

DRAFT

Stevenage Borough Council

Making Stevenage Even Better 2024 – 2027

Introduction by the Leader



**Richard Henry –
Leader, Stevenage Borough Council**

Stevenage is a town with ambition, determination, and drive. From its inception as the first post-war ‘new town’ in 1946 to celebrating its 75th year in 2021, the town is recognised for the progressive and bold aspirations of its community.

As a Council we care deeply about what residents think, and this is why the priorities set out in this document have been shaped around what you have told us matters to you. Whether that be tackling climate change or working with partners to address anti-social behaviour, these are local issues that are important to you, and so this means that they are important to us.

The Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan builds upon the foundation laid out in our previous Corporate Plan ‘Future Town Future Council’ and sets out a roadmap for the next three years. We want to build on our previous successes and provide every opportunity to residents to directly benefit from local investment, now and in the future.

As a Council we have continued to build upon the original town planners’ optimism and in 2015, through collaboration with partners, invested £1 billion in a regeneration programme to reinvigorate the town centre and surrounding areas. This 20-year project to deliver multiple residential, commercial and retail schemes and improve our leisure and cultural offer is progressing at pace, and we want our residents to benefit from this, not only in terms of access to improved amenities and green spaces, but access to jobs in response to the industrial and economic growth this investment will deliver.



Stevenage Town Centre (1957)

Our regeneration plans also aim to promote the town as a place where music and arts can flourish. We have a real opportunity to bring together our unique architecture and heritage to create a vibrant and iconic environment. Our Towns Fund plans will deliver significant benefits through the development of a state-of-the-art Sports & Leisure Centre which will become a hub for healthy living and wellbeing, and improve links between key spaces and assets within the town

Alongside the revitalisation of the town, we will continue to deliver on our ambitious house building targets. We have already provided over 486 council and private homes

since 2014, and in the next 30 years a total of 2,253 good quality, sustainable homes will be built. Residents have told us that they need more council homes, and this is what we are going to deliver.

In addition to increased housing, we also want better employment opportunities for our residents, particularly our children. To deliver on this ambition, we have sought to capitalise on the town's strong history in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), from the early days of the British Aircraft Corporation in the 1950s, to the town now hosting the third largest cell and gene therapy cluster outside of the United States. The growing space, communication and defence industry will also provide fantastic opportunities and we will work with partners to provide access to education and training initiatives, so that residents can benefit directly from the journey we are on. As a former Lecturer at North Herts College, I am passionate about our commitment to young people and supporting new generations to realise the potential they have and raise their aspirations.

The next three years won't be without its challenges. We have seen the financial impact of severe cuts in government funding, changes in welfare and social rent policy, rising inflation, and the significant social and financial impact of the cost of the living crisis and pandemic. We know that there will be difficult financial decisions ahead in order to balance the budget, but we also know we are committed to finding innovative solutions that ensure that we can keep delivering the services you have told us you need.

Our ambition is to Make Stevenage Even Better and I believe the outcomes and actions set out in this document will provide the roadmap to get there.

Contents

Introduction by the Leader	2
Purpose of this Plan	5
Working in Partnership	5
Governance and Monitoring	6
Our Values	6
Caring.....	6
Straightforward	7
Responsive.....	7
Excellent	7
Innovative	7
One Team.....	7
Challenges & Opportunities	8
Key Statistics	9
Our Strategic Priorities	13
Priority: Transforming Our Town	14
Priority: More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes	16
Priority: Thriving Neighbourhoods	17
Priority: Tackling Climate Change	19
Priority: Balancing the Budget	20
A Cooperative Council	21
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI).....	22
Health & Wellbeing.....	22
Technology & Innovation.....	23
Contact Us	23
Background Documents	24
Annex A – Making Stevenage Even Better Plan on a Page (PoP)	25
Annex B – More Social Affordable & Good Quality Homes 2024/25 PoP	26

Purpose of this Plan...

The Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for the next three years. It provides a framework for our thinking, decision-making and resource allocation in the shape of five priorities and three cross-cutting themes.

To ensure focus we have included the outcome that we want to achieve under each priority. By concentrating on outcomes, we can be transparent about the actions that we will take, and by doing so improve accountability and aid ongoing engagement and co-production with residents, partners, local businesses, and community groups.

The strategic priorities in the plan are underpinned by the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy. These key documents set out our financial priorities and commitments for the year and are reviewed annually. These are supported by a number of Council Strategies and Policies within the Council's Strategic Policy Framework. The Policies and Strategies with the Framework set out the Council's position on a number of important issues, including town planning; housing allocation; community safety; climate change; arts and leisure; and equality, diversity and inclusion.

Working in Partnership...

Integral to the successful delivery of our priorities are our external partners. As a Council we have strong links with our partnership colleagues across the county, who each share in our ambition to collectively see Hertfordshire thrive.

Colleagues from District and Borough Councils, the County Council, and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership are central to our ambitions to grow the economy, provide more affordable housing, tackle climate change, and invest in infrastructure such as roads, rail, schools and healthcare facilities. Through our links into the Hertfordshire Growth Board, the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Development Board, and the Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership, we can continue to make strong representation to our partners for the benefit of Stevenage residents.

In partnership with the Stevenage Development Board, we will continue to deliver projects allocated £37.5 million funding through the Towns Fund. The Board includes members from public sector organisations, private businesses, not-for-profit organisations, government agency partners and more, and is a key component of the wider £1bn regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre.

