

# A Safer, Stronger, Sustainable Stevenage

➤ *Stevenage Labour's 2022 manifesto*



# Labour's pledges to you in Stevenage

- **Improve the availability of Housing, with key focus on Council and Social Housing + Building Homes for Local People**
- **Keep Stevenage Safe**
- **Create Jobs and Growth through Regeneration + Encourage investment in our economy and build the wealth of our community**
- **A Town with a Vibrant, Regenerated Town Centre**
- **Climate Change – Delivering a Net Zero Carbon Stevenage by 2030**
- **Making Your Money Count - by ensuring you set our priorities**
- **A Clean and Green Stevenage**
- **Ensure our Co-operative Council gives people a real say in how we deliver services + Give people a real say in our Co-operative Neighbourhoods**
- **Health and Wellbeing – Tackling health inequality**
- **Prioritise sustainable transport and create 'Living Streets'**
- **Reimagining Stevenage - Implementing our Culture and Leisure strategy**
- **Promoting equality of opportunity – Led by our Equalities Commission**



# Stevenage Labour – Working for our Community, Transforming our Town, Delivering Your Priorities

When you vote in a local election, you want to be sure that your vote really counts, that the party you vote for cares about you and our town, and that the promises made to you at election time will be kept.

The Labour Party in Stevenage truly believes that engaging the people we represent delivers the very best outcomes. That is as true when we are developing services as when we are considering future initiatives for the town. We also believe in taxing fairly and spending wisely. Proper community engagement keeps us in touch with our residents' priorities and means we are able to prioritise our spending on things that matter to you. Our values of fairness, equality and opportunity mean we take the needs of everyone in our community seriously.

Your priorities are our priorities, and we don't just talk about what we will do, we really deliver. We are genuinely proud of what we have achieved, working with you and our partners over the last four years. We have kept the promises we made you in our last manifesto – of our 120 commitments, we successfully delivered 117. We will continue to deliver for our town.

We have led an ambitious £1bn regeneration programme for the Town Centre delivering the jobs, homes and leisure facilities that will help keep our retail shops vibrant and viable.

We are building council homes: we have built 300 already and have 300 more in the pipeline - homes for local people and built to the highest environmental standards. Through our Housing First provision we are able to offer a housing option to prevent street homelessness and have built new facilities to provide for complex needs on site.

We are tackling anti-social behaviour with our neighbourhood wardens and engaging residents in our local neighbourhoods by creating a community team in each of our areas with funding to help them plan new local initiatives for the future.

We are tackling domestic abuse, providing a wide range of support to families. This ranges from safety advice and practical help like food parcels, to our safe spaces that provide homes for families fleeing a dangerous situation. We championed the award-winning Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA).

We provide a wide range of leisure, culture and sport opportunities including our wonderful theatre, museum, sporting facilities across the town, including Ridlins sports complex, the golf course, and Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre, and we work hard maintaining the precious green spaces around the town including our five Green Flag parks.

We deliver high quality services like waste and recycling without imposing additional charges on our residents (we do not impose the additional green waste charge that so many other authorities do, which can add a further 20% to a council tax bill). We provide most of our services directly, by employing local people and through our Stevenage Works programme. We make sure that money spent on our contracts benefits local people by creating jobs, apprenticeships, and training opportunities.

We have achieved a lot in the last four years, but we are not complacent. We are incredibly ambitious for our town's future, with a vision for our science and technology-based economy, excellent housing for all, safe, clean and green neighbourhoods and a strong community where everyone feels valued and is able to participate.

Our Housing Development and Housing First schemes demonstrate our commitment and your aspiration that everyone should have a warm, well-maintained and affordable home which meets their needs.

We know how important it is to Stevenage people that everyone in our town is safe and feels safe. Our manifesto pledges to keep Stevenage safe will build upon our strong track record of partnership, working towards an even safer town.

We are actively working to develop the exciting science and technology economy that is growing so quickly along Gunnels Wood Road. We want to ensure that the town has opportunities for our young people in developing the technologies that will change the world in the next two decades. With our new science and technology centre and enterprise centres, being developed as part of the Town Deal, we can ensure it is our young people super-charging the new economy of the UK.

We are ambitious to see the aspirations of our residents and businesses reflected in our Town Centre as we move into the key SG1 phase of our regeneration programme. This will see us implementing key projects like a new leisure centre; garden square; new library and museum; cycling and walking heritage trail; Science & Technology and Enterprise Centres; and a new Gateway Area for our railway station.

