

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area All
Date 11 December 2024



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2024/25

KEY DECISION

Authors Chloe Pullen
Contributor Strategic Leadership Team
Lead Officers Matt Partridge | 2456
Richard Protheroe | 2938
Contact Officer Richard Protheroe | 2938

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 2 2024/25 and provide an update on progress against Cost-of-Living support for residents and current strategic risks.
- 1.2 For Member's 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 2 performance data.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the service performance against 52 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 2 2024/25 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.
- 2.2 That the performance improvements in relation to rent collection (section 4.3.2) be noted.
- 2.3 That the introduction of three new measures in relation to Fire Remedial Actions be noted (section 3.5).

2.4 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 In January 2024, the Cabinet agreed the new Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan until 2027. This includes five strategic priorities:

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

The plan also includes three Cross-cutting themes:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Health & Wellbeing
- Technology & Innovation

The plan was subsequently approved at Full Council in February 2024. The corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect existing and future programmes of work, resident priorities and 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 MSEB 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.

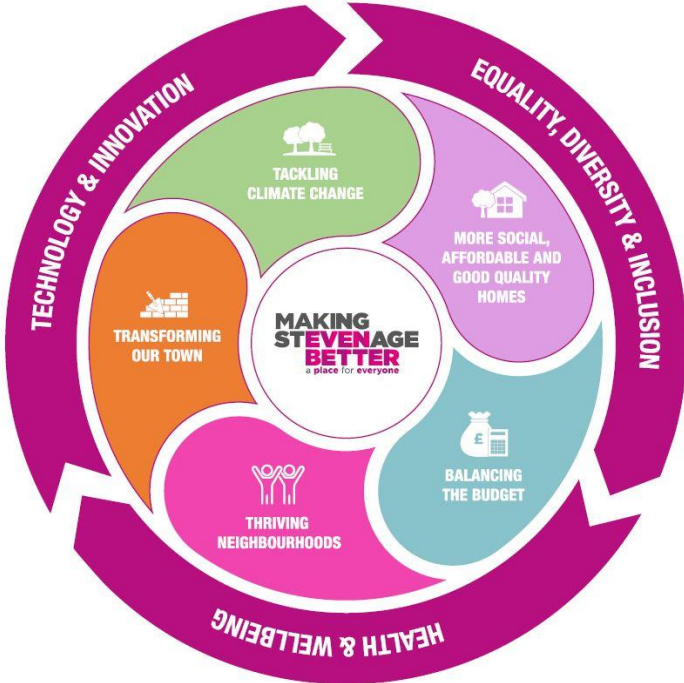


Fig 1.

3.3 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 the Council's capacity to deliver all of its priorities as well as provide core services and implement new government legislation. The main challenge is when the Council has to compete with roles against the private sector (e.g surveying roles), sometimes this can be compensated by using Market Forces supplements and work flexibility. 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.

- 3.4 The Corporate Performance Suite for 2024/25 contains 49 measures which are aligned with the 5 MSEB strategic priorities. There are also 13 measures relating to the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) which will be reported annually. The 49 measures are complemented by statutory and local measures which are managed internally with performance overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.5 Following the Regulator of Social Housing Inspection in September 2024 (which is referenced within a separate report on this agenda) three additional measures have been added in Quarter 2 'RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Actions (High, Medium and Low)' and one to be added from Quarter 3 'RSH Number of Overdue Water Remedial Actions'. The new measures will give the Cabinet oversight of the number of remedial actions stemming from Fire Risk Assessment that have been completed as a percentage of the total that have been identified split into high, medium and low categories. Performance against the complete suite of compliance measures along with the associated mitigating actions is regularly monitored with oversight provided by the the Council's Corporate Risk Group.
- 3.6 There are 22 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance for 2024/25. Baseline measures provide a starting point from which to assess and compare performance in future. The remaining 30 measures are relevant to the Council's focus on what matters to residents and progress made against the MSEB objectives.