Nationally and regionally, we will also continue to forge strong links with Government departments such as the Department for Business and Trade, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, and the Department for International Trade, to ensure that we have a voice in the development of the local and national policy agenda.

We will continue to build upon the strong links that we have with educational institutions such as the University of Hertfordshire and North Herts College to make sure that we can jointly develop a skills and training package that fulfils our residents' aspirations and makes a real difference to their futures.

We will continue to value and work collaboratively with local Voluntary, Charitable & Social Enterprise (VCSE) groups, such as the Citizens Advice (Stevenage), Mission 44 and many, many more, in the acknowledgement that they make a meaningful difference to the lives of residents and successful delivery of our services. We will continue to identify shared objectives and outcomes through the Stevenage Together Partnership to ensure that opportunities for collaboration are coordinated and utilised effectively.

Governance and Monitoring...

To ensure that our approach to delivery of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan is clear, each of the five strategic priorities and cross-cutting themes will be presented as a Plan on a Page (PoaP), please see Annex A. Each PoaP is underpinned by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Milestones that we will use to monitor and track performance.

The first set of PoaP documents covering the period 2024-25 will be published in June 2024, and an example of More Social, Affordable & Good Quality Homes is included in Annex B. These will be reviewed annually, so that we can monitor delivery and make timely changes where required. This will be accompanied by the Council's Annual Report which sets out the Council's achievements for the previous year.

To ensure transparency and to keep residents up to date on progress, the KPIs and Milestones will be reported to the Council's Executive and published on our website at the end of every financial quarter.

Our Values...

We care passionately about our town and are committed to making a real difference to the lives of all our residents now, and into the future.

Our approach is driven by our values. These guide and inform everything we do; delivering our services, making Stevenage a great place to live, working with our partners, and ensuring our Council is an inspiring place for our staff to work.



Caring

As a Council we will:

- Actively and respectfully listen to people in order to understand them and their views

- Adapt our behaviour to help those we are working with
- Present information clearly and in a way that people understand
- Respect the views of others and consider the impact of our words and actions
- Value diversity and treat everyone with dignity and respect

Straightforward

As a Council we will:

- Reduce bureaucracy
- Work smarter and in a more agile way
- Contribute to the development of simplified and straightforward processes and procedures
- Identify and eliminating time consuming or wasteful practices
- Think creatively about how tasks can be best achieved
- Contribute to the identification of processes that may generate efficiency savings
- Embrace technology where this supports increased productivity

Responsive

As a Council we will:

- Remain courteous, helpful and professional in our dealings with our customers
- Demonstrate an understanding of who our customers are and why they matter
- Do what we say we'll do. Explain clearly what service can be delivered and be committed to seeing things through
- Seek and act on customer opinion and feedback

Excellent

As a Council we will:

- Strive to deliver our services to the highest possible standards
- Be open to feedback from others so that we can improve our performance
- Make the best use of our personal strengths and acknowledging our development needs
- Take responsibility for our own learning
- Apply both skill and knowledge to our work
- Learn from both positive and negative experiences

Innovative

As a Council we will:

- Seek and suggest new ways of doing things to improve service, value for money and performance
- Be open to new ideas and suggestions
- Take responsibility for finding solutions and better ways of working
- Actively seek solutions to problems and see things through
- Carefully consider any risks attached to proposed solutions
- Encourage others to contribute ideas and to work with us to find solutions

One Team

As a Council we will:

- Actively contribute to team goals
- Respect and value the contributions of others, particularly staff
- Cooperate with other teams to provide excellent services
- Share knowledge, experience and achievements with the team
- Accept compromises in order to achieve shared aims

Challenges & Opportunities

Since 2010 there has been an 49% reduction in Government funding to Councils across England. This has led to significant financial pressures across the sector which have been exacerbated by Government changes to welfare and social rent policy, rising inflation, energy and food costs, and the significant social and financial implications of the pandemic.

When combining both Government funding cuts and unfunded inflation the total reduction in spend per household in Stevenage is equivalent to £325.20 per year. This has resulted in the Council needing to find cumulative savings in excess of £11Million since 2010 to meet the shortfall.

Despite these challenges the Council has remained financially resilient and continues to work hard to deliver for its residents, this includes:

- £14 million savings since 2010 to bridge the government funding and inflation deficit
- 394 new homes provided since 2014
- a significant period of town centre regeneration including a new bus interchange, multi-storey carpark, Event Island, provision of new residential and commercial property
- £23.95 million business grants administered to Stevenage businesses to March 2022 (18 schemes/4375 businesses)
- £37.5 million Towns Fund funding obtained to support new leisure centre, museum and cycleways
- growth in the life science, including a new £65 million European Headquarters for Autolus Therapeutics, a new life sciences development at the Forum (anticipated to generate economic growth of £98 million and 1,850 jobs) and the establishment of new training facility (Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC))

Key Statistics...

The following pages show demographic trends across Stevenage as captured through the national 10-year Census. This data helps inform the Council's direction of travel, and is supplemented by important local information about employment, deprivation and climate change. From this data we can make decisions about where to focus investment to ensure that we are planning for the future.

In anticipation of population increases, we can work with partners to make sure that the required infrastructure (schools, health facilities and transport) is in-place to support the growing community. We can commit to new-build principles that ensure the homes we build fulfill the same standards across private and social housing, and communities are supported to create desirable environments where everybody wants to live. Where there is unemployment or deprivation, we can work with businesses and community groups to create opportunities. Where residents tell us they are worried about crime we can collaborate with partners to develop and implement innovative solutions to address the causes.