Stevenage's location is key to its success. Making sure we maintain the transport infrastructure we need to connect us to opportunities further afield, while achieving our ambition of being a net-zero carbon town by 2030, requires some innovative thinking. We have already created a public transport interchange as part of our town centre regeneration. We have successfully bid for funding to convert our buses to electric buses and aim to rapidly increase the number of EV charging points across the town. We are also bidding to the government for funding to ensure our fabulous integrated 45-kilometre cycle network is restored and fit for a new generation.

We know there are challenges facing us and we must play our part in tackling climate change, improving the digital capability of the town and continuing to tackle inequalities.

Last year we set out our climate change goal to get to net zero by 2030 and we are now working hard to implement the huge programme of work needed to make that change. As well as making transport changes, we need to decarbonise our housing stock. We are also renewing our biodiversity pledges, with a focus on increasing and protecting our wildlife spaces. As part of this, we plan to create new lakes and ponds and plant over 2,000 trees by 2030.

Our Equalities Commission is working to identify how we can ensure that every resident and community in our town can participate fully in Stevenage life. We know there are inequalities based on ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, health and the economy. We cannot create the future we all want to see for Stevenage unless everyone is able to benefit from the opportunities our town offers.

Stevenage Labour and Co-operative councillors have a track record of delivering for Stevenage and a real vision for a prosperous, healthy, clean, green, safe and thriving town. Give us your vote in May and you can trust us that your priorities will be our priorities. Just like you, we care about our community, because we are part of our community. Let us all take Stevenage forward together.

**Councillor Sharon Taylor**  
**Labour Leader, Stevenage Borough**  
**Council**

**Jim Callaghan**  
**Chair, Stevenage Labour**  
**Party**



# Improve the availability of Housing, with key focus on Council and Social Housing + Building Homes for Local People

Stevenage, like everywhere else in the UK, is suffering from a shortage of social and affordable housing. Having a safe, decent, energy efficient and affordable home is key to our quality of life, achieving our potential and feeling part of our community. We want to continue with our programme to build more homes for the people of our town, focussing on developing as much social housing as possible and ensuring our stock of Council homes is kept in good condition and improving their thermal efficiency. By doing this we will help alleviate fuel poverty, which is becoming more important to people's lives in the current climate. In the tradition of new towns, we want to ensure that homes built are accompanied by all the facilities that are needed to support quality of life: doctors' surgeries and schools; shops and transport; and high-quality green spaces and leisure facilities. We continue our Council homes programme at our most recent sites at Addison House, Shephall Way, Helston House, Scarborough Avenue and ongoing at Kenilworth Close. We know that having a safe, decent home is one of the top priorities of Stevenage people.

**Our promise to you is to aim for everyone to have good housing and we will:**

- Continue to build new Council homes ensuring use of the most up-to-date, energy efficient designs using our 5\* quality programme
  1. Sustainable development
  2. Genuinely affordable rents
  3. Tenure blind design, integrating rented and owner-occupied homes
  4. Making best use of land
  5. Community led consultation
- Complete our housing development at Kenilworth Close, including the state-of-the-art Independent Living Scheme and progress our plans for homes at Shephall View, our Independent Living Scheme at Brent Court and our Housing First homes at Dunn Close and Oaks Cross
- Look for further opportunities to develop Council homes on Council owned land
- Develop and renew our 'tenant & leaseholder voice' through the Housing Management Board, Customer Scrutiny Panel, and the Leaseholder Forum, ensuring a tenant-focussed co-operative housing service
- Develop the innovative Housing First service we have introduced to ensure we take a 'homes first' approach to tackling street homelessness alongside support for complex needs. We will also continue developing our work with Haven First
- Continue to recognise protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) in our allocations policy, as well as those who have served in the armed forces and those who have a connection with Stevenage
- Ensure that at least 60% of our new homes, including in the Town Centre, are built on previously developed land and look to use co-operative socialist garden city values in all our developments

- Use our Local Plan to ensure new developments are well-planned, well-designed, and sustainable and have the facilities they need included in development plans
- Complete the work on our multi-million pound plan to refurbish all of our 500 flat blocks by 2023
- Explore the licensing of private sector rented property and work with partners to support those experiencing poor quality private rented properties or problem landlords
- Work with residents to provide secure cycle parking where required
- Provide information for young people on housing options and work to develop new schemes to meet their needs
- Develop our Wholly Owned Housing Company to increase the number of affordable homes available, buying land, developing, and managing homes for local people



# Keep Stevenage Safe

We want to ensure that wherever you live in Stevenage you will be safe and feel safe. We want to build on the successes of our award-winning Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA) by continuing to develop and extend the service as well as tackle those people who perpetrate such abuse. We also want to continue to decrease crime associated with drugs and alcohol through extending our 'No More Service' and working with individuals directly, as well as through the Housing First Service, by securing as much Government funding as possible.

