

Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report (2022-2023)



Introduction by the Leader and Chief Exec...



**Richard Henry –
Leader, Stevenage
Borough Council**

Welcome to our 2022/23 Annual Report and my first one as Leader of the Council. I am proud to share what we have achieved this year and our ongoing efforts to

make our award-winning town a great place to live, work and visit.

This year has not been without its challenges – the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine continue to affect our daily lives. Through close working with our partner organisations, we have been able to provide help and advice to people during these difficult times, including providing timely advice and guidance through our front-line services and website, opening 15 Warm Spaces across Stevenage and supporting our

voluntary and charitable communities to provide food and clothing to the most vulnerable in our community.

Alongside this work, we have continued to deliver on the priorities that we know are important to you. During 22/23 we progressed our plans to regenerate the town, we provided more homes for local families and worked with local residents to improve neighbourhood spaces and tackle anti-social behaviour. Through our Cooperative Neighbourhood programme activities, and ongoing resident engagement plans in 23/24 we will continue to listen to your views and act on these so that we can deliver the services that matter to you most.

Through this report, you will see just a few of the past year's highlights and successes, and in each section a summary of the priorities we are seeking to deliver in the coming year. I hope you enjoy reading this year's report and you will join me in looking forward to another productive and fulfilling year ahead.



**Matt Partridge –
Chief Executive,
Stevenage Borough
Council**

Over the past year, we have continued with our ambitious Future Town Future Council programme to transform the town

for current and future residents.

Our regeneration programme has made significant progress, with the successful launch of our Event Island Stevenage, the opening of the new Multi-Storey Car Park, and the launch of the new Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC) facilities at North Herts College Stevenage Campus. We have built more homes including social, affordable and for market sale - the proceeds from which are recycled to deliver more housing to help meet the growing demand in the town. We have invested in the maintenance of our buildings, including ongoing

de-carbonisation of Council homes to ensure that our net-zero target for 2030 is achieved. Through our ongoing investment in bio-diversity initiatives, such as the planting of 3 new community orchards, and our determination to progress our climate change commitments in 23/24, we remain on track to make Stevenage a greener place to live.

This year, we have increased the roll-out of online service options which allow residents to transact with the Council when and where it suits them. The development of the online service options will also help to reduce costs which, in a time of increasing financial challenges for the local government sector, will continue to be a key focus for 2023/24.

I am very proud of what my colleagues do on behalf of those we serve, and this report highlights just some of their many successes during the year. We will continue to build on these successes, and I look forward to what we will achieve as we continue to make Stevenage Even Better during 2023/24.

Cost of Living

Rising inflation and interest rates continue to have a significant impact on local people especially those costs related to fuel, food and utilities. The Council continues to work hard to provide support for residents, and over the past year we have worked closely with partners to ensure that meaningful support can be provided where it is needed most. We are committed to supporting our residents during this challenging time and we will continue to do so in 2023/24.

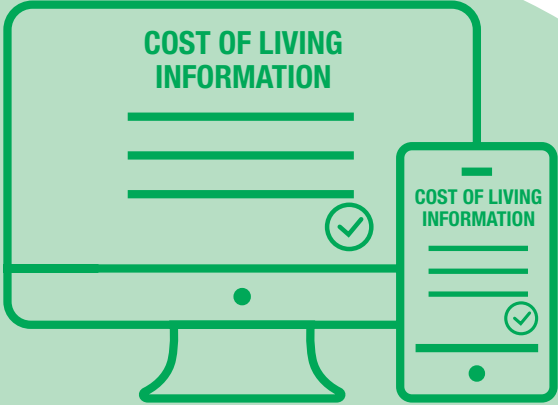
This year we have:

Secured **£100,000** from the Household Support Fund (**£67,000** for food poverty & **£33,000** to help provide support for rising energy costs). This funding has supported **38** organisations to provide food, clothing and energy vouchers to those in need



Supported **15** Warm Spaces across the town to provide a place for people to keep warm, get some food and drink and access support services

Helped signpost **1,700** people to Council support and Government guidance, local grant opportunities, and support with household costs such as school uniforms, through our dedicated Cost of Living information hub on our website