Population

Stevenage has a population of 89,500 people

Between 2011 and 2021 it rose by 6.6%

By 2043 it is projected to rise to 91,848 (2.6% increase)

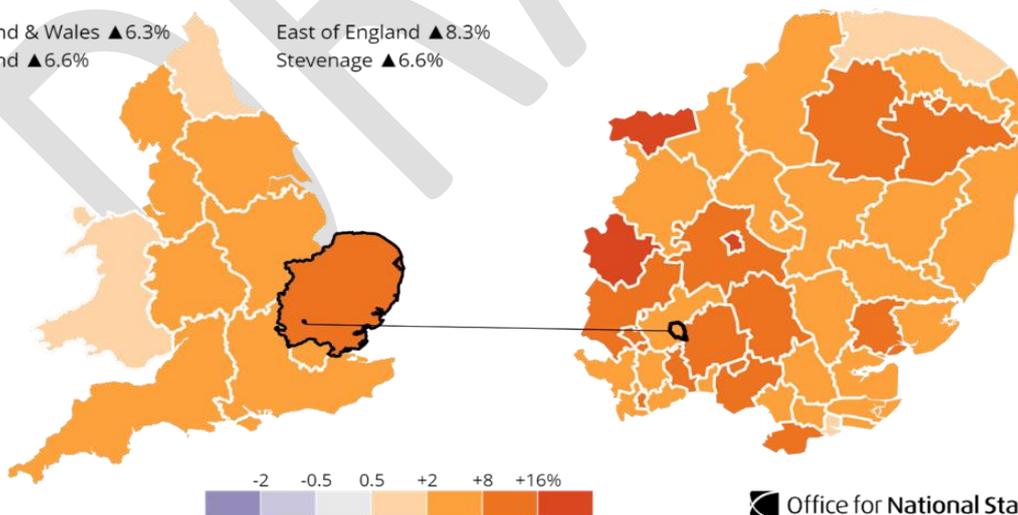
Density

The population density (usual residents per square kilometre) of Stevenage is 3,446, the second highest in Hertfordshire after Watford

Population change in Stevenage: Census 2011 to Census 2021

England & Wales ▲6.3%
England ▲6.6%

East of England ▲8.3%
Stevenage ▲6.6%



Office for National Statistics



Male/Female

2021 - 50.7% female / 49.3% male

2011 - 50.6% female / 49.4% male

2001 - 51% female / 49% male

Stevenage's Average Age

2021 - 38 yrs.

2011 - 37 yrs.

2001 - 38 yrs.



Affordable Housing

The estimated number of households in Stevenage has increased from 34,898 in 2011 to 36,511 in 2021

There are over 2,800 people on the Housing Register waiting for council housing

The total number of new affordable homes provided by the Council since 2014 is 397. At present, the Council is on track to meet its target of 500 homes by 2025

As set out in the Local Plan, a further 7,600 mixed-tenure residential homes are due to be provided

Average House Price

The average house price in Stevenage is £338,961 as per 2022 records. This is cheaper than the average house price in the Hertfordshire which is £542,160

Investing in Young People

Stevenage has seen an increase of 7.7% in children aged 16 years or under since 2011

16,523 (19.7%) of usual residents (aged 5 years and over) were schoolchildren or full-time students

29.6% of usual residents (aged 16 years and over) had Level 4 qualifications and above which compares well with the national average of 29.8 %

Growing Industries

Stevenage is home to the third largest cell and gene therapy cluster globally and the largest outside of the US

Cell and gene therapy is one of the fastest-growing health and life sciences in the world, contributing around £74bn to the UK economy and a quarter of a million jobs per year

Stevenage has been designated a High Potential Life Sciences Opportunity Zone by the Government,

This exponential growth and scale of investment has led to an urgent need for a skilled workforce. The UK Cell and Gene Therapy Skills Demand Survey Report (2021), forecast a growth of 151% nationally in bioprocessing jobs by 2026

Age

Stevenage hosts a slightly younger resident population than Hertfordshire and England, with residents aged 15 to 64 years making up 64.6% of Stevenage's population, compared to 63.9% and 63% in Hertfordshire and England, respectively

There has been an increase of 15.4% in people aged 65 years and over since 2011, however despite this the Stevenage percentage of over 65-year-olds (10.9%) is well below both the County (12.0%) and the National (13.5%) level

Disability

17.3% (15,468) of Stevenage residents assessed themselves as disabled and 25.4% of households in Stevenage had one person who was disabled, and 7% had two or more disabled people in their household

The 2011 Census indicates that Stevenage had 8,550 unpaid carers in Stevenage which was 10.2% of our population. This was a reduction of 11% since 2001

Jobs & Unemployment

Around 1,500 people aged 16 and over in Stevenage were unemployed in the year ending June 2023. This is a rate of 3.1%. The national average unemployment rate was 4.2% in 2023

The three main employment areas, Town Centre, Gunnels Wood and Symonds Green account for over half of all the jobs in Stevenage

Ethnicity

Residents of Black and Minority Ethnic heritage have steadily increased from 8.52% in 2001 to 17.2% in 2021. In 2021, the majority of residents (82.8%) were White (All Groups)

Deprivation

Data from 2019 shows that Stevenage continues to be the most deprived authority area in Hertfordshire, increasing its deprivation score by 5.8% since 2015