We know that feeling safe at home and on the streets, and reducing crime and disorder, are top priorities of Stevenage people and we believe our co-operative approach to working with residents, victims and partners will help us tackle the offending that affects people and impacts most on people's fear of crime.

**Our promise to you is to work towards making Stevenage even safer. We will:**

- Continue to lobby for adequate street lighting, to include all footpaths and cycleways. Since Herts County Council decided to turn off the streetlights at night we have been campaigning for the lights to go back on during all hours of darkness
- Work with the Police and other partners to prioritise the protection of women and girls in Stevenage, both at home and in their communities
- Campaign for misogyny to be on the statute books as a hate crime and for Herts Police to record such crimes accordingly
- Work with local residents through an enlarged and more comprehensive neighbourhood warden service and community safety team to tackle issues of antisocial behaviour in their area and where necessary, and in more serious cases, undertake legal interventions
- Develop the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA) for all groups affected, including preventative services, to help break the cycle of abuse
- Campaign for the Herts Police and Crime Commissioner to include strategies to tackle cybercrime, fraud and scamming within his Police and Crime plan and to raise awareness of these crimes among those most at risk of becoming victims of them, in particular older people
- Continue to invest in facilities such as play centres and basketball courts to help prevent offending behaviour and promote more positive outcomes for our young people, encouraging them to feel valued members of their local community



# Create Jobs and Growth through Regeneration + Encourage investment in our economy and build the wealth of our community

Labour will ensure that Stevenage enhances its reputation for encouraging investment and for supporting our existing companies as well as new ones. Labour's main aim is to create an environment where local people can benefit from access to secure, well-paid jobs, and where our young people have access to good training opportunities.

We have world-beating companies in Stevenage, specialising in technology, aerospace and pharmaceuticals. We were delighted when Glaxo Smith Kline announced its intention to invest £400 million in a new campus in Stevenage creating 5,000 new jobs. In addition, Autolus chose to move their European headquarters to Stevenage, investing £60 million in their new biopharmaceutical facility in Marshgate. Our Bioscience catalyst and life-science ecosystem makes Stevenage the largest gene therapy cluster in the UK - and the third largest in the world. Airbus Defence and Space (the home of the Mars Rover) has recently invested heavily in their new offices in Gunnels Wood Road, showcasing their intent to promote their Stevenage base to the world's aerospace industries. We believe it is vital to the future of the town to ensure that our industries have a town in which they can flourish.

Stevenage has excellent connections by road, rail and air, making it perfectly placed geographically to connect business with their customers across the UK and the world. Our Co-operative Labour Council has worked with businesses and partners to develop our infrastructure, including new rail services, Town Centre regeneration and new housing. As the town develops, we will continue to work with business to build the healthy economy that generates the jobs and wealth to support our community.

**Our promise to you is to aim to build the wealth of our community and we will:**

- Regenerate our Town Centre so that it reflects our world-beating businesses and the aspirations of Stevenage people. Much progress has been made so far, and as a Co-operative Labour Council we will engage with all the community to illustrate the notion that the heart of the town does lie in its people
- Work with local residents and businesses in the Old Town to ensure that our historic High Street has a sustainable future and that both daytime and night economies are supported to thrive
- Use the Council's considerable expertise in sourcing funding to create secure employment for local people wherever possible and, where Council contracts are offered, ensure our local businesses are at the front of the queue
- Encourage an extensive apprenticeship programme, working with and alongside our local businesses. The conduit of the Stevenage Economic Task Force, facilitated by the Council will, with its partner organisations, focus on sourcing available opportunities for companies to embrace the concept of apprenticeships - especially for the young people in our community
- Encourage union membership among Stevenage Borough Council employees. Your Labour Council is proud of the good relationship built up with our workforce and trade unions. We will continue to foster this partnership and our reputation as an example of a good employer
- Encourage entrepreneurs and provide support to new and growing businesses through our Business Technology Centre. We will embrace the concept of a business incubator and provide advice and guidance to potential start-ups
- Provide essential financial opportunities and support to Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau
- Encourage filming in the town, ensuring that Stevenage benefits from the extensive investment in the film industry in Herts