A Cooperative Council

As a Cooperative Council, we are passionate about our communities and making sure they have a say in how services are delivered. 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 we have:

- Secured £760,000 from the government's Community Renewal Fund to support our Community Wealth Building initiatives. Some of this funding has helped provide carbon footprint training for businesses and enabled the Council to review its procurement processes to ensure the bidding process is much more accessible for small businesses.
- Secured £1million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to support our communities, businesses people and skills over the next three financial years. This funding will be used to:
 - Support local business to improve their digital skills and their ability to bid for contracts
 - Help businesses work with our local schools to raise awareness of being more sustainable
 - Work with our voluntary sector organisations to make sure they have the same access to opportunities as businesses do
 - Encourage greater diversity in the types of organisations we have in the town, for example Cooperatives, Community Interest Companies and Social Enterprises



Delivering for Stevenage

At Stevenage Borough Council we have circa 700 members of staff who deliver customer service support, housing, waste, environmental health, planning and leisure services. In 2022/23, 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 year we have:

Worked closely with our partners to ensure that appropriate support is provided in response to **195** adult and children safeguarding cases



Dealt with **97,550** enquiries, including:

14,200
Emails

550
Social media enquiries



80,600
Calls

2,200
Customers served face to face



Collected **18,518 tonnes** of refuse which is equivalent to an average of **491 kg** per household

Reused, recycled or composted **11,385 tonnes** of waste – that's on average the same weight as the Eiffel Tower!



Removed **2,899** fly tips of illegally dumped waste



Carried out **561** vehicle condition checks on taxi and private hire vehicles





Investigated **409** noise complaints, of which **83** related to barking dogs and **129** to loud music, and served **7** abatement notices

Dealt with **123** service requests relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation, including **19** regarding suspected illegal properties due to the number of households living at the property

Carried out **49** inspections of non-licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation



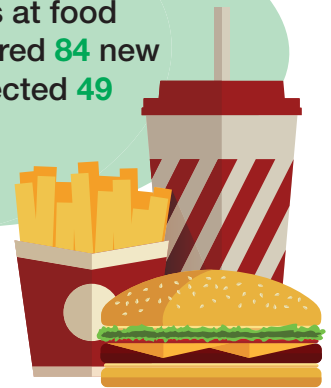
Investigated **71** complaints about standards in single private rented properties and served **9** enforcement notices

Dealt with **57** service requests about rubbish accumulations on domestic premises and served **5** enforcement notices



Dealt with **6** filthy and verminous premises

Undertook **166** food safety interventions at food businesses, registered **84** new premises and inspected **49** new businesses



Completed safety checks of **48** private rental properties hosting Ukrainian refugees



With our partners at the Business & Technology centre we helped support

72 new jobs being created

48 new businesses start up

Future Town Future Council Achievements

Our Corporate Plan 'Future Town Future Council' sets out the Council's vision for revitalising both the town and council for the 21st century. Our key aims and objectives are laid out across five programmes of work:

- Transforming our Town
- Cooperative Neighbourhoods
- More Social and Affordable Homes
- Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving town
- Making Your Money Count



The following pages set out what we have achieved in each programme.



Transforming our Town

STEVENAGE
BETTER
a place for everyone

Our town is evolving and becoming **Even Better**, with the introduction of new transport facilities, spaces for leisure activities, new workspace, homes and arts and culture.

By providing new spaces for our communities in a town centre that is vibrant and green, we are supporting our businesses and transforming our town into a place with something for everyone. We aim to create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work and play.

This year we have:



Event Island

- Opened a new event space in October 2022. Event Island Stevenage is on the site of the former bus station. This is a multi-purpose space for the community with a stage, areas for events and informal play all set in a green space in the centre of the town.



- All trees were retained on site and 11 new trees and over 1,800 sustainable plants and flowers were planted.







- There were 260 entries from local school children to name the new area – Event Island Stevenage.

Transforming our Town continued...



Christ Winter Photography Huber

- The Railway North car park – adjacent to the Railway Station – closed in May 2022 as works began on the new Multi-Storey Car Park (opened in May 2023!). The car park also has a secure storage facility for bicycles, operated by specialist company Spokesafe.

