

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area All
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CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER FOUR 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 4 2023/24 and provide an update on progress against the suite of Community Measures, Cost-of-Living support for residents and current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Members information, a presentation will be provided at the Cabinet meeting which will cover updates in relation to delivery against Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the Quarter 4 performance data.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the service performance against 34 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 4 2023/24 through the Future Town Future Council Programme (Appendix A) be noted.

- 2.2 That the performance challenges in relation to voids (section 4.4.3) be noted, and the planned measures to improve performance be endorsed.
- 2.3 That delegated authority for approval of all new and existing Housing policies in response to the RSH Consumer Standards and following consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder (section 4.6.1) be given to an Officer (Strategic Director).
- 2.4 That the Council’s performance as demonstrated through the 12 Community Measures (Appendix B) be noted.
- 2.5 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.8) 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. The corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect existing and future programmes of work, resident priorities and new regulatory and legislative housing requirements.
- 3.2 The Council’s approach to performance management demonstrates a clear link between service delivery 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 can 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 planned significant investment (£24.6 million) in its social housing stock in 2023/24 is reflected, 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’ was amended to include ‘Good Quality’ (see Figure 1).

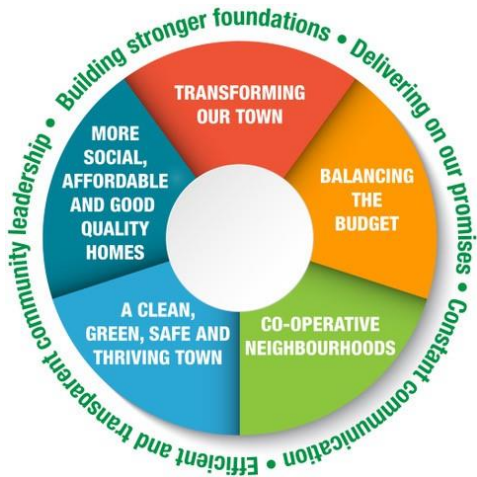


Fig 1.

- 3.4 The Council is committed to the delivery of its priorities and its local services, to the benefit of local residents and businesses. This is challenging in a very competitive, employee-driven market and there is a risk that not being able to retain, attract and recruit the right people and skills at all levels could continue

to impact on the Council's capacity to deliver all of its priorities as well as provide core services and implement new government legislation. The Council is continually reviewing its recruitment and retention approaches to strive to ensure it maintains the right capacity, skills, values and experience amongst staff at all levels.

- 3.5 The Corporate Performance Suite for 2023/24 contains 34 measures which are aligned with the 5 FTFC strategic priorities. The 34 measures are complemented by 64 statutory and local measures which are managed internally and overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.6 There are 16 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance in 2023/24. Baseline measures 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 12 'Community Measures', which focus specifically on 4 themes: climate change; anti-social behaviour; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services. These 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 findings are presented alongside the Quarter 4 activities in Appendix B.
- 3.8 It is important that where methodology for gathering data is changed the rationale for changing approach is set out. The 'RP01a: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum Decent Homes standard' has been revised to reflect the Council's change in how the Boiler component data of the decent homes assessment is sourced. Boiler assessment is an important part of the Decent Homes criteria. The previous assessment was based on the age of the boiler and an assessment of condition through the stock conditions survey. The new methodology takes account of the annual 3-star gas servicing contract which is now well established. Using this more recent service and inspection data is a much more reliable method and ensures that where a boiler is deemed in poor condition and in need of replacement this will be actioned immediately, ahead of the replacement through the planned programme.
- 3.9 Members will be aware that the new Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan was approved for implementation at Council on the 21 February 2024 (see Figure 2). Reporting against the 5 strategic priorities and 3 cross-cutting themes will commence from quarter one 2024/25 and a finalised suite of Key Performance Indicators and Milestones will be presented to the Cabinet for agreement in July 2024.