Life expectancy is 5.1 years lower for men and 4.0 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Stevenage (Bedwell and Bandle Hill) compared with the least deprived (Chells Manor and Pin Green)

Travel

In 2021, 48.7% of Stevenage residents in employment travelled to work by driving a car or van. This was the most popular form of commuter transport

16.4% of residents work within 2 to 5 km from work

Car ownership levels within Stevenage in 2021 show that:

- 18% of residents do not own a car
- 45% own one car
- 31% own two cars
- 6% own 3 or more cars

Stevenage Train Station was one of the busiest in Hertfordshire in 2022/23 with around 4 million users that year

Climate Change

Stevenage's top 5 carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitters in 2020 were (1) Domestic Gas (2) Transport Minor Roads (3) Transport A Roads (4) Domestic Electricity (5) Transport Motorways

Domestic electricity as a contributor to CO₂ has reduced considerably since 2005 (75.2 kt in 2005 to 24.6kt in 2020)

Council emissions have decreased from 40.8 CO₂ kt in 2005 to 22.1 CO₂ kt in 2020

What matters to our residents...

Top 5 Resident Priorities (Residents Survey - 2021)

- 99% of those surveyed prioritised good household waste and recycling collection
- 98% prioritised clean streets, cycleways and pavements
- 97% prioritised well maintained parks and green spaces
- 96% prioritised reducing current crime and anti-social behaviour levels (with 71% concerned about drugs, 61% youth causing disruption, and 60% concerned about groups hanging around neighbourhoods)
- 95% prioritised good local shops and facilities

Making Stevenage Even Better Consultation (2023):

- 69% of respondents agreed that the following five strategic priorities had the right focus
 - **Transforming Our Town**
 - **More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes**
 - **Thriving Neighbourhoods**
 - **Tackling Climate Change**
 - **Balancing the Budget**
- The most popular alternative suggestions were:
 - investment in the town centre
 - preservation, maintenance and utilisation of green spaces
 - working with partners to invest in local infrastructure (e.g., health facilities, schools, roads)
 - investment in existing services (e.g., garage upkeep, housing repairs service)
 - provision of youth initiatives (over and above those provided by Hertfordshire County Council) to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- These suggestions are incorporated within Making Stevenage Even Better and will be promoted through future communication campaigns

Tenants Survey (2021) Key findings:

- 53% of Council tenants reported that they were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council
- Under new housing regulations the Council is seeking views from tenants on levels of satisfaction and the results will be available in April 2024
- Of those who had a housing repair in 2020/21, two thirds (66%) expressed satisfaction with the repair they received
- The Council is in the process of implementing new repairs processes and online repair reporting to help improve services

Our Strategic Priorities...

What matters to our residents, matter to us. In response to resident feedback and changing local demographics, we have identified five key strategic priorities, all of equal importance, which we would like to see achieved over the next three years:

- **Transforming Our Town**
- **More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes**
- **Thriving Neighbourhoods**
- **Tackling Climate Change**
- **Balancing the Budget**

To strengthen the prioritisation of key areas, three of the strategic priorities Transforming Our Town; More Social, Affordable & Good Quality Homes; and Thriving Neighbourhoods are broken down into subcategories:



In addition to the five strategic priorities, there are three areas of work which cut across delivery of all strategic priorities, these are **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**; **Health and Wellbeing**; **Technology & Innovation**, and we refer to these as cross-cutting themes.

The inclusion of cross cutting themes represents the need to raise awareness of these areas when designing and delivery services. They have important social benefits and demonstrate the importance we place on effective partnership working and existing commitments to tackle health inequalities, champion equality, encourage inclusivity and embrace diversity. They ensure that consideration of innovative solutions to

empower residents is a key consideration in the Council's decision-making processes. By maintaining focus on these three themes, we can ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to delivering outcomes for the benefit of our community.

For each of our five strategic priorities and three cross-cutting themes there are a set of associated outcomes and actions, these will be reviewed annually to make sure that we are on track to deliver what we said we would.

Priority: Transforming Our Town

Regeneration: Regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas delivers benefits to residents, through improved public services, local amenities, employment opportunities, homes, transport links and access to green spaces

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

Since 2015, the Council has been working with partners to help enable the regeneration of the town centre, creating new public spaces, kickstarting the regeneration of Queensway with new shops, homes and office space, creating the new 'Co Space' facility, bus interchange, and securing grant funding to enable delivery. We will Continue to deliver the SG1 development, including:

- Developing plans for the Public Sector Hub, which will bring together community assets like local libraries, museum, voluntary sector, cultural facilities, health services, café and council offices all under one roof
- Delivery of the SG1 project with Mace, including refreshed public spaces and Garden Square, the creation of the new Boulevard connecting the Bus interchange and Station with the town centre and up to 1,800 new homes
- Supporting delivery of new homes and commercial spaces on the former Matalan site by the Guinness Partnership, creating affordable homes for local people
- In partnership with the Stevenage Development Board, continue to deliver the Towns Fund programme to completion, including:
 - A new co-produced, state-of-the-art Sports & Leisure Centre with swimming, studios, gym space and flexible sports facilities, enabling healthy living and wellbeing for residents and improved links between this facility and key spaces and assets within the town
 - In partnership with the County Council, we will invest in local infrastructure to improve transport links for residents, including putting forward a case to the Government and Highways England for investment in the A1M
 - Celebrate and enhance our rich heritage and cultural offer
 - Support the project to create up to 5,000 new jobs adjacent to the GSK site and improve walking and cycling connections to the town
 - Enhance key spaces in and around the town centre to attract and support our world leading business sector to maximise its growth potential and assist in creating job opportunities for our residents
- Continue to attract private sector investment that align with the vision for our town

- Actively seek private sector investment and government support for the regeneration of the Station Gateway area, which would see the delivery of new homes, commercial spaces and a high-quality station improving connectivity and east to west links
- Continue to support large developments across the town such as the Forum development, creating a cutting-edge science district and up to 1,800 jobs.

