

# Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report

## 2024-2025







Welcome to

# STEVENAGE

The heart of a town lies in its people



# Message from Richard Henry, Stevenage Borough Council



Welcome to our 2024/25 Annual Report. I am proud to share that over the past year, our ongoing efforts have continued to make our award-winning town a great place to live, work and visit.

Our commitment to working with residents is central to our approach in shaping services. Your views were a key consideration when in February 2024, Full Council unanimously approved the council's new Corporate Plan – Making Stevenage Even Better (2024-2027). The plan set out the council's direction of travel for the next three years and was informed by what matters most to you. Since its introduction, this corporate plan has given us a chance to demonstrate clearly how residents are at the heart of all our decisions.

Through the new corporate plan, we have continued to deliver on the priorities that we know are important to you. We have progressed our plans to regenerate the town by sharing the design for the new Sports and Leisure Centre that brings together sports, leisure, swimming facilities and a cafe under one roof. Partnerships with organisations, such as Everyone Active, have enabled us to offer a range of events, activities and classes designed to inspire and empower residents to get active.

Investing in our young people's futures has also continued to be a key priority for us. We have carried on opening up access to outstanding skills, training and educational opportunities in growing local sectors through various job fairs, grant funding and business workshops. Hosting a dedicated Pioneering Young STEM Futures Summit, in partnership

with Mission44, was a particular highlight as it brought together local businesses, education leaders and key strategic partners to reflect on achievements and shape the next phase of collaboration.

Also to note, the Government recently published a Devolution White Paper highlighting their ambitions for local government reorganisation. Whilst we look to work with our neighbouring Borough and County Councils to determine what this may look like in Hertfordshire; I want to reassure you that our residents will remain at the forefront of every decision we make and I hope that this is reflected in this report through the work we have achieved this year.

Within this report, you will see just a few of the council's highlights and achievements from the past year, as well as a look at what our future ambitions are for the year ahead. I hope you enjoy reading this year's Annual Report and join me in looking forward to seeing the council have another productive and fulfilling year in 2025/26.



# Message from Tom Pike – Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council



This is my first Annual Report as the new Chief Executive of Stevenage Borough Council. Having worked in local government for 20 years and joining Stevenage in 2016, I am thrilled to show you how much we

have achieved over the past year since we launched our new Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan (2024-27), as well as how close partnership working has enabled us to support the community through even the toughest of times. As I begin my new role, I will ensure we continue to make further strides to focus on prioritising what matters most to our residents and make Stevenage an even better place to live.

Our town has continued to evolve through the regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas over the last year. The recent introduction of new and improved play areas, homes, and workspaces have demonstrated just how we have been transforming our town into a place which has something for everyone. You may have also noticed a number of arts and culture-centred additions to the town, including the unveiling of new underpass murals in Sish Lane, Gunnels Wood Road and Martins Way that honour Stevenage's heritage and celebrates the creativity of local school pupils. Investing in a vibrant, cultured town has continued to be a priority for us here at the council, and this will remain the case during my first full year as Chief Executive.

We have also been investing in the futures of our local young people through opening up access to outstanding skills, training and

educational opportunities in growing local STEM sectors such as life science, space and defence, and construction. Initiatives such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme have enabled us to directly invest in the local community's skills, economic growth and job prospects. I look forward to seeing what new initiatives we can support as this programme continues to grow throughout 2025/26.

As a council we have also surpassed our ambition to deliver 500 new affordable and sustainable homes by 2025, providing a total of 595 homes since 2014. The demand for local homes has never been higher, so through the great work of our council employees we are now aiming to surpass previous ambitions and provide a total of 1000 homes by 2030. Stevenage Borough Council provides circa 120 different services, and our work does not stop once these new homes have been built. A key, long-standing focus for the council has been to provide a good quality tenancy, housing maintenance and repairs service to residents, and this year has been no different, with over 96% of our properties being upgraded as part of our recent improvement programme. Our hard work is also reflected in the Council's recent C2 grading following an inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing. This grading reaffirms that the Council meets the Consumer Standards in many areas, with only minimal areas for improvement that will all be addressed as we embark on the journey towards achieving a C1 grading in the coming year.

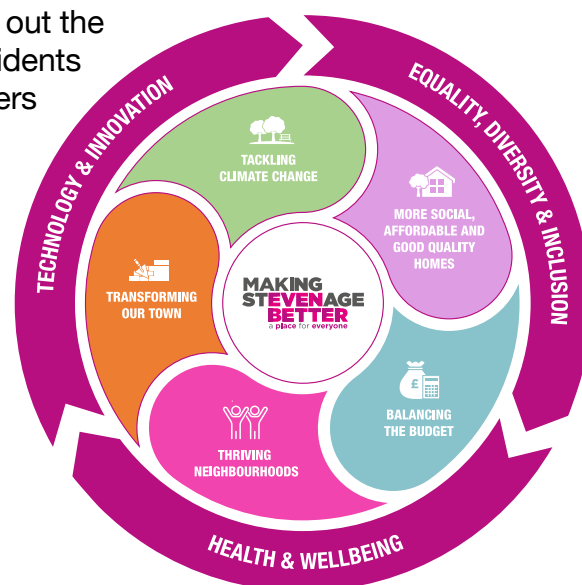
I am extremely proud of what this council achieves on behalf of those we serve, and this report highlights just some of our many successes. Please take some time to read through what we have been doing to improve the town and the council, along with what we have planned for 2025/26.



# Making Stevenage Even Better

The new Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan set out the council's priorities for the next three years (2024-2027). Residents have been at the heart of developing this plan as what matters most to our residents, matters to us. We have listened to these views, and provide a clear framework by which existing partnership commitments and programmes can be reflected. Our services are categorised into five strategic priorities and three cross cutting themes that will be delivered across the Corporate Plan:

- Transforming our Town
  - Regeneration
  - Enterprise & Skills
- More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes
  - Building New & Sustainable Homes
  - Maintaining Good Quality Homes
- Thriving Neighbourhoods
  - Clean Neighbourhoods & Green Spaces
  - Community Safety
  - Culture & Leisure
- Tackling Climate Change
- Balancing the Budget
- Cross-Cutting Themes
  - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
  - Health & Wellbeing
  - Technology & Innovation



**MAKING  
STEVENAGE  
BETTER**  
a place for everyone

Each cross-cutting theme represents the need to raise awareness of important social benefits and the importance we place on effective partnership working and existing commitments to tackle health inequalities, champion equality, encourage inclusivity, embrace diversity and provide innovative solutions for residents. 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.

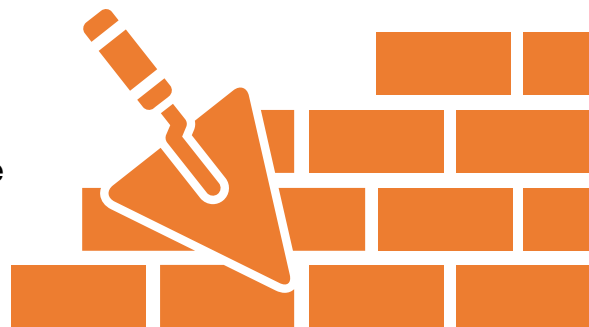
At Stevenage Borough Council we have circa 670 members of staff who deliver circa 120 different services including customer service support, housing, waste, environmental health, planning and leisure services. In 2024/25, we continued to ensure that council services operate for the benefit of local people and to a high-quality that provides value for money. This corporate plan ensures we provide a framework for our thinking, decision-making and resource allocation.

For each of our five strategic priorities and three cross-cutting themes, a set of accompanying outcomes and actions is published within this report and monitored annually to ensure we are on track to deliver on the outcomes we want to see. Progress over the last financial year (March 2024 – April 2025) and priorities for 2025/26 are summarised below:



# Transforming Our Town

Our town is evolving and becoming Even Better, with the introduction of new and improved play areas, arts and culture, workspaces, and homes. By providing new spaces for our communities and improving the vibrancy of the town centre, we are supporting our businesses and transforming our town into a place which has something for everyone. We are on a mission to create a radiant town centre where people want to live, work and play.



