



Communities, Culture and Sport

Portfolio Performance and Resources
Mid-Year Report 2024/5



Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*

Date	15 November 2024	Version	1.0 (Scrutiny)	Approved by	FS
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COMMUNITIES CULTURE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S INTRODUCTION



I am pleased to present this report which provides an overview of progress and key developments from April to September 2024.

In 2024/25, our anti-poverty work is 'front and centre' of the portfolio, and the council and our partners have been working hard to identify and support those most in need, people for whom the cost of living crisis remains very real. I am therefore delighted to report that this work has been recognised nationally, with the support provided through the Resident Advice and Support Alliance receiving an award from Resolve Poverty for 'maximising the financial resources available to households'.



There remains much to do however and this work will be ongoing. This report summarises how this portfolio (alongside the Finance and Resources Portfolio) is spearheading our anti-poverty approach, through, for example, work to help people maximise their income from employment and/or benefits, anti-poverty outreach work and 'poverty proofing' work being carried out in schools across the borough.

To further strengthen our approach to anti-poverty work, the council has now (voluntarily) adopted the socio-economic duty, which means that we have to consider the socio-economic impact of any new policies and strategies, and all of the decisions we make.

Like me, you will all have been shocked and saddened to witness the racism, Islamophobia, far-right activity and community tension across the country in the late summer. To counter this, we launched a community cohesion plan, informed by feedback from local people and linking with our existing equality, diversity and inclusion objectives, priorities in the One Stockport Safety Plan and 'One Stockport: One Future'.

This disorder also affected many of our staff across the council, leaving them feeling upset and vulnerable, and we have sought to support such colleagues during and since these events. Thankfully, this unrest appears to have eased for now at least – we must however remain alert to the possibility of recurrences and be ready to act to prevent this from happening again and protecting our communities and our staff whenever necessary.

In my last report, I mentioned that we launched 'Match My Project' in January 2024 – it's a 'virtual meeting point' where VCFSE organisations can ask our suppliers and local businesses to help with their projects. I am particularly pleased to report that so far in 2024/25, 26 VCFSE organisations have found support for their projects and we are on track to exceed the target of 40 that we set for the year. You can see some examples of projects that have been supported [here](#).

It's also pleasing to see that the Town of Culture programme in 2023//24 seems to have left behind a significant legacy and the report gives examples of initiatives that we've been able to take forward which have built on the momentum created during Town of Culture year. The full reopening of Hatworks has also further enhanced our cultural offer.

Councillor Frankie Singleton, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture & Sport.

Revenue Budget 2024/25		Capital Programme	
	£000		£000
Cash Limit	7,777	2024/25 Capital Budget	7,098
Forecast Outturn	7,812	2025/26 Capital Budget	13,678
(Surplus)/Deficit	35	2026/27 Capital Budget	375
<u>Reserves</u>		2027/28 Capital Budget	0
Approved use of the reserves balance is £0.518m.		2028/29 Capital Budget	0
Planned drawdown from these reserves is £0.461m including £0.318m net funding expenditure reported in other portfolios.			

COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND SPORT

1. DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES



This report is based on the **2024/25 Portfolio Agreement**, considered by Communities and Transport Scrutiny Committee on 10th June 2024 and approved by Cabinet on 25th June 2024. The link to the Agreement can be found by clicking [here](#).







This Quarter 2 (Mid-Year) report includes updates on all **delivery projects, programmes and other initiatives** set out in the portfolio agreement, up to the end of September 2024 where this is available.

Data is reported for all **performance measures** included in the agreement that have been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports. These are categorised to reflect the council's influence and responsibility as Council, Partnership or Contextual. These categories are used to determine the type of target used as numerical, comparator, direction of travel or if no target is set. Definitions for these categories and target types are included within the Agreement.

The updated Portfolio Performance Dashboards are published alongside these reports and these can be [found here](#). They contain the latest data across the full set of portfolio measures, including historical trends and comparative data (where available).

The criteria for RAG ratings and direction of travel status are shown below. The rationale for any variations to this will be clearly highlighted within the commentary.

