

2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT



Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Another successful year for Stevenage



Message From Sharon Taylor - Leader, Stevenage Borough Council

Welcome to our 2018/19 Annual Report. This year has seen achievements to further progress our ambitious town centre regeneration plans, as well as finally being able to adopt our local plan following an excruciatingly long holding period.

Listening and working with you is fundamental to our ethos as a co-operative council and it ensures our plans meet your expectations and needs.

Despite financial adversities imposed by Central Government, I am proud to say we have kept our budget balanced whilst continuing to provide vital services for our residents. None of which could be possible without the hard work of our councillors, staff, partners and volunteers.

This report is just a snapshot of some of the things that have been done or are being planned in response to your suggestions, ideas and concerns.

I hope you'll agree that Stevenage has got a lot to be proud of and I hope that we will be able to build on this year's successes in 2019/20.



Message From Matt Partridge - Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council

Our Future Town Future Council programme has really gained momentum this year.

We have seen major developers commit to investing in the town centre, the building of more new council homes, and we have made significant improvements to our homes and housing services. An increasing number residents are getting involved in planning neighbourhood investment which ensures we are responding to your feedback and improving what is important to you in your local area.

Our council staff continue to work hard to deliver well over 100 services in Stevenage. This report highlights a variety of our successes during 2018/19 and I look forward to driving our plans to improve the town and services you receive in 2019/20.



Future Town Future Council

Future Town Future Council is delivering key improvements that our residents told us they want to see.

Included in this programme are plans to regenerate the town centre, provide housing that works for all, make services more accessible, and invest in our town's neighbourhoods.

Co-operative Council

The Stevenage Way

Our co-operative principles promote and support the close working relationships the council has with the town's residents and organisations. We are keen to include genuine input from our communities and partners in the services we deliver and we want to continue to support services that are led by them.

This year the council has undertaken flagship projects to demonstrate its commitment to co-operative working. Our new community

engagement framework sets out the dynamic ways in which the council will engage with communities across Stevenage, and also acts as a practical resource for use across the council and by our partners. Through it we are clear in our aspirations to improve people's lives and the quality of public services. We are continuing to listen and involve community groups and residents in shaping the town.

Here are just a few examples of how we have worked co-operatively this year:

We worked with the Youth Council to increase its membership and give them further responsibilities to represent the youth of Stevenage.



Stevenage Youth Council helped to distribute donation bins to two schools in the town for the Red Box Project which tackles the issue of period poverty.



We supported residents with the restoration and improvements to the Oval Community Garden.



A very successful volunteering day was held at Bandle Hill playcentre, with Glaxo Smith Kline, the neighbourhood wardens and play staff. This included removing a tree house, painting a sandpit, planting and clearing the grounds in preparation for a new tree house.



In 2019/20 we will:

Further develop our work nationally to share the way that we work with our communities in Stevenage, through the Enabling Social Action Programme and the Co-operative Council Innovation Network.

Develop the way the council supports community wealth building in Stevenage, to ensure what we do and the goods we buy have a positive impact on the local economy.

Regenerating Our Town

A development agreement has been signed with our town centre regeneration developer Mace which means we can continue with the ambitious development of the town centre (SG1).



Reef Group has started redeveloping Queensway North. The development consists of new retail and restaurant space, a gym, new offices, an innovation and technology centre and 116 apartments.



Market Place has been transformed into a play space for families in the town, as well as creating an attractive space to relax and enjoy the town centre.

More than **600**

people attended our event to showcase our new bus interchange plans and share views on the designs.



Events were held in the town centre including Continental Street Food Market, Stevenage International Day and the Christmas Market.



new wayfinding signs have been installed across the town.



We held an event to publicly launch our cultural strategy, Stevenage Re-imagined. It focuses on cultural engagement and making Stevenage an attractive destination for all.

In 2019/20 we will:

- Begin the first phase of the town centre regeneration (SG1).
- Continue works on the Town Square Public Realm and North Block in the town centre delivering new retail and commercial facilities, updated shop fronts, new paving and new seating areas.
- Consult on more detailed designs for a new bus interchange.

- Launch a new marketing brand, Stevenage Even Better and open the visitor centre to celebrate and promote the regeneration of the town.
- Develop further heritage and arts initiatives across the town as part of our cultural strategy.
- Deliver our transport strategy - **Future Town, Future Transport.**

Building New Homes

This financial year we have focussed on building new affordable and private homes.