## REGENERATION

The aim of the regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas has always been to deliver a range of increased benefits to residents. Improved public services, local amenities, employment opportunities, homes, transport links and access to green spaces has helped to achieve this.

### To continue this mission, this year we have:

- Begun the development of new town centre homes including:



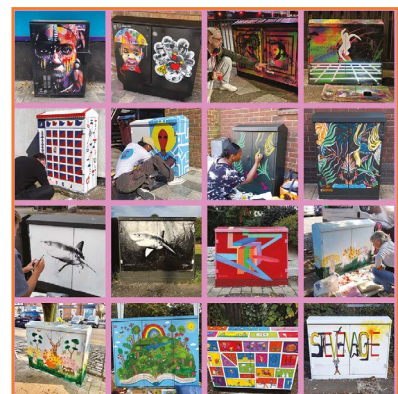
- The first phase of the SG1 masterplan, with construction beginning on Claxton House, on the site of the former Swingate House. The site is being brought forward by Mace, in partnership with the council. Works include piling works and erecting the first crane on site. The development will bring 261 high-quality new homes and a ground-floor commercial unit right into the heart of the town.



- The completion of the first phase of the Guinness Partnership development on the former Matalan site, delivering 143 affordable one- and two-bedroom homes for social rent. This provides a new and valuable source of affordable homes located in the heart of the town.



- Delivered more flexible workspace through the expansion of Co-Space in the Town Square. An additional 150 desks were added into this modern, flexible office space that supports small businesses and local entrepreneurs, whilst also increasing footfall into the town centre.



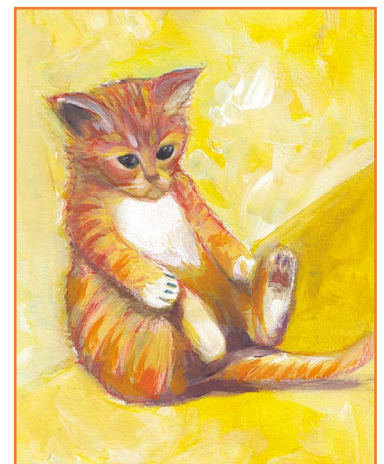
- Made public realm improvements to Market Square to make it more welcoming and feel safer, including a widened footpath, raised crossing, improved lighting, as well as the addition of urban artworks and greenery.





- Unveiled a new mural at Sish Lane underpass in October 2024 celebrating Stevenage's heritage and transforming a key pedestrian link between the Old Town and New Town.

- Celebrated creativity and community through public art by school pupils submitting over 950 entries for an art competition, with 268 winning designs chosen to brighten up the Gunnels Wood Road and Martins Way underpass. These are expected to be unveiled in Spring 2025. Alongside this, a permanent mosaic sculpture is being created for the Stevenage Bus Interchange, built using memories and objects donated by local residents.



- Progressed plans for the new £45m Sports and Leisure Centre in Stevenage. Designs were shared with the public for consultation throughout the year and demonstrates our ambition to bring together sports, leisure, swimming facilities and a cafe under one roof.



## Transforming Our Town continued...

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Bring more homes to the town centre through continuing work on Claxton House, the first phase of SG1. Works began in October 2024 and are expected to take approximately two years to complete. Further phases of the Guinness development are hoped to progress soon, delivering more homes and new commercial space.
- Continue to bring public art to life through the installation of a new mosaic sculpture at the Stevenage Bus Interchange and the school-designed mural panels that will be unveiled at Gunnels Wood Road and Martins Way underpass, continuing to brighten our shared spaces.



- Relocate the Indoor Market to Park Place to create a more prominent and accessible location for market traders, helping to boost footfall and support a thriving, modern retail experience in the town centre.

- Begin site preparation works for the new Sports & Leisure Centre later this year ahead of construction starting in early 2026, subject to planning.
- Design and stakeholder work will continue on the proposed new town centre Public Sector Hub building, which aims to combine the museum, a new library, health organisations and other public services in a central location.
- Continue to invest in improvements to our town centre environment, making it greener, safer, and more attractive. These improved spaces will host events, encourage walking and cycling, and support local businesses.





## 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 has been a key priority for the council for a number of years. Our community benefits from economic growth, skills and improved job prospects so we want to support this growth as much as we can.

### As a result, this year we have:

- Hosted a summit at Knebworth House to celebrate the success of our Pioneering Young Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Futures partnership alongside Sir Lewis Hamilton's Mission44 charity. This summit brought together local businesses, education leaders and key strategic partners, including North Hertfordshire College, the University of Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire Futures, to reflect on achievements and shape the next phase of collaboration.



- Completed the final year of our original UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme, investing £650,000 into our people, communities and local businesses. Funded initiatives included a 'Meet the Buyer' event with over 90 representatives from local businesses at Knebworth Barns; a business sustainability programme in partnership with Sustainable X to support local neighbourhood centre enterprises; and a countywide business support network led by Hertfordshire Futures, with delivery from partners such as Step2Skills and Wenta.



- Secured dedicated funding from Mission44 to create a new Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer role. This role will be focused on strengthening connections between Stevenage's business community, education providers and public sector organisations to help drive skills development and inclusive economic growth.



- The Glebe Neighbourhood Centre was also transformed with vibrant artwork through funding from the UKSPF and support from the Communities Team.



## Transforming Our Town continued...

- Supported Hertfordshire Futures with the successful delivery of the Generation Stevenage skills fair at Knebworth House. Over 1,000 students from Stevenage and the surrounding area attended to engage with local employers and explore future career pathways.



- Offered grant funding through the Stevenage Business Start-up Grant Scheme to help boost business ideas and growth plans. Up to £10,000 of grant funding was also offered through the Stevenage Green Business Grant. This scheme sponsored 8 small businesses and charities to tackle rising energy costs, reach net zero, and build climate resilience by implementing greener solutions.



- Sponsored a series of standalone business workshops in partnership with Action Coach. Topics have included leadership and management strategies, future proof businesses, and accelerating sustainable growth.
- Raised awareness of 34 local small businesses through our Christmas Grottos and Trails as part of the Small Business Saturday initiative.
- Supported 60 new businesses and created 77 new jobs with our partner Wenta through our Business Technology Centre.



- Assisted with the delivery the 'Inclusive Jobs Fair', in partnership with Step 2 Skills and Job Centre Plus at Stevenage Football Club. Over 200 visitors were welcomed by 15 organisations across work taster sessions, interviews, access to training and upskilling opportunities to secure future employment, as well as several permanent job roles.



## In 2025/26, we will:

- Continue our partnership with Mission44 and seek further investment to extend the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme for the next three years. This next phase will broaden and deepen the support available for young people through expanded STEM activities, coaching and mentoring, and stronger links to key local employers.



- Deliver our newly awarded 2025/26 allocation of the UKSPF, following the successful extension of the scheme. This additional £325,000 investment will enable us to continue supporting our communities, people and local businesses through a range of pre-existing and new initiatives.

- Expand our successful Stevenage Works programme, continuing to leverage social value from major construction contracts across regeneration, housing development and asset management, while also launching a new strand focused on health and social care. This will see us work with partners including North Hertfordshire College and Job Centre Plus to create a talent pipeline supporting local employers.
- Invest in our own workforce with the rollout of enhanced apprenticeship and leadership development opportunities, beginning with the recruitment of six new apprenticeships in Spring 2025 as part of a five-year commitment to growing internal talent and supporting long-term career progression within the council.
- Work alongside North Hertfordshire College to relocate their Trade Skills and Engineering campus to the current Stevenage Indoor Market site to help bring new life to the town centre and increase access to technical education, following the successful transition of market traders to their new location.



- Support the return of the Generation Stevenage skills fair in May 2025 with the aim of exceeding 2024's attendance and broaden participation from local employers to help inspire and connect even more young people with opportunities in growing sectors.