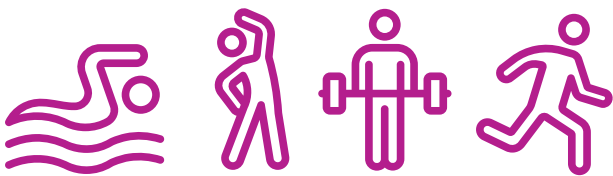
 <p>622 PARKING SPACES</p>	 <p>30 BLUE BADGE SPACES</p>	 <p>30 EV SPACES WITH FUTURE CAPACITY TO INCREASE</p>	 <p>80 BIKE SPACES IN A SECURE STORAGE FACILITY</p>
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- In March 2021 Stevenage was awarded £37.5 million as part of the national Government's Towns Fund, which is allocated to nine projects across the town.

Transforming our Town continued...

- One of the Towns Fund projects is a new Sports and Leisure Hub for the town. Morgan Sindall has been appointed to help deliver the project and the Council will consult with the local community as we work together towards a facility with something for all.

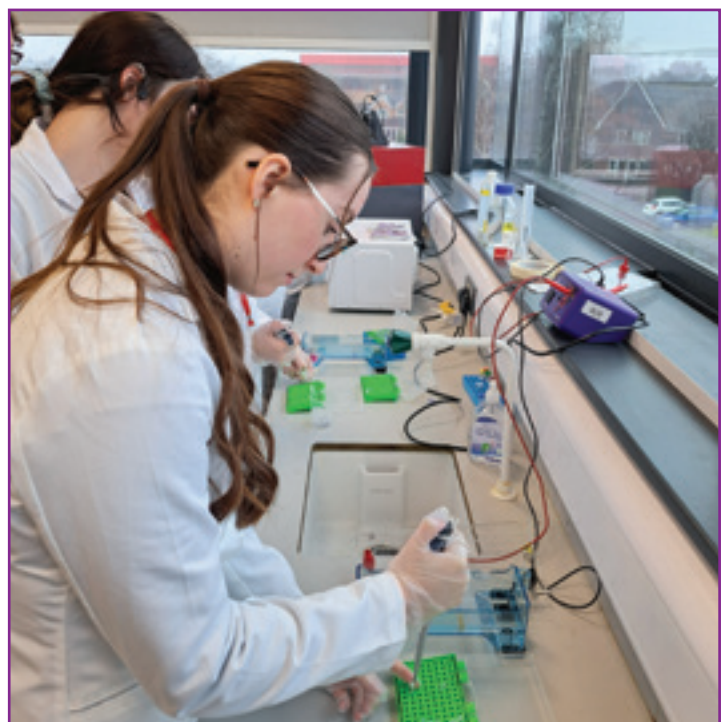


- Stevenage Sports and Leisure Hub will be a flexible state-of-the-art facility with swimming, studios, gym space and flexible sports facilities
- Stevenage has continued to see the growth of the life science industry in the town. Work is almost complete on the new £65 million European Headquarters for Autolus Therapeutics, bringing new jobs to the town.



- Elsewhere, a planning application for a new life sciences development at the Forum has been granted, which will generate 1,850 jobs on site, with the new workforce adding £98 million to the local economy every year.
- Through our community outreach work we have engaged with 8 community centres to get views on our programme of work, and this engagement will continue to expand in 23/24 with a focus on schools

- Increasing skills and opportunities is a key priority of transformation. The first phase of the Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC) launched in March, with the new facilities including a refurbished laboratory, state of the art industry equipment and upgrades to lighting for sustainability improvements. The project is being delivered in partnership with North Hertfordshire College and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Hertfordshire LEP)



Transforming our Town continued...

- Each year, the new science laboratories will be able to accommodate over 140 full time students and an equal number of Apprentices and Higher Education students!