Key to symbols used in tables

	Red – indicator is performing significantly (>5%) below target.		Getting worse – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is less favourable than the previous year-end.
	Amber – indicator is performing slightly (<5%) below target.		Stable – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is within 1% either side of the previous year-end.
	Green – indicator is on track or performing above target.		Getting better – the year-end position (forecast or actual) for this indicator is more favourable than the previous year-end.
GMS – measure is included in the Greater Manchester Strategy outcomes framework.			

Priority 1: Anti-Poverty

The council will seek to address poverty in the borough by delivering work relating to its anti-poverty objectives. There are six objectives in total, five are outlined below (with the sixth one, '*Increasing numbers of people in affordable and stable housing and reducing homelessness*' addressed primarily within the Economic Regeneration and Housing portfolio). Progress on each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2024/25 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Strategic and systematic approach to anti-poverty work

The Cabinet Members for Communities, Culture & Sport and Finance & Resources are the joint leads for ensuring the strategic and systematic approach to anti-poverty in Stockport. The Anti-Poverty Steering Group (APSG) continues to provide strategic coordination for the delivery of the Anti-Poverty Objectives 2024-27.

The APSG is supported by the Anti-Poverty Operational Group (APOG) which is responsible for delivering the committed actions within the objectives. Both the APSG and APOG bring together representatives from a range of partner organisations that have a lead responsibility for delivering elements of the objectives.

The Stockport Community Advice and Information Network (SCAIN) continues to provide a forum for information, advice, and networking with partner organisations from the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector. The network meets quarterly to share best practice, service updates and insight.

The council adopted the socio-economic duty on 18 September 2024, which means that it will actively consider, at an appropriate level, what more can be done to reduce the inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, in any strategic decision-making or policy development context. In adopting the duty, Cabinet committed to a series of actions including reviewing the existing Equality Impact Assessments, establishing an Anti-Poverty Network of lived experience and delivering poverty awareness training. These will be delivered in Quarters 3 and 4.

Stockport Council and partners won a national award for 'maximising the financial resources available to households.' The awards, administered by Resolve Poverty, recognises the approach to support vulnerable households through initiatives such as:

- The Resident Advice and Support Alliance (which includes the council's Welfare Rights & Debt Advice and Cost of Living Advice line plus Stockport Home Group's Money Advice and Energy Advice Teams, Citizens Advice and Stockport Support Hub).
- The Trusted Partner Model for distributing the Household Support Fund.
- The Spend Well Live Well calendar of events delivering financial information, advice and guidance.
- Inclusive Jobs Fairs.

Income maximisation through employment

The council continues to promote the Good Employment Charter (GEC) and the Real Living Wage (RLW) to businesses and employers in Stockport. Promotion has focused on attending and presenting at business networking events, direct engagement with businesses and supporting businesses with their applications. To date, around 80 businesses are either supporters or members of the GEC and over 80 businesses are RLW accredited.

Following successful delivery of Inclusive Jobs Fairs in Brinnington (January 2023) and Offerton (October 2023), a third Inclusive Jobs Fair was held at All Hallows Church in Cheadle in April 2024. Over 230 residents attended – more than the total combined attendance for the previous two fairs. It attracted a diverse group of people with 22% of attendees identifying themselves as being of Asian heritage and 37% identifying themselves as being neurodivergent, having a disability, having a mental health condition, and/or having a long-term illness. Individual services reported receiving 30-40 referrals for follow-up support, access to training, and job applications. Cheadle Parish is now working in partnership with the Growth Company to provide volunteering opportunities for clients in its community café.

A fourth Inclusive Jobs Fair was held at All Saints Church, Heaton Norris on 15 October 2024. To further support residents living in Lancashire Hill, the council and partners set up a weekly 'job club' where residents could access information and support with regards to getting job ready. Over 130 residents attended, many from the Lancashire Hill community. Fifteen residents signed up to adult learning courses and seven signed up to computer skills courses delivered by Xyrius. Fifty-four attendees returned evaluation forms with 96% stating that the Jobs Fair was 'good' or 'excellent'. A further event is planned for Spring 2025.

Benefits take-up

The council's Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Team (within the Resident Advice Service (RAS)) provides help to residents to maximise income, for example, by accessing grants, unclaimed benefits, and appealing benefit decisions. During 2023/24, 2,508 unique residents accessed the service. In total, during the same period, the team has supported residents to access an additional £4.449m. This is new income that residents received from new benefits awards and represents new money coming into the Stockport economy.