- Continue to champion local enterprise and help sustain a vibrant and resilient local economy through providing business start-up grants, bespoke training, mentoring support, and ongoing assistance to local businesses in our high street and neighbourhood centres.



# More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes

## BUILDING NEW & SUSTAINABLE HOMES

The demand for local homes has never been higher, so through the provision of More Social, Affordable, and Good Quality Homes as part of our MSEB Corporate Plan, we have strived to build a range of new and sustainable homes.

Since 2014, the council has provided 595 new homes, and met its ambition to deliver 500 new affordable homes by 2025. As a result, we are now aiming to have provided a total of 1000 homes by 2030.

**This year, to help reach this goal we have:**



- Fully let the new Independent Living Scheme at Brodie Court, freeing up 52 family homes as a host of residents have downsized to take up the high quality homes on offer.







- Begun construction at a further 210 homes across the town, including the new town centre independent living scheme, and new council homes at Ellis Avenue and Cartref.



- Begun finalising construction of the Dunn Close development of 27 homes, which will complete in May 2025.



- Received planning permission for the regeneration of The Oval Neighbourhood Centre, with plans for up to 330 new homes at the site. The council also secured funding for up to £9.2m from Homes England to support this.

- Identified and began works on opportunities for aids and adaptations at a selection of new homes to meet the housing needs of those with additional accessibility requirements.
- Won the regional award for the Planning Authority of the Year - East of England at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) East of England Awards for all the great work our planning team accomplished this year.





## In 2025/26, we will:

- Provide 49 new homes across a range of tenures to contribute towards our goal to deliver 1000 new homes by 2030.
- Continue or begin construction on a further 308 homes across the town to meet the varied housing need across the town.
- Seek to secure additional external grant funding to support the delivery of new additional council homes across the town.
- Submit planning applications for new homes, including at garage sites experiencing low demand.



## MAINTAINING GOOD QUALITY HOMES

Providing a good quality tenancy, housing maintenance and repairs service to residents has been a key, long-standing focus for the council.

## This year we have:

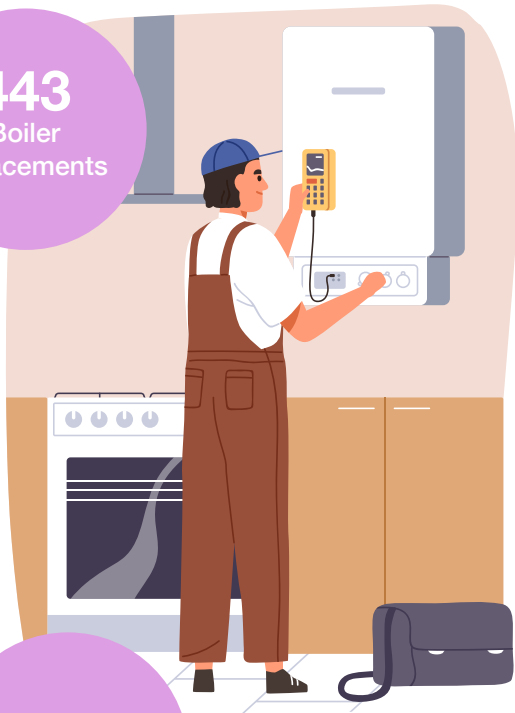
- Upgraded approximately 240 homes with £2.6m in funding (£3.9m co-funding), including 16 flat blocks and 100 houses, to meet the energy performance certificate (EPC) Band C target, with some reaching an EPC Band B as part of the SHDF Wave 2 programme. Therefore, so far ensuring 66.46% of council homes now have an EPC rating of Band C or above.





- Carried out improvements at a selection of our properties in order to meet the 'Decent Homes Standard (DHS)'. 96.64% of our properties are now deemed 'decent' as an outcome of the council's improvement programme, and the remaining properties will be included in our future major works programmes to achieve 100% decency overall by the end of next year. 'Decent Homes' related work has included:

**443**  
Boiler  
replacements



**18**  
Kitchens



**74**  
Bathrooms



**13**  
Full Heating  
Systems



**14**  
Door  
replacements

*(overhauls to  
windows and doors  
were also carried  
out where there  
was no need for a  
full replacement)*



**3**  
3 Window  
replacements

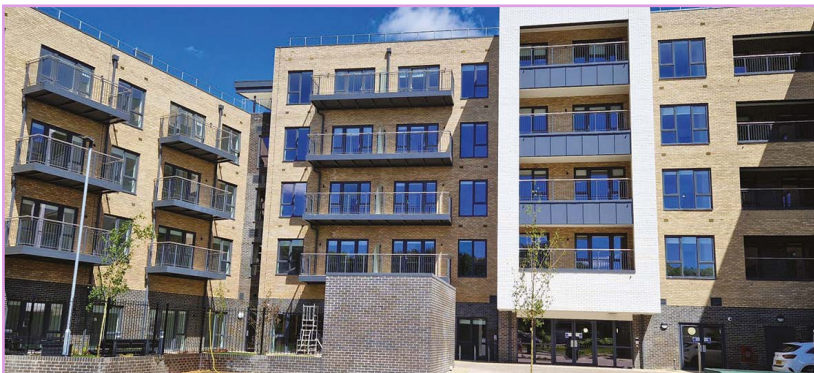


## More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes continued...



- Surveyed 2866 properties within the past year as part of our Stock Condition Survey Programme, totalling 4619 since the programme commenced. In collaboration with Pennington's, all of our existing stock has received a survey within the last 5 years to meet the July 2025 target date. As a result of these surveys, we have raised various Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) cases that are now being logged and managed by various teams to ensure that we action any Category 1 or Category 2 Hazards within the recommended timescales.

- Awarded a C2 grade during our recent Regulator for Social Housing inspection, where C1 is the very best achievable grade and C4 is the lowest. The Regulator attended a tenant workshop, and met with tenants, council officers and councillors and reviewed council documents. This grading confirms the council has provided assurance that it meets the Consumer Standards in many areas, with only minimal areas for improvement highlighted that will be addressed in the coming year.
- Renewed a range of new policies, including Responsive Repairs and Maintenance, Damp and Mould, Aids and Adaptations and Voids.
- Completed 18,096 repair jobs across our properties, including:
  - 16,327 Non-Emergency jobs (90.22% of the total), and 89.44% were completed on time.
  - 1,769 Emergency jobs (9.78% of the total), and 98.99% were completed on time
  - 95.72% of repairs being fixed first time and 90.37% of all jobs being completed on time.
- Responded to 100% of major planning applications within 13 weeks, 98.8% of minor applications within 8 weeks, and 97.8% of other applications within 8 weeks.



- Procured a number of repairs contracts covering services such as out-of-hours repairs, window and door repairs, roofing, scaffolding, disrepair, and general building works.
- Completed 95 house in multiple occupation licensed and non-licensed inspections.



- Received 87 private sector housing condition complaints, with 4 being served enforcement notices due to housing conditions, and works carried out when necessary.
- Issued no civil penalties to landlords for housing-related offences in 2024/25.



Investigated **450** residential and commercial noise complaints, with 108 linked to loud music and 88 due to a barking dog.



Received **53** service requests about rubbish accumulations on domestic premises and served 16 enforcement notices for in relation to nuisance from noise or poorly maintained residential premises.

## In 2025/26, we will:

- Carry out an Asset Review for the council's housing stock to establish where future investment is required.
- Continue to deliver the Decent Homes Programme to achieve 100% of housing stock meeting national standards, including the installation of:

Inspected **10** properties for the Homes for Ukraine scheme.



