

## **Appendix B - Progress of actions included in the 2023/24 AGS**

### **Risk and audit based actions**

**Action:** To ensure that the General Fund Asset Management Strategy can deliver an effective mechanism to manage incoming investment as well as disposal of the Council's assets, the following activity is planned:

- Complete the implementation of new property data management software to manage the Council's assets
- Continue the review of the council's commercial portfolio
- Create a Facilities Management Service Strategy that defines the services provided, to what standard and who is responsible for delivery
- Enhance contract management arrangements with compliance contractors
- Produce a training plan for the Facilities Management service
- Produce a programme of remedial work with contractor
- Review structure for Property, Facilities Management and Estates to ensure they are adequately resourced to support the future needs of the organisation
- Procure appropriate call off contracts to support the Property and Estates functions by providing additional professional expertise
- Produce a Corporate Framework of internal responsibilities outlining the role of the corporate landlord and the occupying organisation service functions

**Update:** The team continues to work towards completion of the Corporate Landlord actions. A key component is the implementation of an improved CAFM system. There is an existing CAFM system in place for logging reactive and remedial works which is hosted on the SBC network. While effective for current needs, hosting the system internally imposes certain limitations due to network firewalls and security measures. A move to the provider's hosted server is being explored but may not represent best value. As such, the team are currently in discussion with the Housing department to potentially collaborate on the use of the Compliance Workbook for this purpose. A validation process is being implemented, consisting of validation checks, audit processes, contractor engagement and diarised monitoring.

**Action:** Making Your Money Count: To ensure that the Council has sufficient resources to fund its medium and long-term service plans and corporate priorities the following activity is planned:

- Continue to find savings as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process, incorporating the work around the four transformation themes and the work of the Commercial Team
- Robustly undertake budget monitoring to ensure all costs are accurately forecasted and profiled
- Continue to look for new revenue streams

**Update:** The Priority has been renamed 'Balancing the Budget' in the new Corporate Plan. 2025/26 Savings have been identified for next year and approved by Council in February 2025. In addition 99% of savings identified for 24/25 have been delivered.

**Action:** Commercialisation: To ensure that the Council's ambitious Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy can be achieved, a programme of work is required:

- Commercial activity in 2024/25 focused on the growth of income from existing commercial services and concessions contracts and will see the launch of new commercial services into the marketplace. Workshops with service managers for fees and charges setting 2025/26 commenced in June 2024. As per the Insourcing Roadmap 2023-26, a review of all services provided to or on behalf of the Council by external suppliers or third parties will continue. There will also be an accompanying review of contract management processes across the Council.

**Update:** Teams across the Council continue to support the development of commercial workstreams, with a range of teams presenting proposals at the working group meetings. Insourcing opportunities are explored and business cases submitted where appropriate. Benchmarking of other outsourced services continues to take place to identify potential opportunities. Fees and charges for 2025/26 for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account have been approved. Contract management training has been provided and was well received.

**Action:** As a result of the combined socio-economic impacts of welfare reform, the Covid-19 pandemic, and an economic downturn the following action is planned:

- Continue to develop and update the online Cost of Living information hub on the Council's website
- Continue to work with partners including Citizen's Advice and the Money Advice Unit to offer residents a comprehensive advice and support service
- Continue to operate and promote the Warm Spaces scheme, utilising public, community, and other buildings to offer comfort during the winter months
- Continue to promote availability of local employment opportunities and skills and training courses (including funding available to support access) to help raise awareness and confidence for people to increase income and improve their financial wellbeing.
- Develop and implement decarbonisation schemes to reduce Council and tenant costs.
- Continue to work through the Stevenage Together partnership to share learning and best practice and to co-ordinate activity where appropriate.
- Continue to work with the County and district and borough councils in Hertfordshire to share learning and best practice and to co-ordinate activity where appropriate.
- Further develop the use of the Social Value Portal to divert funding from Council contractors to local skills development and key local investment priorities.