# A Town with a Vibrant, Regenerated Town Centre

**Stevenage Labour Council has made huge progress on the regeneration of the Town Centre. You told us it was your top priority for the town and we have worked with partners to create a master plan that ensures our Town Centre can continue to thrive by incorporating new shops, homes, leisure and café facilities, new public squares and parks and a one-stop hub with access to health, police, library, County and Borough Council services as well as an exhibition space and coffee shop. Following the pledges we made in our 2018 manifesto, we have already made significant progress with our regeneration plans including the following:**

1. Securing £37.5 million of funding from the Towns' Fund
2. Securing over £750 million of private sector investment in our Town Centre
3. The development of Queensway North including residential, shopping and leisure facilities
4. Securing the development of the European HQ of Autolus, a pharmaceutical company in the heart of the Town Centre, creating 300 jobs for local people
5. The conversion of Town Square North to a modern co-space working facility
6. Creating a family zone in Market Place
7. Opening our visitor centre which has enabled thousands of Stevenage people to contribute to planning our Town Centre
8. Working with our developer Mace to ensure work commences on the major SG1 phase of Town Centre development in 2022
9. Refurbishing the existing multi-storey car park and obtaining planning permission for a new cycle-, electric vehicle- and car-park at Station North
10. Commencing the consultation phase of the area action plan for the railway station
11. Securing the development of the fifth platform at Stevenage railway station
12. Building the new bus transport interchange due to be open in Spring 2022
13. Ensuring, as we develop our Town Centre, that it is accessible to all, including those with disabilities, for example the Disability Discrimination Act compliant toilets and changing facilities in the new bus station
14. Creating a climate change strategy for Town Centre development
15. Commencing our Stevenage Works programme to create jobs, training places and apprenticeships as part of the Town Centre development works



**This is a great start and we can see our Town Centre regenerating and transforming before our eyes, but there is a lot more to do. We will continue to work with our partners on the Town Development Board to drive this change. Our new pledges for this 2022 manifesto are:**

- Always work with our residents on their priorities as we take Town Centre transformation forward
- Resource and deliver the ten projects in the Towns' Fund deal to ensure they are all progressed on budget and in time. Those projects are:
  - A new sports and leisure hub
  - A science, innovation & technology training centre for local people
  - Pedestrian and cycling connectivity, including an Arts & Heritage trail
  - Station Gateway
  - Digital infrastructure – hyperfast broadband
  - Town Enterprise Centre
  - Biotech offices and key worker housing
  - Garden Square including retail, commercial and leisure
  - National New Towns Heritage Centre
  - Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure improvements
- Work with development partners Mace to deliver the major SG1 phase of the Town Centre regeneration including: housing; a new school and a new linear park at the south of the Town Centre; new retail opportunities and homes on the site of the former Swingate building; improvements to the Town Square, including the garden square on the site of the former bus station; development plans for 'The Hub' with public, private and voluntary sector partners
- Work with development partners Reef to deliver the HQ for Autolus and further development of commercial, residential and retail opportunities at Queensway North
- Ensure that the vision for the Station Gateway is delivered, with resources secured and construction started, following extensive engagement with residents, business and developers
- Complete the construction of the new multi-storey cycle-, electric vehicle- and car-park at Station North
- Support Guinness Trust on their development of affordable housing for rent on the former Matalan site
- Expand our Stevenage Works programme to ensure local people benefit from the jobs, training places and apprenticeships being created in the transformation of the Town Centre
- Develop the climate change plan for the Town Centre development to ensure that buildings are energy efficient, economic and sustainable and are contributing to our Net Zero carbon by 2030 target
- Develop an accessibility plan for the Town Centre development, working with residents with disabilities, to ensure the transformed Town Centre is accessible for all

# Climate Change – Delivering a Net Zero Carbon Stevenage by 2030

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Having declared a climate emergency, the Council has set an objective to achieve Net Zero by 2030. It is a challenging target and depends upon adequate Central Government funding in the key areas of housing and transport.