**3936**  
heating  
upgrades

**1316**  
new kitchens  
or bathrooms

**1014**  
window  
or door  
upgrades

**379**  
properties will also  
receive energy  
efficiency works over  
the next three years

- Carry out Stock Condition Surveys to ensure that all properties have received a survey within the last 5 years and HHSRS hazards addressed.
- Review existing processes within the Repairs team and work with our new contractors and in-house team to drive improvements across the service, including preparation for the implementation of Awaab's Law.
- Finalise refurbishment plans for the 5 high rise blocks, including building safety related works and commence works subject to the necessary consents and procurement of a suitably qualified contractor and in consultation with residents.
- Launch an online Booking Hub to enable tenants to book an appointment for specific types of repairs when reporting.
- Work on reintroducing an in-house team to carry out works to void properties.
- Deliver the Building Safety Action Plan to ensure 100% compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.



# Thriving Neighbourhoods



Improving the quality of life for Stevenage residents and enhancing the experience of visitors has always been Stevenage Borough Council's ambition. We achieve this through our approach to ensuring clean neighbourhoods & green spaces, our focus on community safety, and our vision for culture and leisure. Close partnership working has enabled our activities in these areas to thrive and ensured that we remain a dynamic town for residents and visitors alike.

Our neighbourhood-based teams also work co-operatively with residents, Councillors and local businesses to shape the services in their area. Through this work we seek to make services more responsive to the strengths, needs and aspirations of communities and localities.

## CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS & GREEN SPACES

We aim to ensure residents can be proud of the area they live in, as a result it is a key priority for us to ensure your neighbourhoods and green spaces are well-maintained and kept clean.

### This year we have:

- Delivered improvements to eight play areas across the town following consultation with over 300 children and young people. Provision for toddlers and teenagers alike has been implemented to provide fun and exciting places for all to enjoy. This year, in particular, the following sites have benefitted from improvements to their equipment provision:

- Camps Hill
- Canterbury Way Playing Field
- Chancellors Road
- Lapwing Rise
- Parishes Mead
- Riccat Lane
- Shearwater Close
- Town Centre Gardens



- Organised Great British Spring Clean community litter picks with 7 schools, where 28 bags of rubbish were collected with the help of 127 students. The most commonly picked litter included single use vapes, cigarette ends, and sweet / chocolate wrappers. Whilst the strangest items picked included a frying pan and plug-in electrical air freshener.





- Improved our open spaces through our Green Space Volunteers giving over 1,700 hours to carry out woodland coppicing, pond improvements, tree planting, and butterfly surveys. A training programme to support Green Space Volunteers in the future management of our Community Orchards was also introduced.

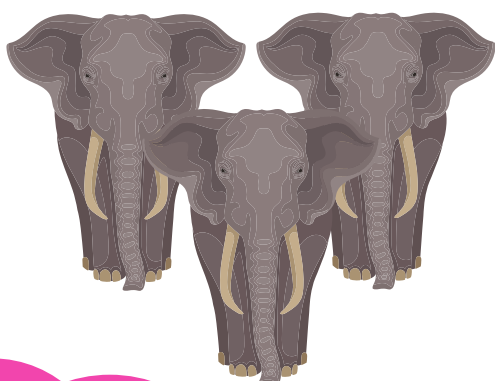


- Created new micro-woods at St Nicholas Park, Hampson Park and Shephalbury Park with the help of the community and local schools.

- Helped residents claim 3,169 tree saplings as part of the Hertfordshire County Council's "Your Tree Our Future" tree giveaway scheme



- Consulted residents on the draft Green Space Strategy and Tree & Woodland Strategy.
- Supported community projects such as the delivery of events organised by the Friends of Hampson Park, and the installation of new benches to the Millennium Gardens.
- Reported a 38% household recycling rate.
- Collected an estimated 19,011 tonnes of refuse, the equivalent to roughly 3 adult African Elephants!

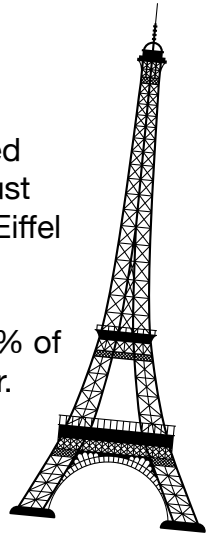




## Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...



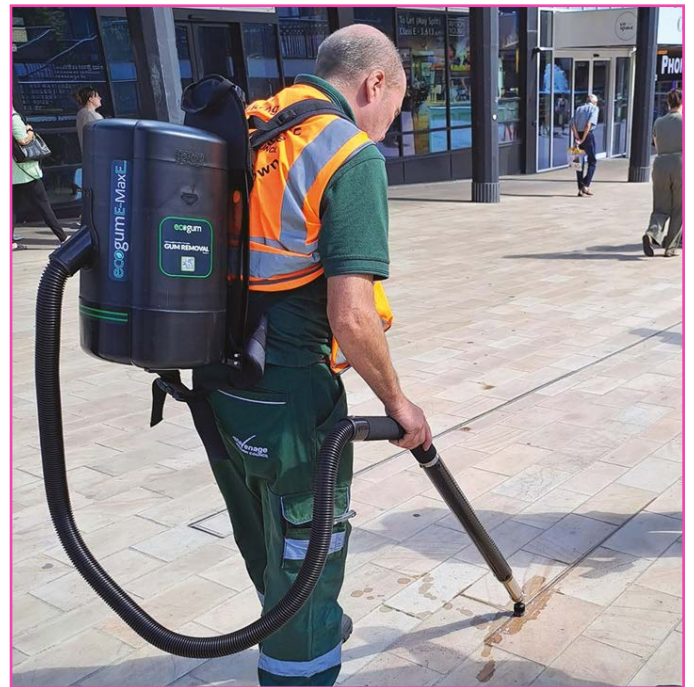
- Recycled, reused or composted an estimated 11,733 tonnes, just slightly over the weight of the Eiffel Tower!
- Collected an average of 99.73% of waste bins throughout the year.
- Cleared up a total of 3,058 reported fly tipping cases.



- Completed 93.75% of graffiti clearances following resident reports.
- Undertook 193 food safety interventions at food businesses, registered 98 new premises and inspected 37 new businesses.
- Carried out 190 vehicle condition checks on taxi and private hire vehicles.
- Received 43 public health burial service requests.

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Implement a Green Spaces Strategy and a Tree & Woodland Strategy, and develop an allotment policy.



- Deliver improvements to the neighbourhood recycling bring bank sites.

- Develop and deliver a varied programme of volunteering opportunities.



- Deliver second phase of a pilot scheme to improve recycling at flat blocks.
- Plant new trees to aid in increasing tree canopy coverage.





## COMMUNITY SAFETY

It is essential that residents live in safe communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced through effective partnership working.

### To accomplish this, we have:

- Continued to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse through regular Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) drop-in sessions running virtually and in person. This year, there has been a focus on keeping active and providing individuals and families with groceries, including cupboard items, fresh food and toiletries.



- Received a total of 1,375 domestic abuse referrals, with 92 of those for high-risk clients and 36 placed within SADA accommodation.

- Offered support to 151 customers via The No More Service. This vital weekly drop-in service provides access to advice, a hot meal, and the opportunity to meet with other service users.
- Worked closely with our partners to respond to:
  - 39 Adult safeguarding referrals made to HCC
  - 85 Child safeguarding referrals
  - 203 Information requests from HCC Children services completed
  - 55 Prevent checks for police intelligence sharing



- Offered support to customers through our rough sleeper team across the town, including sourcing accommodation through our Housing Futures programme and supporting those that slept rough during winter.

## Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

- Received an average of 24 Rough Sleeper referrals per month, reaching a total of 284 throughout the year. Of these, 24 of which were then moved into supported accommodation, and 31 were moved into secure accommodation (PRS or social tenancy, not supported accommodation). There were also 4 periods of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) throughout the year that resulted in 24 placements.
- Continued to support and fund 11 warm spaces, cafés, and craft clubs across the town to provide a place for people to keep warm, get some food and drink, and access support services.
- Provided education sessions for students through Op Edu8 at schools in Stevenage as part of our Community Safety SoSafe Partnership. These sessions highlighted the dangers of gang affiliation, County lines and drug possession.
- Carried out 315 lettings, by Lettings Officers.
- Nominated 148 applicants from the housing register to Guinness HA for one and two bedroom flats in new build developments at Danesview House and Newton House.
- Nominated 20 applicants from the housing register to Clarion for homes at Wesleyan Way, a new development by Lister Hospital.
- Purchased 1 affordable/low-cost property and submitted a further bid for an additional 2 properties via the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) phase 3, to host the increased number of refugee arrivals from Afghanistan.
- Placed 22 prison leavers, into private rented fixed term assured shorthold tenancies with a minimum 6-months, with Government funding, to help rebuild their lives and aid efforts to prevent them from returning to prison. Also agreed 20 placements for Phase 2 of Accommodation for Ex Offenders (AFEO), as well as partial placements where prison leavers have had a positive outcome such as being accepted into hostels or supported housing.
- Received 1,022 debt advice referrals.





## In 2025/26, we will:

- Plan further educational sessions alongside the police to help support parents with the concerns around County Lines, peer pressure and drug use.
- Engage with the community and work co-operatively with partners/residents and those that visit the town.
- Embed Violence Against Women and Girls, including domestic abuse, as a key area of concern within our partnership action plan, following our review and community consultation of the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment.



- Focus on the following six areas highlighted within our newly launched Community Safety Strategy, that will last for 3 years:
  - Highlight the risks to the community of drug possession and crime.
  - Provide safe reporting and support to victims of Violence Against Women and Girls, including Domestic abuse.
  - Promote awareness of Cuckooing and the support available to victims.
  - Divert individuals from becoming involved in Anti-Social Behaviour.
  - Collaborate with Partners and Young People regarding the risks around County Lines and associated Anti-Social Behaviour.
  - Raise awareness around online fraud and the warning signs to the community.



## Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

### CULTURE & LEISURE

Close partnership working within the culture and leisure sector improves quality of life for residents, benefits the local economy, and enables a vibrant, thriving, creative town to flourish.

#### This year we have:

- Delivered and supported a wide range of civic and community events within the town with over 60,000 people attending. These include:
  - Stevenage Day
  - Stevenage Fireworks Display
  - Armed Forces Day
  - Remembrance Sunday & Armistice Day
  - Stevenage Together Awards
  - Christmas Light Switch On
  - Hosting Town Twinning
  - St Nicholas Day



- Hosted over 200 stalls, a variety of rides and attractions and the infamous Rock in the Park stage at Stevenage Day 2024. The event also celebrated Pride and the LGBTQ+ Community with a dedicated marquee, stage and support partners.



- Operated at Fairlands Valley Park for the first season last summer. Through the procurement of an operator to provide lake activities catering for all ages and abilities, Aqua Parcs successfully opened and offered a large inflatable obstacle course on the main lake. Additional activities including pedaloos, paddleboards and kayaks were also available. Activities ran from June to September and had a large impact on the footfall to the park.





- Celebrated women and girls in sport during This Girl Can Week 2024. This vibrant celebration was delivered in partnership with Everyone Active and local community organisations, featured a wide range of free activities and classes designed to inspire and empower participants to get active, and attracted 188 women and girls to take part. The campaign also gained fantastic recognition, including a feature on BBC Three Counties Radio, helping to shine a spotlight on the positive impact of the programme across the community.

- Hosted nearly 400 walkers as part of Active Travel Day for the Stevenage Walking Festival at Fairlands Valley Park.



- Combined our successful Health Walks programme with Hertfordshire Health Walks, and created new walks in Bedwell and from the Town Centre library, with further new walks planned for the Oval and St Nicholas.

- Encouraged a total of 83,133 children to use Everyone Active facilities, a 7.2% improvement from 77,178 children last year.



- Celebrated the return of 'Covid Cobra' to Grace Way, where a selection of the 10,085 painted stones and pebbles were unveiled to over 50 people across four pillars, alongside a linked underpass mural created by local artists.



## Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

- Utilised a £145,079 capital budget, effectively delivering projects across all 13 wards, including a variety of infrastructure and public space improvements aimed at enhancing community environments and supporting local businesses.
- Gained 1,350 responses from our residents around local priorities, allowing us to tackle issues raised in our neighbourhoods.



- Continued to promote STEM opportunities across our neighbourhoods including events at Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, the creation of youth engagement vehicle to shape future prospects, and a dedicated webpage for the council website and on the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal. We also supported The IET to distribute free LEGO League kits to primary schools.
- Maintained over 5,600 subscribers to our digital newsletters, which provide regular updates on what is going on in the local area

- Awarded £60,000 through our local community budgets and supported over 50 organisations to help improve their neighbourhoods



- Continued to work with local residents and organisations to provide support and services that matter to them through our Community Development team.
- Maintained a suite of defibrillators across town to help to save lives in the local community through Councillors' Local Community Budgets.



- The Stevenage Museum welcomed 16,566 visitors, amassed over 2000 volunteer hours, hosted 8 work experience students, supported 5 students with their Duke of Edinburgh award. Numerous exhibitions throughout the year were put on, including:
  - 'Stories from Contemporary Life: 50 years on' that explored the now listed underpass by Bill Mitchell between the Town Centre and the Town Centre gardens on St George's Way.
  - 'Perform Transform' installation based on stories and experiences of living in Stevenage today made by participants in workshops organised by BEEE Creative and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.







- ‘Stevenage on Wheels’ that was a celebration of the roads that have been so important in the town’s story and all the many and varied forms of transport that we use to travel along them, from the Coaching Age to modern-day tales of speed including Vincent HRD motorbikes. Formula 1 World Champion Sir Lewis Hamilton’s first racing car was also showcased as part of this and attracted over 400 people. Further, ‘Speed is Expensive: The Phillip Vincent Story’ was shown at Thomas Alleyne’s Academy and drew in over 100 people.

- ‘In My Mind’s Eye, Trevor Herbert 2000-2024’ was a collaboration with Junction 7 Creatives and showcased one of their artists alongside a spoken word performance and singing.
- ‘Extinction!’ explored the love of the natural world, asked if we are in the sixth great extinction and if there is anything we can do to prevent it. This exhibition included a live animal event, a dinosaur day and a craftivist making session.



- ‘Remembering Ken Hensley and his band Uriah Heep’ was a combination of two live music events and a small foyer exhibition about a musical legend who grew up in Stevenage, and was organised with his family.
- A pop up gallery at 21 Town Square throughout September attracted roughly 2750 people across a daytime art workshop for students, drop in activities throughout the month, and a Drink and Draw event funded by the Stevenage Museum.



- Additional activities included a Roman Day, the Peculiar Market on Event Island, a talk at Lonsdale school, and the Museum’s 70th birthday celebrations.





## Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Increase engagement with children and young people (under 16s) through expanded outreach and participation programmes delivered in partnership with Everyone Active.
- Continue to target areas of high deprivation by delivering inclusive leisure programmes tailored to the needs of our most disadvantaged communities.
- Complete and launch the Stevenage Arts and Heritage Trail, making use of the town's network of cycleways and footpaths to create an engaging public experience.
- Progress initial concept designs for a new cultural museum offer that showcases Stevenage's unique New Town story and heritage.





# Tackling Climate Change

Progress towards the reduction of carbon emissions to be net zero by 2030 has been a significant priority for the council for a number of years, as well as providing support to residents and business to do the same.