42

Affordable homes were delivered at Wedgewood Way and the Twin Foxes pub site.

This brings the total since 2014 up to

173



Other schemes planned include homes at Symonds Green, Shephall Way and North Road. Together these will deliver

59

new homes.

Proposals for the new housing development Kenilworth Close were given planning permission. Demolition can now begin for the new scheme. Consultations took place with local residents to keep them informed of progress with positive feedback.



Developments at Ferrier Road, Burwell Court and Ditchmore Lane are on site and will deliver

39

more homes for the town.

The holding direction on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan was lifted on 25 March 2019 after 497 days. The plan was adopted by the Council in May 2019. This will mean we can continue with our exciting vision for the town, including the provision of a range of housing schemes.



In 2019/20 we will:

Complete and let 54 new homes across a range of planned schemes and 11 private sale homes.

Start work on 298 new homes across a range of planned schemes.

Secure a developer for the Kenilworth Close site and commence work on site including on the flagship older persons housing scheme.

Continue to work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable homes.

Look at other potential areas of council development across the town.

Managing and Improving Our Homes

Our new Asset Management Strategy provides the framework to ensure that Stevenage customers' homes are fit for purpose, sustainable and in thriving and desirable neighbourhoods.

We

started our

£45m

programme of improvements to council flat blocks

Completed

17 new electrical rewires

112 new external wall insulations

103 heating installations

Our housing options and income teams have used new processes and technology to:

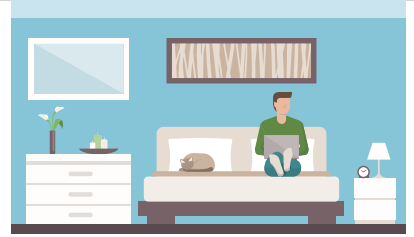
Prevent **399** individuals and families from becoming homeless

Achieve **99.1%** rent collection and our lowest ever rent arrears

Increase court fee collection to **£27,400** last year

95 new roofs

Brought **702** homes up to a decent standard



275 new bathrooms

188 new kitchens

Our Repairs team did more than **21,900** repairs

381 new windows

374 new doors

Work has begun on a Housing for Older People Strategy for Stevenage. We have consulted with over **270** residents and professionals so far, but are still seeking your views on how we provide housing and support for Stevenage residents in their later years.

We are celebrating **100 years** of social housing with a variety of events for our long standing residents.

New licensing regulations were introduced on 1 October 2018 for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Over **200 private sector properties** are subject to these regulations and nearly 97% meet the required standards.



In 2019/20 we will:

- Launch new online services to improve opportunities for housing customers to 'self-serve'.
- Give our staff the tools to work out in the community.
- Continue to deliver improvements to our flatblocks.

- Appoint new contractors to deliver the Council's Decent Homes programme.
- Launch our Housing for Older People Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy.

Improving Stevenage Neighbourhoods

We have made neighbourhood improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood with over £30,000 worth of enhancements improving paths, street signs, verges and litter-bins.



Our Waste and Recycling teams have collected over **10,000 tonnes** of recyclable material from **37,160** properties.

7 play areas have benefitted from improvements following consultation with local children.

We've completed works to eight garage sites as part of a **£9m** improvement programme

Our neighbourhoods

We have started to establish neighbourhood groups to make sure we work with residents on improvements to their neighbourhood.

We have maintained the three green flag awards this year for our parks at Fairland's Valley Park, Hampson Park and Town Centre Gardens.



Our four Neighbourhood Wardens have been working across the town talking to communities to tackle local issues..



In 2019/20 we will:

Begin developing plans for co-operative neighbourhood management in parts of the town.

Continue to invest in and make improvements to neighbourhoods across the town, specifically Longmeadow and Bedwell.

Begin consulting with residents in Old Town and Roebuck to find out what improvements they want to see.

Make improvements to play areas in Old Town and Roebuck.
Continue to improve our garages across the town.
Engage with other partners in working co-operatively with our communities.

Community and Safety

We have renewed our Community Safety Strategy and working closely with our partners it continues to keep our residents safe. As a result, our Community Safety Team have issued:

24

Community Protection Notice Warnings (CPNW)

13

Community Protection Notices (CPN)

7

Fixed Penalty Notice's for Fly-tipping

Here are examples of our achievements this year:



51

Clients have been prevented from being homeless by Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA)

23

Homeless clients have been helped by the No More Service

74

New referrals to the No More Service that supports people affected by alcohol, drugs or offending.