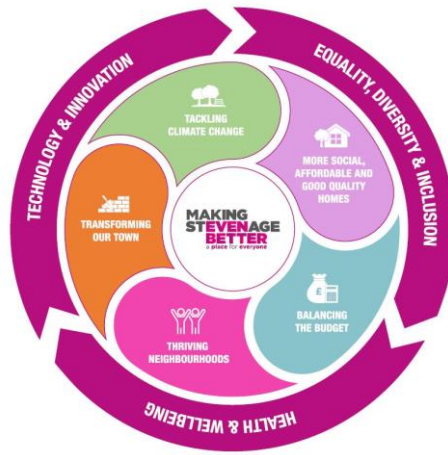


Fig 2.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 QUARTER FOUR 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 has been presented alongside key programme milestones. By taking this mixed-method approach, the Council is able to present a holistic overview of its performance activity. This helps 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 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 3 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. 4
More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (19 measures)	8	8	0	3	0	6

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.					10
Co-operative Neighbourhoods (2 measures)	2	-	-	-	0	11
A Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving Town (7 measures)	5	1	0	0	1	18
Balancing the Budget (6 measures)	1	3	2	0	0	13
TOTAL (34)	16	12	2	3	1	58

Fig 3.

4.1.4 At the time of writing this report, only one indicator (household waste) cannot be reported in Quarter 4. 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 3 is now available and exceeded target. Further information on the Quarter 4 activities concerning household waste are summarised in Appendix B.

4.2 FTFC PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at the Executive in July 2023, with Quarter 4 highlights including:

- 12 homes were delivered through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). This funding supported the council to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation
- Phase 1 of the Kenilworth Close scheme was completed which delivered 88 homes
- A regeneration community engagement programme was successfully delivered with community group visits, tours with local schools and national press coverage
- Enabling works on SG1 Plot A (Swingate House) began in February
- A co-operative neighbourhood spending package has been agreed, with £25,000 being allocated to five priority neighbourhood centres and the remaining wards allocated £3,000. Cleansing arrangements are now in place with Stevenage Direct Services receiving funds for graffiti removal across the town
- The pilot year of the Community Climate Change Fund has been completed with a total of 8 projects being approved
- A supplier has been awarded the contract for Cycle Hire within Stevenage. Work is now ongoing to set the scheme up for launch in Summer 2024.
- The launch of the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) charity has been promoted at partnership events. During the year the charity has raised £49,000

- Ongoing support has been provided to the voluntary sector through work with the Herts Sports and Physical Activity Partnership. 8 different organisations have received £19,737 of funding for physical activity. This funding has also supported 8 schools in obtaining Opening Schools Funds totalling £159,955, with this being used for equipment and programmes
- Development of online services has continued with Commercial Waste and Tipping being launched, a booking system for business vendors involved in Stevenage Day and further enhancements to existing services in response to customer feedback.

4.2.2 A summary of the Council's 2023/24 FTFC achievements and the significant programme of work undertaken across all services will be presented to the Cabinet in July 2024 linked to the Council's Annual Report 2023/24. The July report will be accompanied by an overview of the Council's priorities for 2024/25, and the KPIs and Milestones that will be used to monitor performance, as agreed between Assistant Directors and Portfolio Holders in June 2024.

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 12 'Community Measures', specifically: anti-social behaviour; climate change; provision and maintenance of homes; and delivery of good local services.

4.3.2 The 'Key Facts' section of Appendix B is updated each quarter to provide Members and residents with activity highlights across the 4 themes. These short statements seek to inform discussion and help increase understanding of the Council's efforts in response to what residents have told us matters to them. This information is published via engaging social media campaigns and promotion through the Council website and the Chronicle magazine.

4.3.3 Community Measure performance highlights for Quarter 4 include:

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 95% of ASB cases resulted in successful resolution this is a significant increase from Quarter 3 (77%).

Provision and Maintenance of Homes

- 495 new homes provided since 2014. The programme is predicted to deliver a total of 2,237 new council homes over the next 30 years
- 94% of Council homes have fulfilled the national Decent Homes standard. This surpasses the target for 2023/24 (83.47%) and is an improvement on 2022/23 performance (78.74%)
- The Council's proactive approach to building new homes is underpinned by its ability to turnaround planning applications within statutory targets. In Quarter 4 the Council continues to demonstrate good performance in this area:
 - 100% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks
 - 100% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks
 - 100% of other applications determined within 8 weeks.

Good Local Services

- Under its new leisure contract management arrangement with Everyone Active, the Council is keen to see young people participating in outreach programmes. In Quarter 4, 20,094 children used Everyone Active facilities and participated in programmes. Everyone Active delivered a range of projects and activities aimed at under 16 year olds in Quarter 4. These include:
 - 4,750 school swimming
 - 4,406 swimming lessons
 - 4,358 casual swim sessions
 - 1,499 theatre activity
 - 70 golf driving range
- In Quarter 4, 91% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the Customer Service Centre via a GovMetric Survey.