## This year we have:



- Transitioned our entire diesel fleet, including road and non-road vehicles and machinery, to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), a low-carbon biofuel made from waste vegetable oil. This switch reduced the net carbon emissions of our fleet by up to 90% and required no vehicle modifications.
- Continued the transition of our fleet by procuring and incorporating three additional electric vehicles, bringing the total to six.
- Identified up to 50 potential locations across park land, leisure sites, and garages compounds that are viable to install EV charging points through LEVI (Local EV Infrastructure) funding, by assessing the layout, ownership and the power grid.
- Monitored our electricity consumption across 30 council sites, including Daneshill House and Cavendish Road Depot, through a digital meter explorer, understanding our demand during open, closed, and holiday periods.
- Installed EV charging infrastructure at Bedwell Shops, the Glebe Shops, Oaks Cross Shops, The Hyde Shops, St Nicholas Pavilion, Archer Road Shops, and Filey Close Shops using ORCS funding from OZEV.
- Maintained and updated our Climate Action Plan online tracker, providing residents with up-to-date information on 8 specific strategic climate themes and over 50 climate actions.
- Funded a range of community-led climate initiatives through our Climate Change Community Fund that allocates £7,500 to each ward annually. Funded projects included water butts, tree planting, energy efficiency upgrades at community centres, cycle hangers, and better recycling facilities. We also installed a permanent Christmas tree in the Old Town that will help reduce transport emissions from purchasing a new tree each year, isolate local carbon and pollutants, while also providing an additional local habitat for birds and insects.





## Tackling Climate Change continued...



- Adopted the new Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan (2024-2028) as a strategic framework to guide local efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity through targeted actions across the borough.



- Installed solar panels to 48 residents under the recently completed round of Solar Together scheme, with 30 systems completed by September 2024. The initiative has totalled 333 solar panels, 130 kW capacity, and £286,959 invested so far. 28 installations included batteries, adding 200 kWh of storage. A new Solar Together round has been launched in 2025, with 115 households and 47 businesses already expressing interest in solar installations by March 2025.
- Supported the delivery of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2), a UK Government scheme offering free energy-saving upgrades for low-income, off-gas grid privately owned or rented households. Installed measures included cavity wall insulation, electric storage heating, loft insulation, solar PV, and ventilation.
- Entered into an agreement with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to assist eligible homeowners and private tenants to access funding for the installation of home energy efficiency measures through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS). The schemes are promoted by NEF-approved suppliers who assist eligible households with the process of applying for financial assistance and carry out the installation of approved energy efficiency measures.
- Completed our first Climate Change Risk Assessment to identify and start addressing climate-related risks across our operations and services.
- Secured a Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG) funding of £1,500,000 to provide energy performance upgrades and low carbon heating to privately owned households with low incomes. This grant will be delivered from 2025 until 2028.
- Continued implementing Social Value as part of our procurement processes and prepared an updated Cooperative Procurement Strategy including new sustainability guidelines.
- Donated 133 bicycles to the Recycle Your Cycle scheme for refurbishment and reuse.





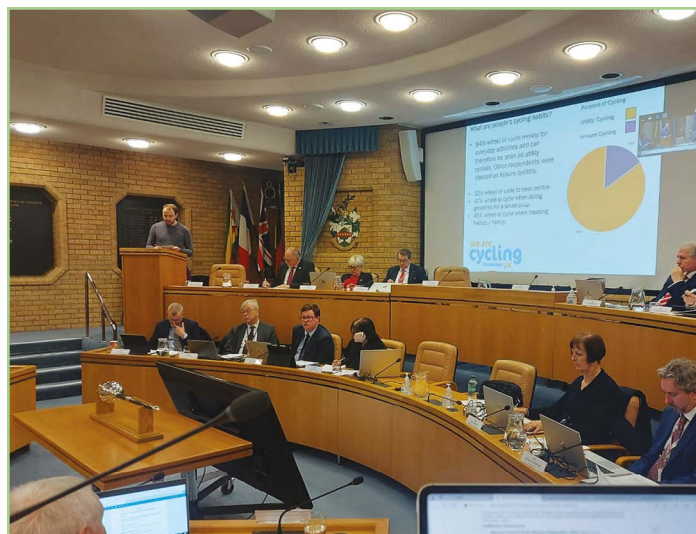
- Adopted a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy in April 2024, incorporating new environmental considerations for an eco-friendly fleet, with more stringent emissions standards, and a subsidised license fee for electric or hybrid vehicles, while continuing to discuss environmental issues through its established Taxi Forum.
- Implemented energy efficiency measures through our leisure facility management contract with Everyone Active including LED lighting, Building Management Systems upgrades, and insulation works.



- Secured £36,000 from Sport England to aid decarbonisation of our public swimming pool. Works included lagging of key pool plant equipment and the installation of a pool cover. Over 3 years, it will reduce our carbon footprint by over 292 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and reduce our water usage by 3,699 cubic metres. The payback on investment of this project is just over 3 years.
- Successfully been allocated a grant amount of £3,856,822 for Wave 3 of the Warm Homes: Social Housing fund.

- Adopted new Supplementary Planning Documents to encourage sustainable forms of development and design, use of renewables, and incorporating active travel measures.

- Progressed the Local Plan Review, including Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 consultations, before submission to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in public (EiP), and incorporating relevant updated and new climate policies on emissions targets, energy efficiency, water management, and the green economy.



- Researched how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring systems can work with planning software to ensure BNG schemes can be captured and monitored over a period of time.
- Established an internal Climate Champions Officers Group to discuss sustainability matters in the way we conduct our work and identify projects to implement over the next year, fostering collaboration.
- Organised Carbon Literacy Training, delivered by Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) for 40 officers, including our Climate Champions, covering sustainable building features and certifications was delivered for key officers.



## Tackling Climate Change continued...

- Published an Events Sustainability Guidance as a key part of the Community Event Toolkit to provide advice on how to incorporate sustainable practices when organising events.
- Launched our commercial food waste collection service for businesses and schools across Stevenage.

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Keep on supporting the delivery of the Stevenage Green Business Grant and the businesses to move forward with their plans.
- Help local businesses navigate sustainability and contract readiness, as part of additional support for businesses.



- Introduce separate weekly food waste collections to all households in Stevenage by 31 March 2026, in accordance with new Simpler Recycling government recycling legislation. Procurement of new vehicles and food waste containers to support the new service has already been completed. It is anticipated that this service could increase our recycling rate by 5% as the diversion of food waste for recycling or composting will create less waste and reduce carbon emissions further.

- Continue implementing the Climate Change Community Fund, seeking operational efficiencies and exploring street plan options to engage the public in projects that enhance biodiversity, active travel, reduce carbon emissions, and improve the local environment.

- Develop a Climate Change Adaptation report that includes a risk assessment of the Council's operations, services, and assets, along with a five-year adaptation action plan, in line with DEFRA guidelines. In parallel, collaborate with other Hertfordshire local authorities to support county-wide climate adaptation work.

- Start delivering retrofit works to improve the energy efficiency of Stevenage's private homes through Warm Homes: Local Grant as part of a three-year programme.



- Deliver retrofit works to improve the energy efficiency of social housing homes through the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3, as part of the three-year programme which will be delivered until 2028/2029.





- Complete a project to replace the Town Centre Clocktower lighting system with an LED system that will not only reduce energy consumption and maintenance costs but also allow us to display a multitude of colours which will rejuvenate the Clocktower and mark days of national significance by lighting it in specific colours (e.g., red, white & blue for VE Day).
- Submit the Local Plan Partial Review to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in public (EiP), including comprehensive new and updated climate policies, aiming for adoption in early 2026.

- Plan to install more cycle hangars across town to provide a bike storage alternative for residents living in flats or small houses with little or no safe storage for their bikes.
- Support the installation of EV charging points across town using the LEVI funding through a collaboration agreement with HCC.
- Replace the current lighting of St George's Multi Storey Car Park with efficient LED systems.





# Balancing the Budget

Ensuring there are sufficient resources available to deliver the council's priorities while remaining resilient to the impact of increasing financial pressures remains a priority for us.

Since 2010, there has been a significant reduction in Government funding to councils across England. This has led to significant financial pressures across local government which have been exacerbated by national policy decisions on welfare and social rent, rising inflation, as well as energy and food costs.

Despite these challenges, the council has remained financially resilient, ensured sufficient resources are available and has continued to work hard to deliver for its residents.



## This year we have:

- Provided £9.7million in business rate relief.
- Administered £20.7million in Housing Benefit to 3,208 residents.
- Awarded £6.1million and supported 5,016 residents as part of our Council Tax Support scheme payments to help people struggling to pay their council tax.
- Paid out over £145,000 in Discretionary Housing Payments to provide financial support to help with rent or housing costs.