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 MSEB priorities set out in Figure 1. In addition, during 2024/25 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 MSEB, as well as highlighting performance against key service delivery targets.
- 4.1.2 Key highlights from the MSEB programmes are summarised in section 4.2. For further information on the aims and objectives of the MSEB programme in 2024/25 please refer to MSEB Plan on a Page, which was presented to the Cabinet in July 2024 as Appendix C of the Corporate Performance Suite 2024/25 report: [MSEB Plan on a Page 2024/25 \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/mseb-plan-on-a-page-2024-25)
- 4.1.3 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 2 below. The full set of current corporate performance measures results and MSEB milestones are attached at Appendix A.

Q2 2024/25 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW						
MSEB Programme	Baseline measure for 2024-25	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 (25 measures)	12	11	1	0	0	15
Transforming Our Town (3 measures)	0	3	0	0	0	7
Thriving Neighbourhoods (11 measures)	5	5*	1	0	0	1
	*The data for 'NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)' and 'NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting' comes from an external source and is only available a quarter in arrears, therefore will be reported this way					
Tackling Climate Change (1 measures)	0	1	0	0	0	7
Balancing the Budget (13 measures)	5	7	1	0	0	7
TOTAL (52)	22	27	3	0	0	37

Fig 2.

4.1.4 There were several strong areas of performance this quarter which are highlighted below:

- The number of homes maintained as decent against the national minimum standard is 95.97% which represents a significant increase since Quarter 2 of 2023/24 (84.77%).
- Compliance certification and documentation for Gas Safety, Fire Safety, Asbestos, Legionella and Lifts are at 100%.
- Satisfaction with the CSC customer service remains high at 92.1%. however as always it is recognised that there is still room for further improvement to be made in this area
- All Planning measures have achieved their targets, with 100% of major and minor applications being determined within target timescales.

4.2 MSEB PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 Alongside performance, the council also captures quarterly updates on the milestones associated with the strategic priorities set out in the MSEB Corporate Plan and subsequent service planning and priority setting activities. All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at Cabinet in July 2024, with Quarter 2 highlights including:

- Residents have moved into the new independent living scheme, Brodie Court which consists of 88 one and two bedroom flats.
- Planning permission was granted for a mixed use scheme at The Oval which includes 250 homes and 91 independent living homes.
- Construction works including foundation works at Burwell Road Phase 2 have begun. This work was able to begin following the approval of a detailed drainage strategy from Herts County Council.
- Planning permission was granted for 11 flats at a site in Ellis Avenue (7 two bedroom and 4 one bedroom).
- The demolition works at Hobbs Court have now been completed.
- The S106 Agreement has been signed between the Council and developer Reef for Gunnelswood Road infrastructure. The Council is currently supporting conversations between the developer and Hertfordshire County Council in regards to their start on site for the new gyratory, in terms of the necessary utility and highway enabling works needed to be carried out.
- The delivery phase of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures pilot projects: Access to All, Life Science Academy Challenge & Inspiring Science for the Next Generation have been completed along with the subsequent evaluation activities. Conversations around the future development of the council's future partnership with Mission44 and other key strategic partners are continuing.
- The play area refurbishment programme completed in time for the summer holidays with a total of £455,000 being spent across 7 play areas. Over 250 children helped determine the investment in the play areas.
- Work is underway on the 5 year local plan Partial Review. This was presented to Cabinet in November with wider consultation to run until the end of January 2025.
- Mid-Year reporting for UK Shared Prosperity Fund is now completed for 2024/25, the final delivery year of the programme. Many areas are on track to exceed targets set out in our Local Investment Plan. In the budget, the Government announced a further £900m to support the programme for a further year with individual funding allocations to be confirmed at a later date.
- Work continues on improving business processes and commercialising services. This quarter the team launched Commercial Health and Safety Courses with the ability to book courses online.
- The Caretaking improvement plan has been received from Consultants Ridge and a scrutiny panel of tenants and leaseholders has been set up to conduct a review of the report. The first meeting was held on 16th October where the Terms of Reference and approach to the review was discussed.

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

4.3 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.3.1 As highlighted in Figure 2, there are no measures that are red this quarter. Last quarter one measure did not meet its target, 'BV66a: Rent Collection Rate. 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 for improvement in Quarter 2.