A partnership between the council and Heaton Moor Medical Group (HMMG) began in November 2023 to increase the uptake of Attendance Allowance. Using patient data, HMMG wrote to patients whose medical records showed conditions that were likely to make them eligible for Attendance Allowance and invited them to contact the council's RAS Team if they were not already in receipt of the benefit and wished to explore the possibility of making an application. To date, 65 residents have been supported. Eight cases had been finalised with cash gains of £44,237.62, with almost £41,000 of this representing annualised income. There are currently 57 open cases being progressed.

Supporting residents in financial crisis

Household Support Fund Phase 5 was successfully delivered. From 1 April to 30 September 2024:

- An estimated 20,224 households supported with an estimated 36,999 items of support.
- £1,714m awarded to households with children (83.7% of total spend).
- £0.403m distributed by third party organisations (19.7% of total spend) including Trusted Partner model and Food Banks.

From April, the Trusted Partner Model was expanded to include organisations to specifically support ethnically diverse communities, SEND families and out-of-work households.

The Cost of Living helpline remains the single entry to access crisis support for vulnerable households. The RAS Team take a person-centred, holistic approach to maximising income and improving residents' circumstances, for example, for home improvement/weatherproofing, adult education/training, grants and social tariffs, provision or crisis support, and referrals to Trusted Partners.

The UK Government has announced a further extension to the Household Support Fund for the period 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025. Stockport's allocation is £2.163m. Progress for this period will be reporting in the Year-End PPRR.

The RAS team also created and implemented a robust audit process to ensure that fraudulent or frequent applications could be identified and dealt with appropriately, ensuring that those who really need the help are receiving it.

The council built upon the previous success of the Trusted Partner network by including new third sector agencies, which enhanced the wraparound support on offer, alongside meeting immediate financial need. It also bolstered intelligence and data-sharing to raise awareness of residents becoming dependent on short-term funding to top up their low incomes.

Welfare Rights and Debt Advice enhanced its web-based resources with new pages and updated referral forms to promote self-help and provide access to comprehensive advice guides for those that are able to help themselves.

Welfare Rights Officers have also delivered free training to professionals in the Third Sector relating to Universal Credit migration, to ensure that partners have the best and most up to date information available to help residents.

Preventing poverty

The Poverty Proofing Stockport programme has worked with more than 40 primary schools (nearly half of the borough's schools). A total of 27 Poverty Proofing audits have already been completed and another eleven are booked for the academic year 2024/25.

Learning about poverty from a social justice perspective has been critical as a starting point. Real success has been achieved when school leaders are open to challenge their biases and assumptions about the lived experiences of children and families in the communities they serve.

The programme draws on the [Children North East audit](#) in a context where the voice of children and families is truly heard. In Stockport, this started with a small group of schools in one of the more deprived areas and the programme has been adjusted as necessary as the programme has progressed.

There have been significant changes in practice in those schools that embrace the learning the programme brings. This has included changes to the curriculum offer (e.g. affordable local visits, accessible music offer etc.), the enrichment offer (affordable clubs and wraparound care) and how schools work with their communities (re-loved uniform and accessible school fairs etc.).

Most (64%) of the schools involved in the programme reported improvements in the outcomes of disadvantaged learners at the end of Key Stage 2.

Anti-poverty outreach activity in communities

A key component of the Resident Advice and Support Alliance is the ability to collate and compare data from across different organisations and monitor trends over time. Resident insight is used to triangulate this data, alongside demographic data to inform the Anti-Poverty Steering Group to direct support to residents. This data is used to direct the location of Inclusive Job Fairs and the Spend Well Live Well calendar of activities, events, and roadshows.