- Earned £3,050 through businesses using Stevenage as a filming location.



- Received 250,460 online transactions, including 29,059 online forms submitted.
- Identified 2025/26 savings of £1.171million to maintain the financial stability of the 2025/26 General Fund budget and delivered the majority of the 2024/25 savings identified for the year.



- Successfully been awarded Government grant funding of £21.6million to build new housing.

- Administered and ran a £140,800 Household Support Fund that helped local organisations to reduce food and energy poverty across the town. The project reached 18 organisations including charities, local community groups, and 10 community cafés that aim to address isolation and loneliness for residents as well as provide cost-of-living advice and support. This year we have also provided £90,100 to food and energy poverty support organisations across the town, and £50,700 to community cafes that act as weekly open access warm spaces with food support throughout the year and during Ramadan.



## In 2025/26, we will:



- Increase growth from current and new concessions contracts and traded services.
- Review of all services provided to or on behalf of the council by external supplier or third party, as per the Insourcing Roadmap 2023-26.
- Develop a commercial culture across the organisation through providing training, tools and communication plans.
- Identify business change and digital savings to support the Balancing the Budget target.



# Cross-Cutting Themes

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION (EDI)

The council continues to work with partners, staff, local businesses, and community groups to advance EDI across the workforce and community.



### This year we have:

- Launched the EDI Action Plan for 2024/25 that holds 18 actions across six key objectives to ensure we continue to champion the rights of individuals across our workforce and local communities.
- Hosted regular Officer Equality Group and Equality, Diversity Governance Group meetings where discussions covered the quarterly EDI action plan updates, Stevenage Equalities Commission activities, ethnicity terminology, the event calendar, invisible disabilities, the Prevention of Sexual Harm Strategy, the accessibility of the social and leisure hub regeneration and more.



- Celebrated Pride at Stevenage Day 2024 that featured a dedicated Pride area highlighting the LGBTQ+ community.
- Hosted webinars and welcomed guest speakers internally on topics such as Neurodiversity, Menopause, and the LGBTQ+ community.
- Celebrated our older community members and Age Friendly Communities in Stevenage and Hertfordshire at the International Day of Older Persons in October.
- Teamed up with Unison and the Time of The Month charity to bring internal staff free sustainable period products at both council sites, with the help of our Community Development team.
- Opened a new multi-faith room offering a tranquil space for all staff to use at the Daneshill office.
- Completed over 20 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) when reviewing and implementing a range of policies, strategies and procedures.
- Published our Equality & Diversity Annual Report for 2023/24 summarising the key demographics that make up our community and workforce.
- Published our latest Gender Pay Gap Report that highlights our continued commitment to gender equality as our mean gender pay gap stands at an impressive -0.98% this year.





- Participated in global celebrations for International Women's Day 2025 through the council's Women in Business Network, over 70 women-led businesses or women in leadership took part in an informal business networking event at Hotel Cromwell Stevenage.

- Continued to support the Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group that was set up to help the council and our partners in addressing the inequalities ethnically diverse communities face in Stevenage. The group took part in a variety of events, including:

- Health Action Day
- International Day
- International Day of Older Persons Event
- Older Persons Activity Learning and Safety Event
- Stevenage Day
- Taste of the Caribbean Event



The Commission also put on their own dedicated conference titled 'The Stevenage Equalities Commission: Beyond Barriers Conference'. It was held at The Gordan Craig Theatre during Black History Month in October and was attended by just under 90 residents, staff partners, and Councillors alike. Workshops and panels were held throughout the day on a variety of topics such as Health Inequalities, Criminal Justice, Political and Civic Representation, Culture, and Education, as well as a special performance by the Drumming with Iroko Theatre Company!



## Cross-Cutting Themes continued...

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Publish a EDI Action Plan 24/25 Progress Report and launch a revised action plan for 2025/26 to ensure we continue to champion the rights of individuals across our workforce and local communities.
- Continue to host internal 'Champion' workshops on a range of key EDI topics throughout the year.
- Carry on monitoring our approach to EqIAs through Service Plans, and utilise the information to inform decision making and the wider understanding of existing and future community needs.
- Support the Stevenage Equalities Commission to continue to engage with Black and Brown communities and partners in Stevenage to understand their perspective on how to meet the challenges they face every day.
- Work with the Stevenage Equalities Commission and Voice4Change to formalise the group into a Multi Stakeholder Co-operative.
- Work with the Stevenage Equalities Commission and Operation Black Vote charity to carry out formal Civic leadership Programme Diagnostic/Familiarisation research and analysis into the democratic deficit in Stevenage to develop an understanding of the key issues facing the town. This research will then be used, alongside data and feedback from the community and partners, to understand the context of community leadership and design a civic and citizen programme for Stevenage.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

The council continues to work with partners to tackle health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

### This year we have:

- Made physical activity more accessible by delivering free or low-cost sessions directly within local communities through the Active Communities Programme. Designed to support the “30 minutes of activity, five times a week” goal, the programme offers a broad range of inclusive activities for all ages and abilities, ranging from strength and mobility classes to youth basketball camps and disability-friendly sports. The initiative not only supports physical and mental wellbeing but also promotes social inclusion through community cafés and targeted programmes such as those for ex-offenders and asylum seekers. With over 245 outreach sessions and 1,558 attendees to date since its launch in July 2023, the programme has significantly expanded leisure provision and community engagement across Stevenage.
- Healthy Hub merged this year with the Young People's Healthy Hub to deliver a combined programme of health and wellbeing support for all ages. This included mental health counselling for young people, Stop Smoking support, Family Centre courses and the annual Health Action Day that saw over 20 different stalls and over 300 people throughout the day.



- Delivered our Place-based Health Inequalities Programme to over 200 people following GP referrals, in partnership with Everyone Active. This weight management programme provides free physical activity, advice and guidance to those wanting to live a healthier lifestyle.



- Continued to support the Herts Mind Network's Crisis Café that provides provision for those in crisis situations. Supplying emergency help and onwards referrals to get mental health support and advice, this outstanding work was recognised by receiving a National APSE Award for Best Health & Wellbeing Initiative 2024.



- Launched our Age-Friendly Stevenage status on the International Day for Older Persons. In partnership with the Centre for Better Aging, Age UK and Everyone Active, we hosted over 200 attendees and 30 stallholders that resulted in a total of 1,100 interactions occurring throughout the day.

- After Stevenage became a Dementia Friendly Community, we hosted a Dementia Friendly event as part of the Herts Dementia Festival. It was organised for people living with Dementia as well as their carers and families with the help of Alzheimer's Society, Hertswise, The Red Shed, Purple All Stars Sing Rocks and many more.



- We also hosted an internal Dementia Friends training session, provided by the Alzheimer's Society. The training gave employees a chance to train as a 'dementia friend' that can support their community.



## Cross-Cutting Themes continued...

### In 2025/26, we will:

- Launch a new five-year Healthy Stevenage Strategy, focused on reducing local health inequalities through prevention, early intervention, and strengthened cross-sector partnerships.
- Support the development of new wellbeing initiatives that address key public health challenges, including obesity, frailty, and mental wellbeing.
- Enhance access to local physical activity by supporting leisure provision and promoting behaviour change projects in collaboration with local partners.

