independent research company have been commissioned to undertake the survey and the findings will be presented to the Executive in Q1 2024/25.

4.7 STRATEGIC RISK

- 4.7.1 The strategic risks set out in section 4.6.5 were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 10 October 2023, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 17 October 2023 and considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.
- 4.7.2 The Audit Committee receives a detailed Strategic Risk Report each quarter. The report to Audit Committee considers the actions which have been identified to mitigate each of the identified risks and the progress of those actions identifying whether actions are on track. Changes to the way risk is managed at the Council are also highlighted and considered by the Audit Committee. Where the Committee raises specific concerns about the risks or the process for managing them, these are highlighted to Executive within this quarterly report.
- 4.7.3 A risk is a future incident or event which has the potential to impact on the Council's ability to deliver services, projects and achieve its ambitions. By being alert to and putting in place mechanisms to manage both the risks and opportunities effectively, the Council is in a better position to continue to deliver services, remain viable, continue to innovate and use resources more efficiently. Some risks will always exist and will never be eliminated.
- 4.7.4 Each risk is measured in terms of a combination of the likelihood of a perceived threat or the opportunity occurring and the magnitude of its impact on the Council's objectives. The Council reports both inherent and residual risk scores. Inherent risk is the risk present in any scenario where no attempts at mitigation have been made and no controls or other measures have been applied to reduce the risk from initial levels to levels more acceptable to the Council. Residual risk is the risk remaining after efforts have been made to reduce the inherent risk.
- 4.7.5 The strategic risks which are monitored and updated through Audit Committee include:
- General Fund Asset Management
 - Building Management
 - Building Safety/Fire Safety Act
 - Climate Change
 - Staff Capacity to deliver services
 - Commercialisation
 - Contract Management
 - Council Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme
 - Covid-19/Flu/Pandemic
 - Fraud
 - IT Resilience and Cyber Security
 - Health & Safety
 - Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
 - Information Governance
 - Leisure Provision
 - Balancing the Budget (Medium & Long Term)
 - Regeneration/Capital Funding
 - Regeneration Delay
 - Repairs and Maintenance
 - Resilience
 - Social Housing Regulation Bill
 - Socio Economic Impacts
 - Transformation

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS

- 4.7.6 There were no changes to any risk scores this quarter. Work continues to progress the actions to mitigate high and very high risks. For further information on the mitigations in place please contact the Policy & Performance Team at policy@stevenage.gov.uk.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report. Where required, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects, service changes and improvement activity identified.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.
- 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 provides good governance assurance.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report, except for those activities that seek to have a positive impact in this area, and the officers responsible for delivering the improvements will need to identify and address any climate change considerations in the implementation of activities.

5.6 OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.6.1 Implementing the priorities and improvement activity outlined in this report may impact on the development of future policy or procedure, which will be monitored through the formal policy/procedure sign-off process via the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- [Strategic Risk Register \(Part II Audit Committee Report\)](#)
- [FTFC Plan on a Page](#)
- [Corporate Performance for Quarter 4 22/23](#)

7 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Two 23/24
- Appendix B: Community Measures Quarter Two 23/24