£100k

of funding won to support victims of domestic abuse

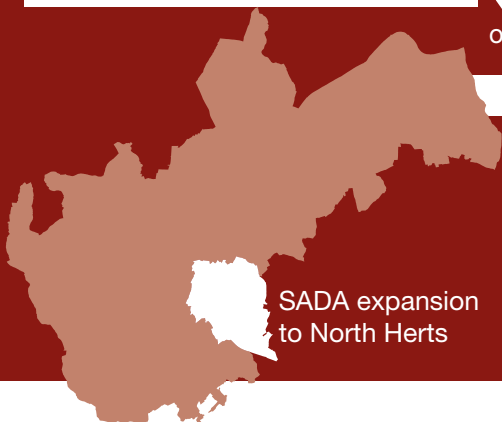
AWARDS

2 TPAS awards for Excellence in Community Action

ASB Team finalist Housing Hero Awards for front line team of the year

White Ribbon accreditation award

Short listed for the TPAS Central Region award for Team of the Year



SADA expansion to North Herts

Delivered

12

community events, including Bat Walks, Teddy Bears Picnic, Wildlife Walkabout, Great British Spring Clean.



Green Space Volunteers gave 1,200 hours

(equivalent to around £13,000) for activities including events, butterfly surveys, coppicing and the creation of wildflower meadows.



The council worked with the Rotary Club and pupils & staff from three schools to plant

5,000

crocus bulbs across three sites.



The council became the first local authority in Hertfordshire to sign up to the Modern Slavery Charter.

In 2019/20 we will:

Begin work on an arts and culture space in the North Block improvements in the town centre.

Continue to work with the Police and other partners to reduce anti-social behaviour and support young people.

Healthy Living, Leisure and Play

In Stevenage over 1,300 children and their families joined us to celebrate National Play day

Over **3,360** children and young people are registered to use the playcentres and holiday playschemes.



67,043 visits to Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre including gyms, classes, badminton, squash and bowls.

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228,359 visits to Stevenage Swimming Centre including casual swims, lessons and classes.

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TOUR SERIES



The Council successfully hosted the Tour Series over the late May bank holiday as part of the Stevenage Cycling Festival. The event was televised on ITV with an estimated 10,000 people in attendance.

11,845 people took part in activities at Fairland Valley Park Sailing Centre including school engagement, events, functions and water sports.

healthy hub Stevenage

has now reached over **14,000** visitors accessing 20 different services and support groups provided by the council and 35 different partner organisations.

Stevenage CYCLING FESTIVAL

Stevenage Cycling Festival – engaged over 750 people in led rides, courses, workshops and events and included the launch of Stevenage Cycle Hub.

59th Stevenage**DAY**

was held on 17 June on King George V Playing Fields, with an estimated **30,000** people attending over the course of the day.

In 2019/20 we will:

Deliver the 60th Anniversary of Stevenage Day.
Explore opportunities to improve our leisure facilities.

Continue to work with our health and community partners to deliver the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.



We won an Excellence in Public Health Award for creating the town's first Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Delivering Excellence For You

We maintained a balanced budget this year despite central government funding being reduced. We are now looking at new ways to save money and identify income opportunities, to make us financially secure for the future.

We are working hard to improve the accessibility of our services and the customer experience.

The Customer Service Centre continues to be busy

Revenues and Benefits customers can now access online self-serve options.




Over **25,400** customers served on the counter

More than **179,600** calls made to our call centre

Over **124,700** online transactions were made with us this year.

88.5% rated our service as "Good"

A new and modern Council website is being developed to meet customer needs.

 **8,300**
over  **5,800**
over  **1,200**



We exceeded our targets for responding to customer service requests across a number of areas, such as...

5.96 days
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit claims and changes

9.82 days
Average time taken to complete routine repairs

We continue to strive to make Stevenage Borough Council a great place to work.



We have **15** apprentices



We have been awarded the Armed Force Covenant Silver Award, recognising us as an employer of choice for ex-service personnel and reservist employees.

In 2019/20 we will:

Look at more innovative ways to deliver services, aiming to improve the customer experience, increase productivity and make us less reliant on government funding.

Launch an improved website which is customer friendly and is accessible to use on mobile devices.

Introduce a new system to enable our waste and recycling teams to work more efficiently.

Develop staff skills to equip us for the future.