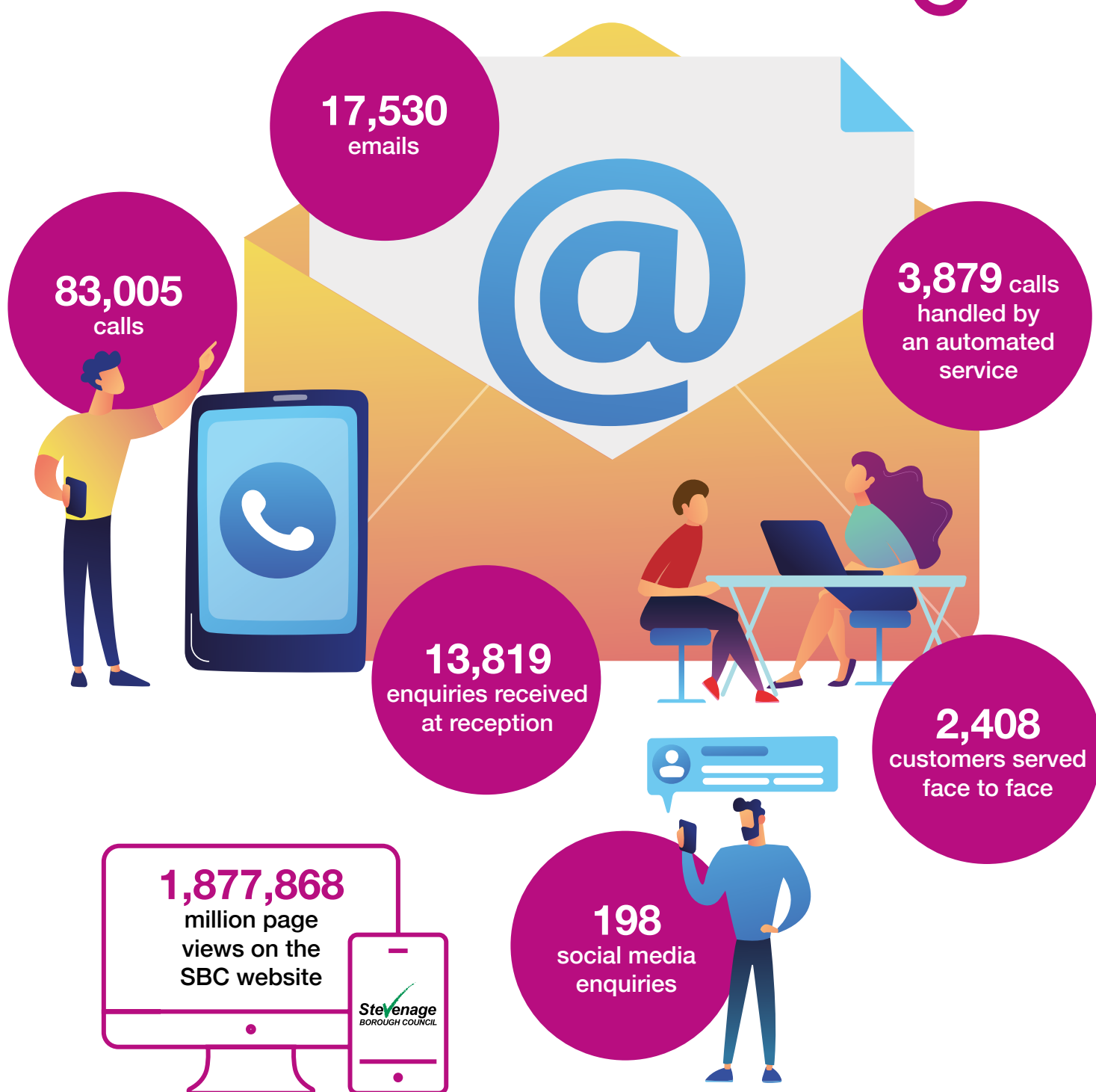
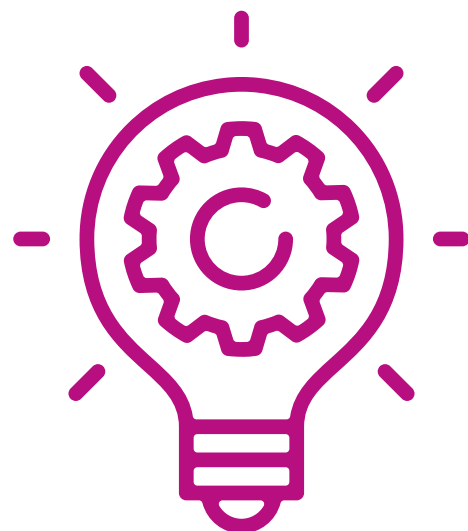


## TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

The council has always embraced technology and innovation to enhance how we operate, and deliver system efficiencies that empower residents to use digital services too.

### This year, in particular, we have:

● Dealt with 120,839 enquiries since the relocation of the Customer Service Centre to the main reception at Daneshill House, including:





## Cross-Cutting Themes continued...

- Invested in transformation initiatives that seek to improve how services are delivered to customers and internal business processes within the council across areas such as:
  - A £650,000 investment in technology has facilitated the migration from legacy systems, resulting in improved functionality for our Housing Management System and HR system. This upgrade has streamlined operations, increased data accuracy, and enhanced user experience across all platforms. Teams can now perform tasks more efficiently, leading to higher productivity and better service delivery.
  - A £70,000 investment in new technology to boost our cyber security and staff training, making our systems stronger and more efficient. We have also enhanced our training programs to better prepare our staff for potential cyber incidents. By using advanced technology and improving our response skills, we aim to create a safer and more effective working environment. This proactive strategy has safeguarded our data and reassured our clients and stakeholders about our commitment to high security standards.
  - Improvements to online customer services by implementing a telephony solution that encourages usage. This involved creating a new phone messaging system that sends customers direct text messages signposting them to relevant online services, resolve queries. It has also allowed customers to navigate the system easier, reduce their wait time and increase their satisfaction. Additionally by directing inquiries to online services, we have reduced the number of calls that customer service representatives handle, allowing them to focus on more complex issues that require personal attention.
- Enhanced website and online services for customers through:
  - Improving website accessibility for key online services
  - Introducing new online services for Complaints, Abandoned Vehicle Reporting and Health & Safety services.
  - Improving feedback methods to continually improve online services, with a new 'customer feedback survey' for customers to feedback immediately after using an online service.
  - Introducing new website analytics tool to understand how customers use the website
- Internal business process and technology improvements, such as:
  - Making use of the cloud to enhance internal business systems
  - Modernising business processes, including improving ways of working within streets and grounds maintenance service and piloting improvements to customer contact to help with debt management

## In 2025/26, we will:

- Complete a review to understand digital accessibility compliance and develop an action plan to track progress
- Ensure full utilisation and value for money of all business insight, systems, and Office 365 apps across the council
- Develop and implement a new ICT and Data Strategy, along with a new ICT Policy project.

# A Cooperative Council

As a Cooperative Council, we are passionate about our communities and enabling them to co-produce projects and service related policies. Central to this approach is the principle of community wealth building, which focuses on how much money is held and reinvested in an area for the benefit of local communities. As one of the largest procurers of goods and services locally, we are committed to ensuring that not only do we champion this approach to other partners and businesses, but through our actions too.

This year in particular, we have worked closely with partners across the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network to support the following policy lab projects:



## ● Little Bank of Kindness

A core tenant of our Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach is working co-operatively with residents to highlight priorities for our communities, establish local ownership and support genuine resident agency and involvement. We partnered with Made Open to pilot a “Little Bank of Kindness” community timebank within the St Nicholas Community Centre. Timebanking is the process of exchanging time and skills with other people in your community. Examples of timebank community activities have included dog walking, gardening support and companionship. The yearlong pilot concluded in May 2024 with the next steps for this project aiming to build a stronger volunteer framework.

## ● Councils' Cooperative Development Toolkit

This policy lab project aimed to establish a framework that supported the identification of opportunities to improve the local cooperative development context and move towards action. The project ran in three phases:

- Collaboration and research: Framework identification/development and resource consolidation
- Testing: Application of resources
- Dissemination: Development and promotion of a toolkit and report

The toolkit was launched at the CCIN conference in February 2025, and is available on the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network website. Involvement in this policy lab was invaluable to our work supporting community organisations such as the Social Inclusion Partnership and the Stevenage Equalities Commission Multistakeholder Co-operatives.





# **Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report**

(2024-2025)

If you'd like this publication in another format  
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