Enterprise & Skills: Opening up access to outstanding skills, training and educational opportunities in growing local sectors such as life science, space and defence, and construction, so that our community benefits from economic growth, skills and improved job prospects.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- As home to the third largest cell and gene therapy cluster in the world, to work with business and the Government to promote Stevenage's unique offer, creating local jobs and opportunity
- Work with Airbus and MBDA to support the development of a world class space, communication and defence cluster
- Expand the Stevenage Works programme with partners and local businesses to increase the number of residents accessing training and employment opportunities within the construction and trade industry, and growing Stevenage Works to expand into further sectors
- Working with education partners, we will capitalise on the growth in the (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) STEM sector to enable new facilities, maximizing the impact of the new Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC) facility led by North Herts College
- Develop and implement a Skills Framework with partners which targets key sectors and growing industries and provides a clear pathway for young people, those with barriers to employment and those looking for career development or change opportunities to access the high-quality employment opportunities available in Stevenage
- Work with young people and partners such as Mission 44, STEMPOINT East, North Hertfordshire College, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the University of Hertfordshire, we will build on Phase One of the 'Pioneering Young STEM Futures' programme to secure a further £1m funding package to deliver projects which provides increased opportunity for young people's access to STEM opportunities
- Support events to showcase local employment opportunities and careers pathways to young people such as Generation Stevenage
- Support the growth of small businesses locally, by providing access to training and support initiatives through the Business Technology Centre operated by Wenta, via partners such as the Growth Hub, and by providing advice on how to secure Community Wealth Building.

Priority: More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes

Building New & Sustainable Homes: The demand for local homes is in part met through the provision of more social, affordable, and good quality homes that meet improved sustainability standards.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:



- Provide 529 new social and affordable homes by 2029/30 – delivering 1,000 new homes since 2015
 - Ensure that the Five Star Quality Housing Principles are fulfilled across the town, creating more affordable homes and improving local areas
 - To help meet the demand for housing we will explore options to introduce shared ownership as a tenure type
 - Continue to secure grant funding to support the new build programme through schemes such as the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme
- Identify and build new independent living schemes such as planned at Brent Court, in line with our design commitments set out in the Housing Older People Strategy
 - Involve local residents in the redevelopment of large neighbourhood centre regenerations schemes such as the Oval, so that residential, retail and community amenities deliver what people need
 - Explore new housing development sites through the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to ensure the generation of income for future social housing builds.

Maintaining Good Quality Homes: A good quality tenancy, housing maintenance, repairs and homelessness service is provided to residents.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- Set rents and service charges at affordable levels for tenants and leaseholders (within national policy constraints) particularly in response to significant cost-of-living challenges brought about by high inflation, food, energy and living costs, whilst balancing this with the need to do more with less in response to additional housing regulatory and statutory requirements
- Invest £249m over the next ten years to improve the maintenance of our council homes, to ensure that tenants have good quality, safe and sustainable homes to live-in, particularly in response to the climate crisis. This includes:
 - Completion of the low to medium rise flat block refurbishment programme by 2025, and commencement of refurbishment works to the Council's five high rise flat blocks in 2024/25
 - Delivery of the Decent Homes programme to achieve 100% of the stock meeting both National & Stevenage Standards, including the installation

- of 995 new kitchens or bathrooms, 1875 heating upgrades, 1500 window or door upgrades and 1400 properties receiving works to improve their energy efficiency over the next three years
 - Tackling the climate change emergency by sourcing funding and investing in the right solutions to reduce energy costs and the overall carbon footprint of our housing stock, including achieving a minimum Energy Efficiency Rating of Band C for all council homes by 2030
 - Maintaining full compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements to ensure tenants homes remain safe
- Implement improvements to the Council's Repairs and Voids service, to ensure it offers choices to tenants and delivers cost-effective repairs and improvements right first time
- Increase spending on housing management services, including increasing the number of tenancy audits, so that tenants can have regular access to Housing Staff, so issues can be reported and mitigated earlier, and support provided to vulnerable tenants where required
- Fully establish the Council's Community Advice and Support Service to help deliver personalised advice and support for tenants
- Review service standards and implement a new engagement strategy that ensures tenants and leaseholders are treated with fairness and respect so that they can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold the Council to account
- Devise and implement a new Rough Sleeper & Homelessness strategy 2024-2027 that ensure homeless residents are given access to temporary and emergency accommodation and timely wraparound support services
- Continue to deliver against all the requirements listed above whilst managing the HRA debt effectively, with sufficient reserves being held to ensure the Council remains financially resilient.