The Council's own carbon footprint represents around only 1% of the Stevenage total and around 10% with the Council's own housing stock included. All areas of Council activity have to progressively take into account direct action to reduce their carbon footprint. Among the actions taken to date by the Council are:

- Publication of its Climate Change Strategy
- Transfer of its electrical supply to a non-fossil fuel supplier
- Introduction of electric vehicle charging points in car parks and Neighbourhood Centres
- Paperless committee documents
- Improved cycle parking facilities
- Green homes grants for improving insulation for financially vulnerable families
- New Hertfordshire Energy Advice Tool App made available to all residents to help cut emissions and energy costs

Through our planning approval process and housing development projects we are improving insulation levels and phasing out fossil fuel heating.

It is important to ensure equal priority is given to both adaption and mitigation measures. Temperature and climatic conditions will continue to change up to and beyond 2050. Climate Change Justice will be a key consideration in all our actions. Among the ongoing and future commitments we will:



- Work with local and national businesses to align our programmes to Net Zero where appropriate
- Ensure all new developments have the minimum carbon footprint and developers' operations are close to Net Zero
- As an exemplar, our new Council housing developments will continue to lead the way for all future developments
- Bring forward our proposals for retrofitting of non-fossil fuel heating and improved insulation of our Council housing stock
- Use active procurement to minimise our supply chain carbon footprint
- In conjunction with Herts County Council improve maintenance and regular upkeep of cycleways and pedestrian areas to encourage active travel
- Ensure that by 2027 the majority of Council vehicles are non-fossil fuel
- In conjunction with public and private sector partners increase the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities across the town including apps showing location
- Establish and maintain a vibrant and constructive Citizens' Panel
- As a chosen Sustainable Travel Town we will work with Herts County Council to ensure we have an affordable public bus service that meets the needs of the public for all employment and leisure travel within the town and surrounding area
- Maximise the use of social media and public events to inform and encourage public understanding and engagement with the climate change programme
- Ensure adequate shade provision around play areas
- Recognise the direct link between biodiversity and the climate change agenda and seek opportunities for small scale rewilding
- Maintain our working relationship with the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the UK 100 campaign group and Friends of the Earth.
- Form a partnership with the young people of our town who are key to achieving the behavioural change required by us all to meet our objective of Net Zero by 2030. Ongoing communication with schools and youth groups remains vital
- Continue to be an active member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Panel to maximise the joint use of our resources and knowledge remembering climate change has no boundaries



# Making Your Money Count - by ensuring you set our priorities

Every council in the UK has faced the toughest times in living memory, with huge cuts to government funding and unfunded inflation. Since 2020 Stevenage has received no government funding at all. It has been necessary to reduce our costs by over £14m while retaining the 120 services that we all value. We have had extra duties placed upon us due to the Covid Pandemic which will be with us for several years. Despite promises from central government we have not been reimbursed with the full cost of implementing these measures, leaving a £1.2m shortfall.

We still deliver those 120 services at an average cost of £250 per year to each household. This is exceptional value for money. It is important to stress that although Stevenage collects the Council Tax, it does not get to keep it all. For every pound collected, 77.3p goes to the County Council for the services they are responsible for and 11.3p goes to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Stevenage Borough Council retains only 11.4p. We know that the services we deliver to the people of Stevenage are important - you tell us this when we conduct household surveys - as well as seeing which ones are the most essential. We listen to your comments and when we have to make cuts we take those views on board. We have moved to streamlining some services and making them available online. To reduce costs we share services with other authorities where this does not affect service delivery. Some small increases in the fees and charges which increase the Council's income have been made and, as a last resort, we have increased Council Tax within the limits set by government. All of the financial transactions you make with us are now cashless and we have encouraged the use of direct debits to reduce costs.