- Our partners have started work on their sites within the town centre. The Guinness Partnership have started construction on the former Matalan site. Phase 1 will provide 143 one and two-bedroomed apartments and all new homes in this phase will be offered as affordable tenures
- We granted planning permission for 4 major developments including:
 - re-development of the Forum Centre to deliver a new Life Science development
 - redevelop the Sanders Building and Gunnels Building to create new employment floorspace
 - MBDA were permitted to create a new research and development facility
 - Permission for a new TKMaxx and Homesense store within Roaring Meg.



In the Town Centre we:

- Welcomed 12 new businesses into the town
- We hosted 4 business resilience events to support our local businesses with over 150 business taking part
- We organised 18 public events including our Halloween Trail and Christmas Light Switch on

WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24:

- Our new Multi-Storey Car Park and secure cycle storage facility will become fully operational
- Subject to Member consideration construction will start on phase one of the £350 million SG1 town centre regen scheme on the former Swingate House site
- A design for the new Leisure and Swimming Centre will be developed
- Proposals for a new Public Services Hub will continue to progress, offering a one-stop location for public services including health, library, voluntary, café, and council all under one roof
- A new events programme for the town centre and Event Island Stevenage will be delivered

More Social and Affordable Homes

The total number of new affordable homes provided by the council since 2015 is 336 and we are on track to achieve our ambition of building a further 396 homes by 2025.

This year we have:

- Reinvested more into affordable and social homes, with work progressing on Helston House in Symonds Green with the funds secured from the private sales of De-Haviland House on North Road.



- Secured planning permission following significant community engagement for the 27 one, two and three - bed supported accommodation unit at Dunn Close as well as 17 private homes at Courtlands, with completion on both sites due Winter 2023/ Spring 2024

- Completed 11, one-bedroom homes at Oaks Cross, providing supported accommodation for people who find themselves homeless. This scheme has also been shortlisted in the Innovative Housing categories at this year's LGC and MJ awards and secured an additional £525,000 funding pot for the Councils rough sleeper initiative for the next three years from 2022-2025



More Social and Affordable Homes continued...



- Completed two rounds of consultation for the developments proposals of The Oval, with over 4700 responses for the online survey as well as over 200 residents attending the multiple in person events
- We continue to work towards the Councils Carbon Neutral pledge with all new builds now benefiting from a range of environmental enhancements such as solar panels, triple glazing, heat recovery systems as well as being zero gas.
- At the heart of each development is the Five Star quality approach, which is helping to define the quality of our wider housing programme:



WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- Handover the 29 new social rent apartments at Helston House, Symonds Green
- Progress the 27-bed supported accommodation unit at Dunn Close
- Progress the 17 new private sale homes at Courtlands
- Aim to secure planning permission and subsequently start works at the proposed developments on Shephall View and at Brent Court
- Hold further consultation rounds for the development proposals at the Oval with the intention to submit proposals to the planning department late 2023/24

Managing and Improving our Homes

We currently look after over 8000 Council Homes across the town, and we are committed to providing good quality homes for all our tenants.

This year we have:



Removed and disposed of **55 tonnes** of fly tipping from our flat blocks – that's as much as seven elephants!

Made **420** visits to our independent living flat blocks and **156** visits to our independent living schemes to make sure they were clean and tidy



1796 visits w to all our flat bloc clean and provid and clean enviro all our residents.

Cleaned over **330,000** square meters of glass in our flatblocks, independent living schemes and communal areas – the same as cleaning the Shard 6 times or 48 football pitches.



We have dealt with:

Over **2000** emergency repairs

Over **7500** urgent repairs

Over **16,300** routine repairs

...and **90%** of our repairs were fixed first time



Through our Major Works contract we provided the following:

Kitchens – **76**

Bathrooms – **33**

Boilers – **94**

Full Central Heating – **35**

Electrics – **15**

Window replacements – **1**

Door replacements – **95**



More Social and Affordable Homes continued...

- Through our £45 million 5-year flat block and garages refurbishment programme delivered through Mulalley & Wates:



- As a contractor invested in making a positive social impact on the community Mulalley & Wates in partnership with the Council have:



- replaced and renewed communal heating systems at all 15 of our sheltered housing blocks
- refurbished 24 lifts in our flat blocks as part of lift refurbishment project
- retro-fitted sprinklers at all 7 of our high rise flat blocks
- let 340 homes through either our own social housing or nominations to Housing Associations
- received 2004 new applications to join our housing register
- With Government funding we supported 16 prison leavers into private rented tenancies to help rebuild their lives and prevent them from returning to prison.



WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- through the delivery of our capital and revenue programmes we will continue to invest in the Council Homes to provide safe high quality housing for residents
- Complete a review of our repairs function to ensure we are delivery an efficient and effective service to our tenants
- Implement our new statutory duties under the Building & Fire Safety Act
- Implement our new duties under the Regulator for Social Housing consumer standards
- Establish a replacement for the Housing Management Advisory Board to ensure the tenants voice is strengthened

Cooperative Neighbourhoods

The Cooperative Neighbourhoods programme was launched in late summer 2020 to ensure residents are at the heart of decision-making. The neighbourhood-based teams work co-operatively with residents, ward members 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.

This year we have:



- secured £125,000 funding from central government to improve how we interact with residents digitally. 1700 residents responded to this survey to let us know what improvements they would like to see in their local area
- Neighbourhood Wardens have been working in specific areas of the town to help tackle issues such as fly tipping and dog fouling and work with residents to identify what really matters to them
- obtained over 4,500 sign ups to our digital newsletters - which provide regular updates on what is going on in the local area. To sign up please visit our council website at www.stevenage.gov.uk
- awarded £60,000 through our local community budgets and supported over 50 organisations to help improve their neighbourhoods

Cooperative Neighbourhoods continued...

- we were awarded £214,000 through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund over the next few years to deliver projects that matter to residents and will help deliver positive results for neighbourhoods. Including:
 - improvements to neighbourhood public realms and neighbourhood centres
 - local arts and culture projects
 - local volunteering projects and events
- demolished and rebuilt 27 garages over 4 sites which are wider to fit modern day vehicles
- improved our neighbourhood areas by refurbishing 194 garages across 26 sites, including the replacement of hardstanding, fencing and surrounding areas of garage blocks, and the addition of solar lighting
- Generated over £133,000 income from letting of empty garages - enabling us to fund more services that matter to residents



WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- Develop and implement resident led Cooperative Neighbourhoods Plans for each of our neighbourhood areas
- Through our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan we will work cooperatively with our local communities to take pride in where they live and best support the needs of local residents
- Continue to build on our engagement with our residents through both traditional and digital consultation
- Support our Youth Mayor & Youth Council to become stronger, more vibrant and representative of Stevenage's young community
- Implement our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to ensure we continue champion the rights of individuals across our workforce and local communities

Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving

Climate Change

We aim to improve the quality of life for Stevenage residents and enhance the experience of visitors. This is achieved through our approach to tackling climate change, our focus on community safety, the vision for culture and leisure and our plans for a healthier Stevenage. We continue to look at ways to reduce our carbon footprint and encourage our residents to make changes to contribute to our goal of being net zero.

This year we have:

- planted 4,000 tree saplings with the help of our local community to create a new woodland in the South Field of Fairlands Valley Park
- worked with Wenta to launch an affordable net zero emissions service for small businesses, and provide support to 100 local businesses in reducing their carbon footprint



- Retained 5 Green Flag awards for:
 - Fairlands Valley Park
 - Town Centre Gardens
 - Hampson Park
 - Shephalbury Park
 - Weston Road Cemetery
- Planted three new community orchards at Peartree Park, Letchmore Park and Bedwell Park



Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving continued... Climate Change



- Helped residents claim 1,000 trees as part of the “Your Tree Our Future” tree giveaway scheme



- As part of the Great British Spring Clean, three community litter picks were organised. Across all the litter picks, 75 volunteers took part and over 103 bags of rubbish were collected
- Our Green Space Volunteers gave over 1,000 hours to help improve our open spaces in Stevenage
- 35 households have accepted solar PV installation under the Solar Together Scheme
- 150 homes energy efficiency has been improved through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme 1B which aims to raise the energy efficiency of low income and low energy performance homes (those with energy performance certificate (EPC) ratings of E, F or G)
- upgraded 7 of our independent living sites to hybrid gas boilers and air source heat pumps, and 2 sites have upgraded to solar thermal systems, which will reduce 34% of greenhouse gas emissions from these sites.
- 209 households received an energy efficiency upgrade under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1
- The new Railway North Multi Storey Car Park is equipped with solar panel and battery storage that could save up to 6.6 tonnes carbon per year, as well as 30 electrical vehicle charging point and bike storage spaces.

WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

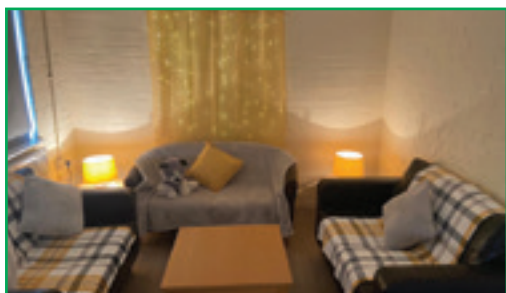
- In partnership with Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, create a New Biodiversity Action Plan
- Continue to manage new and existing meadow grassland sites
- Plant 110 trees as part of our biodiversity commitment
- Install 12 new electrical vehicle facilities in our neighbourhood centre car parks and continue to work closely with the County Council to encourage an electric bus solution that meets Stevenage’s needs
- Establish and pilot our neighbourhood green plans
- Establish the Dragons Den Repair Café and encourage new local initiatives through the Dragons Den project

Community Safety

We continue to work closely with our partners to keep our residents safe. As a result, we have seen fantastic achievements through our Community Safety team and the SoSafe Partnership which brings all the key agencies in this area together including the Police and the Police & Crime Commissioners office.



This year we have:



- supported 69 families to access safe space accommodation
- helped 1,682 people with intensive support including 159 male victims
- Provided 22 training sessions on domestic abuse awareness to our partners
- trained 164 external professionals on Modern Slavery awareness
- Through our No More Service, provided complex needs support to individuals to tackle issues which negatively impact on their daily life. This includes responding to
 - 150 new referrals
 - 127 new referrals to the Youth service – a 16% increase on last year
 - launched an eight-week programme for domestic abuse perpetrators called Evolve which runs in parallel with the No More Service. 49 referrals have been made since its launch
- Investigated 490 reports of fly-tipping
- Served 10 Community Protection Notice warnings and 6 Community Protection Notices for ASB
- Launched a women's centre with partners to provide a safe, women only environment, to provide support and information for women of all ages



WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- Pilot the Youth domestic abuse perpetrator Evolve program, developed from the adult program
- Enhance the status of the SADA Charity to ensure development by promoting its launch at partnership events
- Expand the success of the AOP (Adult Offender Protocol) housing approach by applying the model to other offender groups

Culture, Leisure and a Healthy Stevenage

We have a vision of culture, leisure and health that will ensure we remain a lively town which is a great place to live for residents as well as a great destination for visitors.

This year we have:

- secured funding of £110,000 in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association for the investment and refurbishment of the tennis courts at Shephalbury Park.
- Delivered 599 sessions in Azonto Fitness, Walking Football and Walking Netball and spent £14,000 on health qualifications through the This Girl Can initiative and the Herts Sports Partnership



- in partnership with HertsMind Network, Healthy Hub Stevenage (Adult), Govia ThamesLink and wider key stakeholders launched the Nightlight Crisis Cafe. The café, situated in the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre on Lytton Way, has been set up to help those in need of immediate support a non-judgemental listening ear for emotional and practical support and signpost to other local sources of therapy or advice



- The annual walking festival was held during National Walking Month. 65 people participated in the family trail at Fairlands Valley Park. 370 walkers participated throughout the week including 71 new walkers
- secured £129,000 in funding to promote health related projects following the re-opening of leisure facilities as part of the COVID recovery plan.
- made available £60,000 of funding for three secondary schools to open up the school facilities to more community clubs and people in the community.