**Update:**

Latest updates include:

- The UKSPF continues to be utilised with the full allocation due to be delivered by the end of the 2024/25 financial year while further allocation of funds for 2025/26 has recently been confirmed.
- Household support funding is being used to fund community cafes which act as warm and cool spaces. Household support funding round 6 is currently being distributed to continue the cafes to September 2025.
- An Enterprise and Skills Partnership Officer joined the team in September 2024 and is establishing strong networks with young people's services, education providers, businesses, and organisations across Stevenage.
- Phase 2 Mission44 proposals have been submitted and are due to be considered by the Mission44 board.
- The Cost of Living information hub on the Council's website has continued to be updated.
- The Terms of Reference for Stevenage Together partnership have been reviewed. The partnership and subgroups continue to take a strategic approach to issues that influence the quality of life of those who live and work in Stevenage.
- An application has also been made for the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund to retrofit and decarbonise 550 of the Council's housing stock. Additionally, an expression of interest has been submitted in relation to the Warm Homes: Local Grant to retrofit private homes across the town.

**Action:** IT Resilience and Cyber Security: The Shared IT Service to continue to implement the IT Strategy and Action Plan to enhance IT infrastructure, cyber security, IT resilience by:

- Complete the implementation of the new ICT structure
- Implement the agreed new Target Operating Model for the ICT service (the new structure and roles and governance structure).
- Further develop cyber security policies
- Gain Cyber Assessment Framework Accreditation
- Complete the actions contained in the Cyber Treatment Plan
- Continue the work to implement new procedures to enhance recording, management and monitoring of software licence information and review the Council's software licensing policies

**Update:** The IT restructure has been completed. Work to achieve PSN certification and Cyber Assessment Framework Accreditation remains ongoing. Regarding the Cyber Treatment Plan, this is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

**Action:** Health and Safety: Continue to enhance and embed health and safety compliance and performance by:

- Continue the rolling programme of internal and external audits for medium and high-risk services
- Complete the implementation of health and safety enhancements for the Council's identified health and safety risks

**Update:** The audits have been completed and action plans agreed and monitored. The health and safety risks continue to be monitored by the H&S strategic group. There are currently three high risks, which are also components of risks detailed in the Strategic Risk Register, all of which have mitigating actions planned and underway.

**Action:** Council Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme: To ensure the Council can deliver new council owned homes as programmed the following action is planned:

- Appointment of principal contractors for pipeline schemes currently progressing through Planning
- Completion of Dunn Close and Courtlands schemes for a total of 44 new homes
- Ongoing work to secure additional external funding for major projects including The Oval

**Update:**

- The two aforementioned schemes are progressing.
- New schemes are progressing in early design stages and will be assessed for viability as the design develops.
- Positive progress has been made regarding grant funding, including receipt of the first tranche of Homes England funding for Brent Court Garages and exploration of other bid opportunities.

**Action:** Repairs and Voids To enhance the Repairs and Voids service, the following action is planned:

- Deliver improvement plan for Repairs including:
  - Continue to consider opportunities to upskill the workforce and maximise productivity.
  - Procurement of support contractors – to demonstrate VFM and ability to deliver to required quality and timescales in accordance with agreed service standards.
  - Make best use of technology – for example leverage the benefits of mobile solutions to capture tasks and manage workflow. Frontline teams to be enabled to view existing repairs and raise new repairs.
  - Improve diagnosis of repairs at first point of contact.
  - Customer engagement – to help shape new service model, demonstrate learning from complaints. Improve communications with customers and their perceptions of and satisfaction with the service.
  - Service delivery framework - to enhance collaboration between asset management and repairs teams balanced with clear accountabilities.
- Deliver improvement plan for Voids including:
  - procurement of voids contractor
  - business case for future delivery model to be presented to Executive for approval
- Cross-cutting actions:
  - establish client/contractor functions and review staffing resources.
  - review policies, processes, and procedures.
  - set out clear service standards for which we can be held accountable for by customers.
  - benchmarking: costs, standards, and performance

**Update:** An improvement plan for the Repairs service is being implemented following an independent review and a Community Select Committee scrutiny carried out in 2023/24. Good progress is being made on the workstreams – a review of staffing resources has been completed and recruitment to key management roles concluded in Q4 of 2024/25. Policies and procedures are being worked on including a protocol between the Repairs and Maintenance and Housing Asset Management teams to ensure repair requests are managed efficiently. The procurement of support contractors is in progress with contract mobilisation expected between 1 April and 1 May depending on whether the Lot is subject to section 20 consultation or not. Having good quality, cost effective and well managed contractors alongside the core in-house trades will help ensure the service can carry out repairs in a timely manner. In the longer term delivery of improvements to housing systems will enable more efficient ways of working which in turn will support increased productivity of the workforce.