**Our promise to you is to tax fairly, spend wisely, and deliver good value services based on those that you have told us are important. We will:**

- Ensure that we deliver as many Council services as possible through in-house provision. We currently collect our own waste and recycling and do most of our housing maintenance with our own in-house teams
- Retain our local community budgets for use in projects within your area
- Increase the use of priority-based budgeting for schemes in your neighbourhoods and make sure they give value for money
- Continue to work with Herts County Council to create an exemption from Council Tax for those young people in care until they reach the age of 25
- Continue to promote and work with our neighbourhood wardens who are out and about in every local area so that they continue to be the first point of contact with the Council
- Invest in our commercial property in the borough and make sure that it increases the revenue it generates to help reduce our funding gap
- Encourage our residents to contribute to decision making through public meetings, digital methods, accessibility to councillors and through our website. We will invest more in digital participation
- Continue to support our Youth Mayor and Youth Council so that the voices and ideas of young people are heard and taken account of
- Encourage local companies to bid for Council contracts put out to tender. We will encourage the bigger contractors to contribute to voluntary groups in our town, either with finance or help. We will also ask them to look to employ local people and offer training to them

# A Clean and Green Stevenage

**A town that is clean and green and recognises the importance of our green spaces to quality of life. With increasing government cuts to the funding of local government we will need to work hard to ensure we prioritise keeping our town clean and green. Our Labour Council knows that Stevenage people truly value our wonderful Green Flag spaces like Fairlands Valley Park; Shephalbury Park; Hampson Park; Town Centre Gardens; and Weston Road Cemetery. Our children's play spaces encourage exercise, imagination and creativity as well as inspiring a love of the natural world. We want our town to contribute to that natural world, not to be damaging it or diminishing its role in our quality of life.**

**Our promise to you is to work to protect our green spaces; seek to gain further Green Flags and improve the biodiversity of the town; and manage our waste, recycling and emissions to ensure we protect the natural legacy for our community and future generations. To achieve this we will:**

- Work with residents to reduce the total level of collected waste and increase recycling rates to at least 50%, while ensuring we understand the destination of recycling streams
- Never introduce additional charges for green and kitchen waste, unlike other local authorities
- Launch a robust anti-litter campaign with strong enforcement including fixed penalty notices
- Retain our Green Flag status for Fairlands Valley; Shephalbury Park; Hampson Park; the Town Centre Gardens; and Weston Road Cemetery whilst aiming for this status in other established green areas such as Ridlins End
- Engage residents in improvements to our parks, through litter picks, consultation around new facilities, and Green Volunteer action days
- Increase Town Centre and High Street cleansing as funds become available
- Continue our programme of play space improvements involving young people in their design
- Maintain active cooperation with all our primary and secondary schools on environmental issues, this being a key factor in helping to establish behavioural change
- Renew our Biodiversity Action Plan
- Seek every opportunity to increase the town's tree cover to over 20% by 2035.
- Ensure, where possible, that water resilient plants are used in public areas and that native tree species are the preferred option. In both cases plants and trees should be suitable for the projected 2050 climatic conditions while supporting local wildlife
- Support and promote our Green Space volunteers
- Promote our green spaces through a 'Green Stevenage' section of our website
- Seek the opportunity for establishing a community based 'Repair Café'
- Lobby central government for the funding needed to transition to sustainability across transport, housing and waste management. We will do this alongside other Local Authorities

# Ensure our Co-operative Council gives people a real say in how we deliver services + Give people a real say in our Co-operative Neighbourhoods

**Our Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach is designed so that residents have the opportunity to engage in planning for their local areas, working with local Councillors and the dedicated Council team for their neighbourhoods. It offers the opportunity for residents to have a say in how local funding is spent. We already have teams set up in each of the six neighbourhoods in Stevenage, including our dedicated Neighbourhood Warden teams. Once we can return to full resident engagement programmes these teams will work to identify the key issues and actions in each local area and make sure we have a programme in place to deliver:**

## **Co-operative Neighbourhoods. We will:**

- Maintain our co-operative partnership-led approach, working with charities, schools and colleges to realise positive outcomes in our community
- Maintain the Local Community Budget scheme and aspire to increase the amount of budget for each councillor. At the point of future increases in the amount, review the working of the scheme, with strong member involvement in the review
- Award additional funding to two areas a year (of the six) on a rolling programme. This would be less frequent, but a bigger pot of money to be directed by councillors with resident engagement in specific areas
- Encourage participatory budgeting with residents on projects in our neighbourhoods
- Work with Herts County Council to direct funds for supporting our public areas and consider the aging of early build areas such as Bedwell when maintaining them. Explore the value of our neighbourhood approach in realising 'living streets' and other HCC coordinated projects
- Sustain our commitment to the Neighbourhood Wardens, who have their ears to the ground in their areas and bring a lot of reassurance to residents
- Actively encourage Green Space volunteers in our neighbourhoods, for the health and environmental benefits this programme brings