- Supported and in some cases directly delivered 30 events across the town with over 50,000 people attending them, including:

- Stevenage Day
- Christmas Light Switch On (Old Town and New Town)
- Christmas Market
- Stevenage International Day
- Halloween Tastic
- Stevenage Fireworks Display
- Armed Forces Day
- Remembrance Sunday
- Armistice Day
- Pride Awards
- Queens Jubilee Picnic in the Park Event
- Queens Jubilee Beacon Lighting
- Ukraine Charity Concert



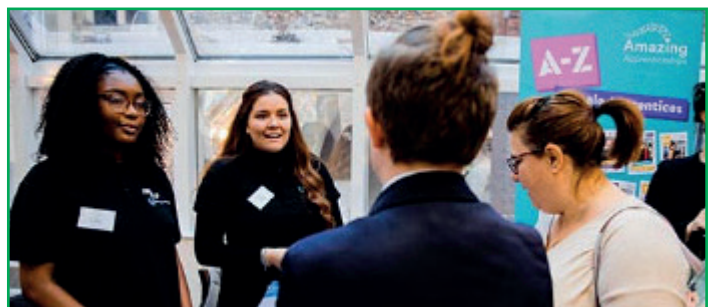
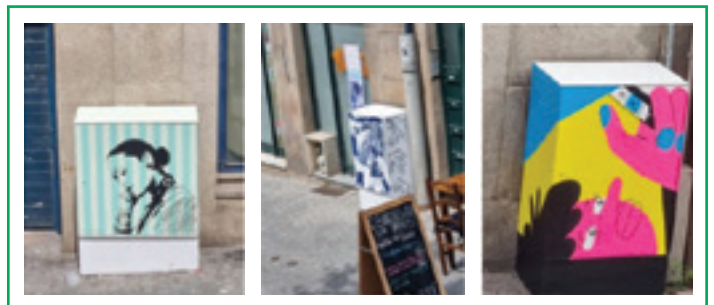


- Stevenage Museum secured £10,000 in funding from Historic England for a project to explore the town's working history

WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- Develop our Young People's Health Hub programme and integrate it with our Adult Healthy Hub
- Continue to support the Nightlight Crisis Café with a focus on men's mental health projects
- Build the capacity of the local creative sector, including J7 Creatives and the Arts and Heritage Forum
- Work with local businesses, telecoms providers and local graffiti artists to explore how graffiti tagging can be tackled in an interesting and dynamic way
- Look for funding opportunities to expand our cultural events programme
- Provide a wide range of high-quality leisure, culture and arts events and services that are affordable and accessible
- Through our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan we will continue to work with our young people to improve their access to STEM careers through in-person parent events such as Generation Stevenage



Making Your Money Count

We aim to ensure sufficient resources are available to deliver on the council's priorities while remaining financial

This year we

paid out over **£142,000** in Discretionary Housing Payments to provide financial support to help with rent or housing costs

awarded **£5.9million** as part of our Council Tax Support scheme payments to help people struggling to pay their council tax

distributed **£5million** in Government Council Tax Energy Rebate to over 37,500 households



- Provided £7.4million in business rate relief
- paid out £20.9million in Housing Benefit
- launched a new skips and trade waste brochure and events brochure to promote our growing commercial services to the business community
- generated £15,800 through businesses using Stevenage as a filming location
- won a Granicus Operating Efficiency Award for the changes we made to our customer service centre to become more digital
- Successfully awarded Government grant funding of £750,000 to make digital and cyber improvements to help reform our services
- Over 203,000 transactions were made online with over 25,500 forms submitted
- had over 9.5million page views on the Stevenage Borough Council website and digitised services to make it easier for residents to access services, including:



- booking, paying and managing a bulky waste collection online
- choose and request to rent a garage online
- arrange for household waste collection online
- launched new phone options in our customer service centre to promote digital channels and demand on customer services
- Complaints and feedback methods have been modernised, with new online feedback methods

WHAT WE WILL DO

In 2023-24 we will:

- Grow the trade waste function to offer a one-stop shop
- Implement further digital and new ways of working through our Transformation programme to improve our services for customers and staff
- Complete the update of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 24/25 onwards
- Complete the update of the 30-year HRA Business Plan setting out how available funds to maintain, improve and build more council homes will be spent
- Review our Cooperative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy to maximise savings and generate new income



Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report

(2022-2023)

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