4.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.4.1 As highlighted in Figure 4, three measures did not meet target in Quarter 4. The table 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 in Quarter 4 and the activities in place to address this.

MEASURE NAME	BUSINESS UNIT	Actual - Quarter 1 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual – Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Target - Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD
More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes						
HDD1f: Number of private homes provided	Housing Development	0	33	35	35	50
RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor	Building Safety & Housing Property Services	105	120	77	135	173
RSH BS04: Percentage of Homes for which Legionella Risk Assessments have been carried out	Building Safety & Housing Property Services	100%	100%	100%	96.65%	100%

Fig.4

HDD1f: Number of private homes provided

- 4.4.2 The scheme at Courtlands was delayed as a result of prolonged adverse weather and the diversion of electricity cables. The scheme is now anticipated to handover in Quarter 2 2024/25.

RV3: Number of Voids returned by Contractor

- 4.4.3 In Quarter 4, 135 void properties were returned by the Contractor. The 135 returned voids is an increase compared with 77 voids returned in Quarter 3, this increase is an outcome of the decision in Quarter 3 to move from a single main contractor to multiple Contractors.
- 4.4.4 A review of the Council's Voids Service has also been completed and a business case for the future delivery model will be presented to the Cabinet for approval later in 2024/25. Delivering planned improvements should result in improved customer satisfaction, improved housing quality, better value for money and reduced turnaround times and a reduction in rent loss due to empty homes. These improvements include the implementation of a new contractor supply chain. The procurement of new contractors has commenced, and the outcome is expected to be reported to the Cabinet in July 2024 to enable contracts to be awarded during Quarter 2.
- 4.4.5 To support this, internally the team have reviewed the way it manages the delivery of voids to ensure that there is full accountability and ownership by the teams/individuals involved in the end-to-end process going forward – this has also included some additional staffing resource. This improvement plan is part of the Corporate Transformation Programme; and on-going work will be overseen by the Transformation Portfolio Board.
- 4.4.6 In July 2024, the Council will introduce pre-termination visits to all properties, so that if there are significant property condition issues or repairs required due to tenant damage or unauthorised alterations these can be addressed prior to the property being vacated. These visits will also be an opportunity to discuss with tenants the condition in which they should leave their property when moving out, with the aim of reducing void costs and turnaround times. The Council will also explore how it can strengthen its ability to recharge costs to tenants where the tenant has not fulfilled the obligations of the tenancy agreement and requiring the tenant to repay the rechargeable costs or set up a payment arrangement prior to the tenancy ending.

RSH BS04: Percentage of Homes for which Legionella Risk Assessments have been carried out

- 4.4.7 Following a review of the Tenancy Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Technical Guidance published by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the compliance team has widened its work programme to report on all properties where Water Safety Checks are required, rather than just Independent Living Schemes. Further to this 6 inspections were slightly delayed due to resourcing issues therefore performance dipped to 96.65%, at the end of Quarter 4. All six blocks were subsequently inspected and performance stood at 100% at the end of May 2024.

4.5 COST OF LIVING

- 4.5.1 Following approval of the Cost of Living (CoL) Action Plan in October 2022, a number of activities were 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 that is specifically targeted at supporting people facing financial, housing and other difficulties.

- 4.5.2 In Quarter 4, the Council worked with the Crossroads and Shephall Community Centres to establish 2 new Community Cafes. This brings the total to 6 Community Cafes across the borough. The cafes can provide visitors with a warm drink and space to talk. Staff are able provide advice on available support, such as access to the Household Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Support Scheme, or information on partners who can provide benefit advice. The cafés are advertised at the Community Centres, via Neighbourhood Notices Boards, online through the Council’s website and through the E-Newsletters which are sent out to residents.
- 4.5.3 A vital component of CoL activities has been the work with partners to reach a broad range of residents in as many compelling ways as possible. The Council’s work with Stevenage Football Foundation on the Community Kitchen Course was well received when first launched and meant that in Quarter 4 another 5 week course was set-up at the Thomas Alleyne Academy. This course is designed for families with children between 5 and 12 to learn quick and nutritious meals, that are inexpensive to make. The team also use it as an opportunity to talk to residents about the health activities in the borough, as well as an opportunity to sign-post to partners who can provide benefit advice and support.
- 4.5.4 In Quarter 4, the Council has also continued to provide funding to Holy Trinity, St Hugh and St John Churches and the Salvation Army for their warm space cafés and craft clubs. Dedicated pages covering the Stevenage Warm Spaces Network (launched in November 2022) are regularly updated and 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 REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING (RSH) & HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE (HOS)