<u>MEASURE NAME</u>	<u>BUSINESS UNIT</u>	Actual - Quarter 2 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2023/24 YTD	Actual – Quarter 4 2023/24 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD
Balancing the Budget								
BV66a: Rent Collection Rate	Housing Management	95.14%	95.96%	97.46%	89.44%	97%	95.14%	95.96%

Fig.3

BV66a: Rent Collection Rate

4.3.2 Income collection for Q2 end of June 2024 is 97% which is above the set target of 95.14%.

4.3.3 The Income team continue to implement steps from the Income Recovery Action Plan including:

- Support for customers - ensuring that all tenants have access to money advice and systems are in place to identify vulnerable households/tenants at risk of being unable to pay for rent, fuel, or food
- Working to mitigate the anticipated challenges such as tenant welfare, increased level of arrears and demand on services, tenant engagement and affordability.
- Continuing with a direct debit take up campaign.
- Carry out a tenant's wellbeing day whereby officers will visit targeted groups of tenants.
- Visit all tenants on housing benefits that are affected by the benefit cap.
- Continuing collaborative work with external agencies to tap into financial support for our tenants' e.g., Stevenage Community Trust and CA to support those tenants experiencing financial challenges.

Seeking ways to support tenants such as working with partners CA who can issue energy bill vouchers and in partnership with local food banks.

4.4 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES (TSM)

4.4.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced in 2023/24 as a regulatory requirement for all landlords in England. There are 22 TSMs – of which 12 are sourced from a tenant perception survey. The Council has commissioned Housemark and Service Insight to conduct the tenant perception surveys quarterly during 2024/25. The Council are required to complete at least 570 surveys for its stock size; however, for 2024/25, 1000 responses will be

collated over the year to ensure further statistical accuracy. The aim is for 90% of surveys to be completed over the phone with the remaining 10% online.

4.4.2 In Quarter 2 for 2024/25, 245 surveys were completed, 186 over the phone and 59 online. The Q2 satisfaction results can be seen in the table below:

Ref	Question	Previous year (2023/24)	Q1 & Q2 cumulative(2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP01	Overall satisfaction	56.0%	63.3%	+7.3%
TP02	Repairs service overall	62.7%	66.3%	+ 3.6%
TP03	Speed of repairs	52.4%	65.1%	+12.7%
TP04	Home is well-maintained	59.2%	64.4%	+ 5.2%
TP05	Home is safe	69.9%	74.8%	+ 4.9%
TP06	Listens to views and acts	44.9%	51.9%	+ 7.0%
TP07	Keeps tenants informed	50.9%	58.8%	+7.9%
TP08	Treats tenants fairly and with respect	70.2%	71.0%	+ 0.8%
TP09	Complaint handling	22.8%	28.8%	+ 6.0%
TP10	Communal areas are clean and well-maintained	53.3%	58.9%	+ 5.6%
TP11	Contribution to neighbourhood	47.7%	58.8%	+11.1%
TP12	ASB handling	49.5%	55.9%	+6.4%

Fig 4

4.4.3 The Council has seen an improvement across all twelve measures compared to the 2023/24 year end data, with the cumulative overall satisfaction at 63.3% representing an increase of 7.3%. The highest increase relates to satisfaction with speed of repairs which is now 65.1% an increase of 12.7%. Whilst treating tenants fairly and with respect has recorded the lowest increase of 0.8%, it continues to remain the highest overall score at 71%.

4.4.4 It should be noted that the Quarter 2 scores were achieved through a combination of online and phone call surveys. Housemark has generally seen lower satisfaction results for online surveys compared to telephone surveys for the social housing providers it is supporting. Overall satisfaction by method of data collection for Quarter 2 stands at 40.7% for Tenants who completed the online survey and 67.2% for telephone responses.

4.4.5 In addition to the twelve standard questions, the team have opted to ask two additional questions which will vary each quarter. For Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, tenants were asked to set out the reason for their initial overall satisfaction score. For Quarter 2 a question was also asked about whether they have access to the internet and if so, how easy or difficult they find it to use.