## **Resident Engagement. We will:**

- Establish Neighbourhood Bulletins in all six areas, with a separate Town Centre Bulletin when occupancy levels justify this for new members of the community in the Town Centre
- Support face to face resident meetings and maintain a flexible response to short term consultations. Develop our digital capacity to hold 'pop-up' digital meetings with residents
- Commit to continually improve our annual residents' survey and incentivise 100 residents per year to complete a more in-depth resident survey with a £50 reduction in community charge
- Encourage resident feedback on website and call centre services



- ### Community Wealth Building. We will:
- Sustain a co-operative approach to working with partners through the Social Inclusion Partnership and seek out collaborative funding opportunities for local charities and social enterprises
  - Record and promote the impact of SBC services, and the value of our spend, as a local authority in the community

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# Health and Wellbeing – Tackling health inequality

Stevenage continues to suffer from significant health inequalities compared with the rest of Hertfordshire. Although not directly responsible for health, there is much our Labour Council can do in the provision of excellent leisure and cultural opportunities, health promotion and partnership working to join up access to health advice and facilities. We will work with our partners to tackle the key causes of poor health in our community - smoking, obesity and mental ill-health. Working with the Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire, we aim to continue to develop our Healthy Hub alongside Stevenage Leisure Ltd and develop further our Young People's Healthy Hub.

**Our promise to you is to work with our partners to improve the health of our community and reduce inequalities. We will:**

- Work with our colleagues in the NHS and Public Health to deliver innovative and improved health facilities in our Town Centre, giving residents easy access to specialist health care
- Use our successful bid for the Town Deal from government to regenerate our leisure facilities in the Town Centre to provide a new leisure hub
- Work to improve local availability of activities in our neighbourhoods to help residents improve their health
- Support health promotion campaigns especially smoking cessation, tackling obesity and maintaining good mental health and wellbeing
- Support our older residents to remain independent for as long as possible in their own homes
- Provide free-access health facilities like trim-tracks, outdoor gyms, Aquapark, table tennis tables and skateparks in our parks and green spaces
- Support and promote Parkrun, Stevenage Cycling Festival, our cycle network and the huge range of sport and leisure opportunities we provide in Stevenage
- Work with local sports clubs to help them recover after the pandemic
- Work with partner organisations to enhance leisure and cultural opportunities



# Prioritise sustainable transport and create ‘Living Streets’

We know that many parts of Stevenage do not have the bus services they need and, if we are to encourage people to choose alternatives to cars, we will have to make sure that those alternatives are available. We are fortunate to have a magnificent network of 45 kilometres of cycle ways around the town. We want to promote their use, but need to ensure they are fit-for-purpose. We will continue to lobby Herts County Council to ensure that our cycle ways, which they are responsible for maintaining, are maintained in good condition. We want our neighbourhood streets to be places that our community can enjoy, not streets that are dominated by parking issues and speeding traffic. Our Stevenage Labour Co-operative Council has, and continues to promote, the excellent transport links that we have in our locality. We will continue to strive for excellent public transport.

**Our objective is to work to create ‘Living Streets’, which work in the interests of pedestrians and cyclists, and lobby to ensure we have sustainable transport as well as good roads, rail and bus services. To achieve this, we will:**

- Promote our ‘Living Streets’ programme, campaigning for safe and vibrant streets where people can walk and children can play safely
- Promote the use of electric vehicles by providing electric vehicle charging points around the town and use planning policies to promote electric car use
- Protect free parking in the High Street
- Develop a ‘park and ride’ offer for all our Town Centre facilities including the Old Town, Town Centre, Leisure Park and Roaring Meg using electric buses
- Promote cycling within the town, especially utilising our 45 kilometres of cycle ways, and lobby Herts County Council to improve that network with better surfaces, maintenance and lighting
- Develop an extensive cycle hire scheme
- Jettison the Government’s notion of ‘Smart Motorway Technology’ and continue to campaign for full widening of the A1(M) between Junctions 6 and 8
- Campaign for more buses and ensure that the whole town has coverage
- Consult on the promotion of personal electric scooters, subject to national endorsement and enforcement
- Support the 20’s Plenty initiative, as evidence shows that lower vehicle speeds reduce casualties, encourages walking and cycling, and makes neighbourhoods quieter, cleaner and more liveable
- Campaign for an electric public transport spine route from Roaring Meg to the Town Centre, the Old Town and Lister Hospital
- Implement the ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas) funded scheme to introduce electric buses to support zero carbon travel for the residents of Stevenage, following the successful joint bid between SBC and HCC for 27 electric buses for our town
- Secure cycle parking at all retail areas, local centres and the Town Centre, situated conveniently for the cycleways