**Action:** Corporate Capacity: To ensure the Council has the capacity to carry out all of its priorities as well as provide its core services and implement new government requirements as they arise the following actions are planned:

- Creation of service plans for 2024/25 in all service areas to ensure resource planning
- HR team to continue working with service leadership teams to prioritise recruitment and associated support plans
- Roll out of new Workforce Strategy

**Update:** The Workforce Strategy was approved in September 2024. The HR team continue to work with service leadership teams to prioritise recruitment and associated support plans.

**Action:** Social Housing Regulation Act: To deliver the proposals set out in the Social Housing Regulation Act which will give tenants greater powers, improve access to swift and fair redress and enhance the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing, the following action is planned:

- Development and implementation of an engagement framework 'Working Cooperatively to give Tenants a Voice Strategy'
- Through the work of the Executive Housing Working Group implement the process for benchmarking the 12 Tenant Perception measures and 10 management data measures which local authorities will be required to report on from March 2024
- Continue with the rolling 5-year stock condition survey programme.
- Develop and publish a new Communications Plan
- Review and approve new Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy
- Review end to end processes to ensure compliance with the Social Housing Regulation
- Act including Awaab's Law once enacted and improve customer experience
- Procurement of new support contractors
- Make better use of technology including mobile solutions
- Setting and monitoring of KPI's to manage performance (proposals for inclusion in strategic KPI suite for 2024/25)

**Update:**

- The Regulator of Social Housing inspection took place in September 2024 and the Council achieved a C2 rating. A post inspection plan has been developed and will be monitored through to completion.
- The Housing Communications plan has been developed and is in place.
- Procurement of contractors went live in December 2024, with contract award expected in February and mobilisation across March and April.
- KPIs are now in place and reported in the strategic KPI suite.

**Action:** Building and Fire Safety Acts: To deliver the proposals set out in the new Building Safety/Fire Safety Acts which have established new legal duties for landlord and building owners of higher-risk residential buildings to keep their buildings safe, the following actions is planned:

- Contractors to be appointed to carry out remedial works identified as a result of building inspections via procurement process
- Remedial work to be carried out by contractors
- Ongoing compliance monitoring to be carried out to ensure requirements of the Building and Fire Safety Acts are being met

**Update:** Contractors have been appointed and remedial works continue to be identified and progressed. Fire risk remedial numbers are reported to Cabinet via the Performance Scorecard and show an improving position. Monitoring also takes place via Corporate Compliance Group.

**Action:** Climate Change: To ensure Stevenage can meet the government's net zero target for the town by 2050, the following action is planned:

- Creation of a Climate Change Risk Register to assess the effects of climate change for SBC/Stevenage
- Generation of Pathway 1,2 and 3 reports to outline current working areas and recommendations to SLT
- Launch of Climate Action Plan portal
- Produce a Climate Change Action Plan based on the Climate Change Risk Register
- Promote government schemes and grants to the public to encourage decarbonisation town wide
- Upgrade the SBC Local Plan to include improved Climate Change considerations
- Work with businesses in Stevenage to encourage sustainable procurement
- Bid to central government for funding SBC lead carbon reduction projects.

**Update:**

- The Climate Change Annual Update has been presented to SLT, Cabinet and E&E Select Committee, and the Council emissions annual report is in progress. The Climate Action Plan Tracker remains available online and has been updated to the end of the calendar year.
- An application has also been made for the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund to retrofit and decarbonise 550 of the Council's housing stock. Additionally, an expression of interest has been submitted in relation to the Warm Homes: Local Grant to retrofit private homes across the town.
- The Climate Change Risk Assessment has been completed and approved by SLT but the team are working in amendments and complements and are aiming to produce a new CCRA during 2025. The team are also coordinating efforts for the production of a Climate Change Adaption Plan.
- Regarding the SBC Local Plan, the Regulation 19 consultation opened in November 2024 and the Planning Policy and Climate Action teams have been working closely in each consultation round to provide a response and update, if required.

**Action:** Digital Switchover: To ensure that there is no disruption as a result of the changeover from analogue to digital lines the following action is planned:

- Convert careline telephone lines at the Council's Independent Living Schemes by October 2024
- Identify and convert any remaining analogue lines within the Council's commercial and housing stock.