- 4.4.6 As part of the survey tenants are able to use free text to provide additional detail. This is currently being analysed and any matters reported by tenants who have given permission for their responses to be shared have been reported to individual teams for further contact to be made where necessary. Feedback from the surveys is being used to help inform and implement a new Resident Engagement Strategy along with specific development and improvement work.

4.5 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT HANDLING

- 4.5.1 As set out within the Councils Complaints Policy residents are able to contact either the Housing Ombudsman Service, mainly for issues which relate to the Council as a landlord or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for areas such as Homelessness, the Housing Register and associated advice.
- 4.5.2 Both Ombudsmen services will independently consider cases where they have been approached by residents and will then come to a determination concerning the matters which have been raised. In line with the Housing Ombudsmen's new Statutory Code of Complaint Handling, the Council is required to report the outcome of such cases, and this will be provided to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.
- 4.5.3 The previous quarters Corporate Performance Report committed to providing an update from the Monitoring Officer to report decisions upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as part of the Q2 Performance Suite. From then on, judgements and findings of both the Housing and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will be reported quarterly alongside the council's performance information as part of this report.
- 4.5.4 In the first two quarters of the year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has reached determinations in respect of three complaints. In all three cases, the Ombudsman decided not to investigate.
- 4.5.5 With regards to the Housing Ombudsman, 3 cases were considered in quarter 2, the details of which are set out in Appendix B. No formal determinations have been made in respect of these cases. Two of the cases were resolved following intervention and advice and in one case the Ombudsmen wanted the Council to consider the case first through its internal process before they would consider getting involved.
- 4.5.6 The Council has reviewed its Complaints Policy in line with the latest regulatory and legal requirements. Details of this along with the Annual Self-Assessment of Complaint Handling against the Housing Ombudsmen's Code. This has seen the introduction of a new Member for Complaints (Housing) role within the Cabinet as well as the introduction of a fortnightly Housing Complaint Clinic with the purpose of reviewing trends and undertaking route cause analysis to help drive improvements and learning.
- 4.5.7 The Annual Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report were considered initially by the Executive Housing Working Group, which is Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and attended by other key Councillors including the Leader of the Council, prior to being approved by the Cabinet on 5 June 2024.
- 4.5.8 Tenant Satisfaction Measure Perception Surveys for the year to date indicate that 28.8% of respondents were either very or fairly satisfied with the handling of their complaint which represents an improvement of 6% compared to the 2023/24 year end figure.

4.5.9 The Housing Complaint Clinic is continuing to take a lead in monitoring and improving performance, Full details of this work and performance are presented as part of the Council's Quarterly Performance Framework.

4.6 COST OF LIVING

4.6.1 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.

4.6.2 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.

4.6.3 In Quarter 1, the Council continued to provide funding to Irish Network, Bedwell, Chells Manor, St Nicholas and The Oval Community Centres, Junction 7 and Crossroads Care for their community cafes. These are funded until the end of March 2025.

4.6.4 The Council continues to administer the Household Support Fund Scheme. A total of £50,000 has been distributed to groups and organisations that are directly supporting Stevenage residents with food and energy poverty. The current funding has been allocated and a further tranche will be distributed to districts shortly.

4.6.5 The Council is awaiting confirmation from Hertfordshire County Council as to the allocation split between food and energy for the next tranche. Groups that have been supported previously include foodbanks, daycare support centres and community cafes offering free food and refreshments, along with social interaction and support.

4.7 STRATEGIC RISK

4.7.1 The strategic risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 7 October 2024, agreed by the Senior Leadership Team on 16 October 2024 and were considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 6 November 2024.

4.7.2 The Audit Committee receives a detailed Strategic Risk Report each quarter. The report to the 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 the Cabinet within this quarterly report.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS

4.7.3 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 are charged with identifying and addressing any related climate change considerations.

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
- [MSEB Plan on a Page 2024/25 \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/mseb-plan-on-a-page-2024-25)

7 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Compendium of Performance Results Quarter Two 2024/25
- Appendix B: Ombudsman Determinations Quarter Two 2024/25