# Reimagining Stevenage - Implementing our Culture and Leisure strategy

Stevenage has a unique cultural heritage both as a settlement that goes back to the Domesday Book and also as Britain's first post-war new town. We continue to build on this legacy with an enhanced and sustainable cultural offering: complementing Town Centre regeneration; substantially improving health and wellbeing; benefitting our local economy; engaging children and young people; and attracting visitors from the county, London and beyond to a thriving, busy and accessible creative environment.

**Our promise to you is to develop the cultural life of Stevenage working with partners to achieve the key ambitions set out in our cultural strategy. We will:**

- Support and upgrade the facilities of our well-loved local theatre, the Gordon Craig
- Plan and deliver a major public art programme and trail enhancing our High Street and Town Centre, parks and open spaces and our 45 kilometre cycle network
- Further develop the establishment of permanent and temporary (pop-up) artist studios and hubs including digital media, such as Junction 7 Creatives
- Support the relocation of Stevenage Museum to a Town Centre location with an aspiration to develop a New Towns Heritage Centre using the Town Funds Deal monies
- Encourage the provision of high quality music facilities for the town to provide access to skills development and career opportunities for young people
- Build on the town's substantial sporting heritage by encouraging sport for all, such as the highly popular Parkrun and Junior Parkrun, and attract national and international sporting events
- Continue with our highly successful Stevenage Cycling Festival and support Stevenage Cycling Hub at our Green Flag Fairlands Valley Park
- Support Arts and Health projects that use creativity to enhance physical and mental well-being and quality of life recognising the impact of Covid
- Promote our Town Centre regeneration through a wide-ranging programme of cultural activity in the Town Centre
- Continue to ensure there is free creative and cultural activity for our community to engage in, such as Stevenage Day, Fireworks Night and the Christmas Light Switch-on, so everyone can get involved
- Ensure the new leisure contract from 1 April 2023 delivers modern, innovative services and outreach
- Explore delivering the best value for Stevenage residents through innovations such as a Residents' Card to ensure preferential rates for residents in accessing our leisure and cultural facilities
- Although it is Herts County Council's responsibility to deliver services for young people, we will continue to deliver a free play service for 4-14-year olds at locations across the town to support the wellbeing of our children and young people

# Promoting equality of opportunity – Led by our Equalities Commission

Having a diverse town is something we celebrate and welcome. Everyone should be allowed to flourish regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, religion, physical ability, or sexual orientation. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic has had an unequal impact and has exposed multiple inequalities across our society. The murder of George Floyd in the USA highlighted the effects and prevalence of racism, leading to the Black Lives Matter movement and focussed minds on the inequalities in UK society. As a response we set up the Stevenage Equalities Commission, with people who work and live in the town, to examine how racism affects our community, to listen to people's lived experiences, and to learn how various agencies can tackle institutional racism as well as other forms of discrimination against all minority groups.

Making Council services fair and equitable is a goal that is common to all our pledges, but we would also like to emphasise what we want to do to address inequalities in our town.

## To achieve these objectives we will:

- Continue to support the administration of the Stevenage Equalities Commission and help to produce their final report and future development
- Address inequalities in Stevenage Borough Council's workforce by promoting positive recruitment and employment practices and addressing any barriers
- Support and promote the Older Persons' Day through a Town Centre event, together with other agencies to highlight services and activities available
- Continue to work with the police to promote awareness and reporting of hate crime in all its forms
- Ensure that the developments that are taking place in the Town Centre address accessibility issues for all people with disabilities
- Support the rights of people with learning disabilities to integrate, feel safe and be understood in our community and aim to work with the various specialist agencies to enable and facilitate access to amenities and life opportunities
- Support a full ban on all forms of 'conversion therapy' aimed at LGBTQI+ people. In particular we recognise that any new law banning conversion therapy should not allow any exceptions for specific groups
- Support reforms to the Gender Recognition Act to allow transgender people an easier path to recognition as their gender identity
- Highlight particular events during the year such as the International Women's Day, Black History Month and LGBTQI+ History Month