**Update:** This remains a strategic risk but the national deadline for switching from analogue to digital lines has been delayed to January 2027 at the earliest. The testing of the first independent living scheme careline transfer was successful and it is the target to complete the transfer for all independent living sites by August 2025. IT are managing non-housing conversion of lines and are also targeting completion in 2025, ahead of the new deadline for conversion from analogue to digital by January 2027. It is the intention for a working group to be set up comprised of Housing Management, Asset Management and IT to ensure that the approach for other (non careline) Housing lines is aligned with the activity taking place for non-housing elements of the wider estate.

**Action:** Court Cost Management: To enhance arrangements for managing court costs, the following actions is planned:

- Procedures for capturing and recording expected income from court costs/compensation awarded and assigning associated roles and responsibilities
- Mechanisms to monitor cases where judgements have been made in favour of the Council and costs/compensation awarded.

**Update:** A process is being established between finance and shared legal services to ensure collection and recording of court costs takes place.

## Best Value Self Assessment Actions

Action	Update
<b>Continuous Improvement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. In response to the Office for Local Government's (OfLoG) publication of local authority data, the OfLoG District Council Metrics will be added to the Council's Performance Management System in 2024/25 for quarterly monitoring and review by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)</li> <li>ii. The Council will undertake a review of its approach to coordination of Government Single Data List returns to ensure that there is a central log of comparative data for key services</li> <li>iii. To enhance the Council's existing approach to using data to inform business insight, an assessment of all existing business insight tools will be undertaken</li> <li>iv. The SLT will continue to retain priority focus on workforce matters through its Workforce Strategy with specific focus on promoting the link between individual staff objectives (as captured through REALs) and the council's wider MSEB strategic priorities i.e. 'the golden thread'</li> <li>v. Audit of Service Assurance Statements to be added to the 2025/26 SIAS programme of work.</li> </ul>	<p>All applicable OfLoG measures have been incorporated into the Performance Management System (inPhase), however it was announced in December 2024 that OfLoG would be closed. Other benchmarking measures will be explored (e.g. LG Inform) as part of the work to explore other performance reporting systems and greater use of PowerBI as a primary business insight tool.</p> <p>The Workforce Strategy was approved in September 2024 and the use of REALs continues to support the cascading of the council's wider MSEB strategic priorities through to individual staff objectives.</p> <p>Audit of Service Assurance Statements to be considered for inclusion on the 2025/26 SIAS work plan.</p>
<b>Leadership</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The Council will implement a budget process development model for 2025/26 which is aligned with key outcomes identified in Service Plans</li> <li>ii. All Service Plans (currently held corporately) will be made accessible online to the SLT throughout the year via Microsoft Teams</li> </ul>	<p>Budget planning for 2025/26 has now concluded and closer alignment with service and workforce planning processes will continue to be explored for 2026/27. Service plans are being made accessible to SLT and will continue to be going forward.</p>
<b>Governance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To enhance Member knowledge and insight of Council matters, the Council will review the scrutiny subject topics for 2024/25 and identify opportunities for future Select Committees covering a range of subjects (including site visits and external visitors were appropriate)</li> <li>ii. Through the new Member training programme, a session on the</li> </ul>	<p>Scrutiny topics for 2024/25 were developed to ensure that they covered a range of subjects, supported by the Scrutiny Officer.</p> <p>A session with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provided a session for our newly elected Members on the essentials of scrutiny on 18 July 2024.</p>



<p>importance of scrutiny and existing scrutiny functions will be arranged</p> <p>iii. Introduce a single annual performance and forecast review report for Stevenage Borough Council companies</p> <p>iv. Introduce a twice yearly SLT Complaints Report on key complaints themes identified through the Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report</p>	<p>This is currently reported in the Q4 Monitoring Report General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital, and Group Companies (see Cabinet July 2024)</p> <p>Complaints information is now being reported alongside the Corporate Performance Quarterly Reports.</p>
<p><b><i>Use of Resources</i></b></p>	
<p>Undertake a review of the Council's approach to project management to ensure that the Council's ability to check the intended outcome of projects is assured and this is communicated to key stakeholders</p>	<p>Various project governance processes are in place. These will be tested further through the service level assurance process.</p>