Priority: Thriving Neighbourhoods

Clean Neighbourhoods & Green Spaces: Neighbourhoods and green spaces are clean and well-maintained, ensuring residents can be proud of where they live.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- Introduce a digital system to support the cleansing and maintenance of our green spaces and streets to better coordinate work across these areas
- Continue with the shrub bed improvement works to remove tired, old shrub beds and replace with improved grassed area
- Continue to deliver improvements in graffiti reduction including working with the creative sector to display street-art on digital cabinets, making areas more appealing and providing opportunities to local artists
- Continue the programme of garage refurbishment through the Garages Improvement Programme so that the 6,462 garages across the town are maintained and in a lettable condition
- Through the Cooperative Neighbourhoods programme, continue to work with residents to identify and resolve local issues, reporting progress on case work regularly to Members and residents

- Implement Cooperative Neighbourhood Plans across all six Neighbourhood Areas, to include forward plan of meetings, Member walkabouts, workshops and events.

Community Safety: Residents live in safe communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced through effective partnership working.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- Develop a new Community Safety Strategy in 2024/25, that builds upon progress made in recent years, with the aim for the Council to continue to work with partners and residents to reduce crime and disorder across Stevenage
- Encourage the reporting of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), including through implementing the Clear, Hold, Build initiative, which involves the Police and local residents working together to help areas affected by crime
- Continue to provide safe reporting and support to domestic abuse survivors and victims of modern slavery, through the Council's Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA)
- Tackle the harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse through the Council's No More Service, that offers practical support and guidance to help people reduce their substance misuse and chances of re-offending
- Divert young people from becoming involved in crime, domestic abuse and Anti-Social Behaviour through delivering or supporting a range of partnership initiatives, including through:
 - the Youth Evolve programme that provides interventions on anger management, self-esteem, healthy relationships and drugs and alcohol
 - Operation Educ8 sessions that provide advice and guidance to young people in secondary school, around key issues such as cannabis and graffiti
 - The No More Youth Service that provides support to children that lives are directly impacted by alcohol, substance misuse and/or offending
- Continue to work with partners to provide timely intervention where safeguarding issues are raised and contribute to the delivery of the Hertfordshire Multiagency Prevent Board Action Plan.

Culture & Leisure: Close partnership working with the culture and leisure sector enables a vibrant, thriving, creative town, which improves quality of life for residents and benefits the local economy.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- Deliver events across the Town Square & Event Island, to increase visits to the town centre and raise the profile of Stevenage as a shopping, leisure and cultural destination, and encourage local people to have pride in their town
- In partnership with the regeneration team, develop a compelling event offer for the new Sports & Leisure Hub that promotes healthy living for Stevenage residents

- Progress the new community Museum as part of the Town Centre Public Sector Hub, including the delivery of a varied and engaging activity programme utilising education, outreach, digital and research services
- Through close partnership working with our sports and leisure contractor Everyone Active, provide a wide range of facility and community based high quality leisure, culture, art, theatre, swimming, golf events that are affordable and accessible to residents, including delivery of a wide and diverse programme of water and land-based activity at Fairlands Valley Park
- Work closely with the 175 sports clubs signed-up to Sport Stevenage, ensuring that coordinated support is provided and activities are widely promoted
- In partnership with the regeneration team, plan and deliver a public art programme and cycleway trail which incorporates newly commissioned local artwork.

Priority: Tackling Climate Change

Tackling Climate Change: Progress the reduction of carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and provide support to residents and business to do the same.

To support this outcome we will take the following actions:

- Support our ambition for the Council's emissions to be at net zero by 2030, by implementing three decarbonisation pathways including transport, buildings, people and processes, and implementing an online climate change tracker to highlight progress towards the 2030 target
- Work closely with local communities by creating a community climate fund, with £7,500 per ward available for local climate change projects, to reduce carbon emissions and enhance climate resilience, and to work with different local groups to improve engagement on key climate issues
- Deliver investment into Council homes to reduce emissions, including ensuring all Council Homes have a minimum EPC band C by 2030
- By 2025, fulfil the Future Home Standard so all new homes to produce c75% less carbon through low carbon heating & hot water systems to reduce heat waste, and for all new Stevenage Borough Council developments to include high quality ventilation and insulation, supported by solar & air source heat pump energy generation and triple glazing
- To improve recycling rates, the Council will review the Household Waste Management Policy to ensure that new statutory duties can be fulfilled from 2026 and the amount of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting is increased
- Identify and create new sites for Trees and Meadow Grasslands including 300 new trees and 2,400 square metres of woodland, to encourage birds, insects and mammals into the area, helping to improve biodiversity
- By 2026, 70% of the Council's vehicle fleet will be run on low carbon a fossil-free alternative to diesel
- Continue to support businesses towards decarbonisation and sustainability in partnership with Wenta through the 'Action Zero' programme, and work with county and regional level partnerships to tackle challenges such as water supply and solar energy provision.

Priority: Balancing the Budget

Balancing the Budget: Sufficient resources are available to deliver on the Council's priorities while remaining resilient to the impact of increasing financial pressures

To support this outcome we will continue to be open and honest with residents about budget pressures and the impact of wider economic challenges, government grant reductions, and the need to do more with less. We will need to take an innovative approach to meeting these challenges and this will be delivered across four workstreams:



Actions across these workstreams include:

- Delivering a balanced budget for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) annually, so that strategic priorities can be fulfilled
- Through the Cooperative Commercial & Insourcing Strategy (2023-2026) deliver new ways of generating income through increased commercial activity and the creation of additional sustainable income streams (e.g., trade waste; skips; cemeteries)
- Through implementation of a revised Corporate Procurement Strategy, ensure that the Council's commercial ambitions and purchasing power generate reinvestment into the local economy with an emphasis on social value, alongside ethical, quality and cost measures
- Develop and implement a five-year Ways of Working Transformation Plan with a primary focus on effective delivery and design of services, underpinned by an enhanced customer experience through the actions within the 5 Star Customer Service Programme (accessible services online & 24/7; easy to use trackable processes; spot & solve issues before they arise; an answer first time & clear on next steps; personalised advice and support)

- Implement a new General Fund Asset Management Strategy to guide the investment in our commercial property portfolio, maximising income and returns and enhancing support for existing and new businesses.