- 4.6.1 Following the Grenfell Fire tragedy in 2017, the Government introduced a range of legislative measures through the Social Housing Regulation Act (2023), the Building Safety Act (2022) and the Fire Safety Act (2022). The purpose of the legislation was to ensure that engagement with tenants and safety of council homes is prioritised by landlords. In addition, in April 2024 the four Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards were updated to give more focus on the voice of tenants and the quality of homes, and strengthening the RSH role to hold Registered Providers (RPs) to account. The revision of standards has meant that a number of the council’s housing policies are in the process of being reviewed to ensure that they reflect the new requirements. Given the volume of polices that may require approval over the next 12 months, it is recommended that delegated authority for sign-off is given to an Officer (Strategic Director), following consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder.
- 4.6.2 To help inform the RSH understanding of compliance, in April 2023 all RPs with over 1000 social housing properties were required to start collecting 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) for annual reporting purposes. The central aims of the TSMs are to provide tenants with greater transparency about RP performance and inform the regulator about RP compliance with consumer standards. The TSM data will be summarised in a Housing Annual Report for tenants which will be presented to the Cabinet in July. This will be accompanied

by a tenant friendly Housing Strategy which will update tenants on the council's priorities for its housing improvement programme in 2024/25.

- 4.6.3 In addition to increased focus on engagement with tenants and safety of council homes, in 2024 the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) published a revised Complaints Handling Code. A requirement of the HOS is that RPs will publish an Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report, which must include:
- a) an annual self-assessment against the HOS Code to ensure the RPs Complaint handling policy remains in line with requirements.
 - b) a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the RP's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints it has refused to accept;
 - c) any findings of non-compliance by the HOS;
 - d) the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
 - e) any annual report about the RP's performance from the HOS; and
 - f) any other relevant reports or publications produced by the HOS in relation to the work of the RP.
- 4.6.4 The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report was considered by the Executive Housing Working Group during May 2024 and will be presented to the Cabinet alongside the Housing Annual Report and Housing Strategy in July 2024.

4.7 OFFICE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (OFLOG)

- 4.7.1 In July 2023, a new performance body, the Office for Local Government (OfLoG) was launched by the Government with the stated aim to increase understanding of local government performance; support improvements, highlight excellence and identify risks of failure. Alongside this a consultation on draft Best Value Duty (BV) guidance was launched, which has been followed by final publication in May 2024. The statutory BV Duty is set out under section 26 of the Local Government Act (1999) and requires local authorities to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness".
- 4.7.2 In response to the updated BV Guidance, the Council undertook a voluntary self-assessment against the 7 BV principle requirements. This exercise indicated that the Council is able to successfully demonstrate that it fulfils the characteristics of a well-functioning authority, and that continuous improvement is a key component in the exercise of its functions. To enhance its approach, the Council decided to identify actions that would help build upon its existing approach to BV and as an outcome 12 'even better if we' enhancement actions have been added to the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25.
- 4.7.3 A key component of the BV Guidance is the use of OfLoG metrics to help inform understanding of BV compliance and provide insight into Councils that might be at risk. The metrics cover adult social care; adult skills; waste and finance; roads; business and economic growth; waste management; corporate & finance; and planning. Of these, 18 metrics are applicable to the Council. Subject to Cabinet approval in July 2024, the intention is that all 18 OfLoG

metrics will be included in the Council's corporate performance suite for 2024/25, this will be alongside existing regulatory and locally agreed Key Performance Indicators.

4.8 STRATEGIC RISK

- 4.8.1 The strategic risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 29 April 2024, and agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 14 May 2024 and will be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 4 June 2024.
- 4.8.2 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. 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 Cabinet within this quarterly report.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS

- 4.8.3 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 Corporate Policy & Business Support 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. Any financial impact of the under/over achievement of Corporate Performance Indicators will be reported as part of the Quarterly Monitoring report.

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)
- Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- [FTFC Plan on a Page](#)

7 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Four 2023/24
- Appendix B: Community Measures Q4 2023-24