A Cooperative Council...

Underpinning our strategic priorities is our commitment to the Cooperative Council principles. As a Cooperative Council, we are passionate about our communities and making sure they have a say in how services are delivered. We are committed to the following principles:



- Social partnership and strengthening the links between the Council, residents and communities
- Democratic engagement and supporting the active engagement of residents in decision making and priority setting
- Co-production and working with residents to be equal partners to design and commission public services and determine the use of public resource
- Enterprise and social economy through promotion of community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other business. Providing an environment for co-operative and mutual enterprises to thrive
- Maximising social value and supporting the development of a framework and criteria for social value
- Community Leadership and exploring new ways to help the community contribute to local outcomes
- Exploring new ways to meet the priority needs of our communities and encourage models such as cooperatives and mutuals which give greater influence and voice to staff and users
- Embracing innovation in how we work with communities to drive positive change

In the development of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan we have undertaken a six-week period of consultation with residents, local businesses, community groups and staff. Your views really matter to us, and we would like to thank those who took the time to provide their feedback.

Through our consultation we have been able to enhance our understanding of the areas of work which are a priority to you. This includes areas which are integral to the delivery of services and have wider reaching social implications. We refer to these as cross-cutting themes and including them within the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan maintains focus and ensures a comprehensive and integrated approach to delivery of outcomes for the benefit of the community.

Cross-cutting Themes...

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Council will work with partners, staff, local businesses, and community groups to advance EDI across the workforce and community

To support this commitment we will take the following actions:

- Implement the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan to advance EDI across the 9 protected characteristic groups (including socio-economic) and publish progress updates annually
- Support the Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group to deliver on its recommendations to promote racial equality and tackle racial disparity across the community
- Continue to build a strong, vibrant and representative youth council that provides opportunities for the younger people to have a voice in civic matters
- Raise the profile of the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor and digitise the election process to improve engagement and streamline approach
- Continue to support the delivery of the Older Peoples Network and Older Peoples Day through successful delivery of the Older People Programme, so that older people have a voice in how services are delivered
- Promote gender equality and the achievements of women through a range of empowerment events such as the annual International Women's Day 'Working with Women in Business' partnership event
- Continue to promote inclusivity in sport so that the benefits are accessible to all members of the community and enables the full involvement of disadvantaged groups in every aspect. This will be achieved through activities such as the Inclusive Tennis Programme with the Lawn Tennis Association and National Tennis Association at Shephalbury Park Courts
- Work with representatives from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community to arrange a Stevenage Pride Event

Health & Wellbeing

The Council will work with partners to tackle health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of residents

To support this commitment we will take the following actions:

- We will continue to work closely with partners to protect the most vulnerable households in our community in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Financial assistance and support schemes will be provided where resources are available (e.g. provision of food packages and clothes through the Household Support Fund and provision of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme) and we will continue to provide timely benefit information and advice to residents, and signpost to partner services where needed
- In collaboration with the Public Health Board, Primary Care Networks, Integrated Care Board and NHS partners, we will deliver on our existing commitments to tackle and prevent health inequalities through the implementation of a revised Healthy Stevenage Partnership Strategy, delivering a broad and varied array of health and wellbeing initiatives, assistance, programmes and activities for the local community

- In co-production with residents, build on the success of the Young Peoples Healthy Hub by establishing an Adults Healthy Hub which provides support and advice across mental, emotional, physical or lifestyle related needs
- As part of the Cooperative Council Innovation Network deliver on projects that help promote wellbeing across the community, for example the 'Cooperative Community Bank of Kindness'
- Capitalise on Stevenage's comprehensive off-road cycle network and implement a range of initiatives that promote the benefits of cycling to residents, including establishing a Cycle Hub in partnership with Fairlands Activity Centre, to include cycling activities, recycled bike sales and a programme of local events
- We will work with partners, residents and local businesses to maintain Dementia Friendly Community status, so that people with dementia are understood, respected and supported.

Technology & Innovation

The Council will embrace technology and innovation to enhance how we operate as a Council. We will deliver systems efficiencies that empower residents to use digital services

To support this commitment we will take the following actions:

- Invest in IT (including hardware, software, networks, and data storage) to meet the Council's needs
- Ensure the full utilisation and rationalising of software applications used by the council, including Microsoft 365 and ensure that they are being fully exploited in the back-office delivery of services to optimise efficiency, productivity, and collaboration across services
- Enhance the Council's digital and commercial offering through the provision of reliable, online services to residents that fulfil the objectives of the Transformation agenda
- Review all external and internal digital systems against revised Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to ensure compliance against regulations so that content is accessible to all.

Contact Us

If you would like to get in touch to discuss the content of Making Stevenage Even Better, please do so using the following methods:

www.stevenage.gov.uk/contact-us

01438 242242

Stevenage Borough Council

Daneshill House

Danestrete

Stevenage

Herts

SG1 1HN

To find out more about how you can take part in local democracy by asking questions or making statements at Council meetings, visit www.stevenage.gov.uk/council-and-democracy

You can also book, find, report and pay for a range of services on the Council's website at www.stevenage.gov.uk

Background Documents

[Future Town Future Council Corporate Plan](#)

Stevenage Borough Council's Strategic Policy Framework

DRAFT

Annex A – Making Stevenage Even Better Plan on a Page (PoaP)



MAKING STEVENAGE EVEN BETTER 2024-2027

Our Values



Our values are underpinned by our commitment to the Cooperative Council principles:



Priorities



Outcomes



Actions



Cross Cutting Themes



Annex B – More Social Affordable & Good Quality Homes 2024/25 PoaP

MAKING STEVENAGE EVEN BETTER 2024-2027



Our values are underpinned by our commitment to the Cooperative Council principles:



Priorities	More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes	
Focus	Building New & Sustainable Homes	Maintaining Good Quality Homes
Outcome	The demand for local homes is in part met through the provision of more social, affordable, and good quality homes that are delivered by the Council to improved sustainability standards.	A good quality tenancy, housing maintenance, repairs and homelessness service is provided to residents.
Actions	Provide 529 new social and affordable homes by 2029/30	Set rents and service charges at affordable levels for tenants and leaseholders (within national policy constraints) particularly in response to significant cost-of-living challenges brought about by high inflation, food, energy and living costs, whilst balancing this with the need to do more with less in response to additional housing regulatory and statutory requirements
	Ensure that the Quality Housing 5 Star Programme Principles across all new builds are fulfilled	Completion of the low to medium rise flat block refurbishment programme by 2025, and commencement of refurbishment works to the Council's five high rise flat blocks in 2024/25
	To help meet the demand for housing we will explore options to introduce shared ownership as a tenure type	Delivery of the Decent Homes programme to achieve 100% of the stock meeting both National & Stevenage Standards
	Continue to utilise grant funding of the new build programme through schemes such as the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme	Tackling the climate change emergency by sourcing funding and investing in the right solutions to reduce energy costs and the overall carbon footprint of our housing stock, including achieving a minimum Energy Efficiency Rating of Band C for all council homes by 2030
	Identify and build new independent living schemes (e.g. Brent Court) in line with our design commitments set out in the Housing Older People Strategy	Implement improvements to the Council's Repairs and Voids service, to ensure it offers choices to tenants and delivers cost-effective repairs and improvements right first time
	Through the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) identify new sites for private home development to fulfil housing demand and ensure that future subsidy of new council homes is possible	Review service standards and implement a new engagement strategy that ensures tenants and leaseholders are treated with fairness and respect so that they can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold the Council to account
	Fully establish the Council's Community Advice and Support Service to help deliver personalised advice and support for tenants	Devise and implement a new Rough Sleeper & Homelessness strategy 2024-2027 that ensure homeless residents are given access to temporary and emergency accommodation and timely wraparound support services

KPIs		
	HDD1d: Number of homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	RSH: CH01 (part1) –Number of stage one complaints made by tenants
	HDD1e: Number of council rented homes delivered by the Council (current quarter)	RSH: CH01 (part 2) – Number of stage two complaints made by tenants)
	HDD1f: Number of private homes provided	RSH: CH02 (part1) Number of stage one complaints made by tenants and responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescale (i.e. 10 days)
		RSH: CH02 (part2) Number of stage two complaints made by tenants and responded to within the Complaint Handling Code timescale (i.e. 20 days)
		RSH Rep1: Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.
		RSH Rep2: Proportion of non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale.
		RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor
		Let1: Interim – No of days to let a sheltered property from the ready to let date
		Let2: Interim – No of days to let a general needs property from the ready to let date)
		BV213: Homelessness Preventions
		RP01A: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard (informed by new RSH measure – number of homes that don't meet the decent homes standard)
		RSH BS04: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspections certificate
		RSH BS01: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate
		RSH BS03: Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out
		RSH BS02: Percentage of dwellings with a valid Fire Risk Assessment
		RSH BS05: Percentage of domestic passenger lifts with an in date LOLER inspection
Milestones		
	Delivery of 29 New Social Rented Units	Implementation of new repairs pathways increasing the utilisation of in-house resources and decrease external reliance
	Delivery of 27 Unit Supported Housing Scheme	TSM Survey commissioned, delivered and findings communicated to key stakeholders and Executive. Findings to be used to help inform understanding and decision-making based upon what really matters to tenants.
	Delivery of mixed tenure regeneration scheme which delivers new affordable and private sale accommodation including new state of the art Independent Living Scheme. The project will also provide new retail and community facilities	A new forum established that will give tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to feedback on key council housing policy changes and projects directly impacting them
	Continue the design development and delivery of large-scale neighbourhood regeneration proposal aiming at delivering new high-quality accommodation, retail and community facilities for the area with the intention of submitting a planning application and accompanying delivery plan.	Implementation of the Housing & Engagement Framework
	Delivery of 6-12 new homes under funding offer from Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC)	Preparation and implementation of new RSH Consumer Safety Standards, to cover safety, quality, neighbourhood, transparency, engagement, accountability, tenancies
	Continued development of 17 Unit Private Sale Scheme within the Wholly Owned Company	Delivery of the detailed implementation plan and resident engagement
	Delivery of second phase of wider Kenilworth scheme which is entirely private sale	