Activities are driven by intelligence and partner organisations are aligned to local priorities i.e. Healthy Start, Groundwork Energyworks, Citizens Advice, DWP Family Support Advisors, Credit Union, and United Utilities. Residents are supported at the events, booked in for follow-up appointments and/or signposted into the Cost of Living team for further support. Outreach highlights since April 2024 include:



- Monthly financial inclusion drop-in cafés at Heaton Norris Community Centre, the Olive Branch in Edgeley and Lancashire Hill coffee morning.
- Money Maximising Roadshows delivered alongside Inclusive Jobs Fairs in Cheadle at All Hallows in April and All Saint’s Church, Heaton Norris in October.
- Attending a wide range events and forums taking place across the borough including Easter Fun Day at Webb Lane Allotments (April 2024); Edgeley Fun Day at St Matthews Church (June 2024); Stockport Homes Customer Roadshows; and Reddish North Park Fun Day (August 2024).
- DWP supporting families' colleagues are now also attending regular days at Adswood and Brinnington Family Hub to support staff with parents' queries.
- The ‘Spend Well Live Well in Stockport’ Facebook group is kept updated with offers, news, and opportunities to help residents to maximise their money and raise awareness of the support available. Currently the page has over 1,900 followers.

The council supported Merseyway Shopping Centre to deliver a pop-up school uniform shop for the third year running. Located within the Merseyway Shopping Centre, the shop was open between 10 and 17 August. In total an estimated 6,000 quality second-hand school uniform items were sold.

To further support families with the cost of school uniforms, the council has commissioned Cherry Tree Project to establish a pre-loved school uniform offer. ReLoved: Uniforms for All will launch in autumn 2024. Following the public appeal announced in July, an estimated 500kg of items have been donated via donations bins located in all library buildings.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Performance data on the measure relating to this priority that has been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports is summarised in the table below.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target	
CCS 1.2: Number of children in receipt of Free School Meals	Low (contextual)	8622 children	9067 children	9,212 children (30/09/2024)		N/A	 

Priority 2: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2024/25 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below. These reflect the council's four equalities objectives. As reported to scrutiny committee in October, work is underway to review the actions against each of these objectives in response to the racism and Islamophobia experienced over the summer.

Ensuring that Stockport is a fair and inclusive borough

Community events and networks are now informing strategies and action plans. A new organisation-wide race equality group has met three times, and the council also is part of the GM Race Equality Group. As part of proactive communications work, an inclusive calendar, which helps us to celebrate diversity and share knowledge and learning, has been launched. The council has also worked with the 'Palette of Colour' network to reflect on how it can ensure communications are authentic and agile.

Over the summer Stockport, along with communities across the UK, witnessed an increase in racism, Islamophobia, far-right activity and community tension. In response to this the council launched a programme of work on a community cohesion action plan. This was informed by feedback from community partners and links with the council's existing equality, diversity and inclusion objectives, the priorities in the One Stockport Safety Plan and 'One Stockport: One Future.' The programme will cover these five areas:

- Community engagement and investment in inclusion.
- Education and prevention.
- Review of the hate crime reporting and support offer.
- Information, advice, and guidance to ensure community spaces feel safe and inclusive.
- Proactive communications.

To support this work, a One Stockport Communities Together Forum was established. This involves leaders from the council, other public sector organisations and local communities. It is a forum to provide leadership and support to partners across Stockport and co-operate with colleagues across Greater Manchester, and other districts where appropriate, to respond and promote social cohesion.

Ensuring the workforce is representative of Stockport's communities and helping staff to achieve their full potential

Progress to date has focused on improving the workforce training and development offer. The council piloted a programme of reverse mentoring with senior leaders. Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) colleagues were mentored by colleagues with diverse backgrounds to understand their lived experiences. The pilot was successful, and the first phase of this learning approach has been rolled out across the council. In addition, the council's colleague networks have a CLT sponsor aligned with them who not only provides support to the network but raises the profile of the protected characteristic the group represents and provides a learning opportunity to that CLT member. A number of inclusive leadership sessions have been delivered with our Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Leadership Group and through the Leadership Forum. These masterclasses are now being rolled out to any colleague who has a direct report responsibility.

A number of EDI self-assessments were undertaken within directorates using the LGA self-assessment tool. Intelligence gathered from these is contributing to the development of the existing EDI action plan along with specific actions in directorates. There has also been a focus on inclusive recruitment, through inclusive jobs fairs, the Jump Start programme for care experienced young people and supported internships for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Next steps are to finalise the EDI self-assessments and deliver on the inclusive leadership masterclasses so that every colleague with direct reports has attended one. Work has been undertaken to develop a zero-tolerance policy to discrimination and the 'report and support' offer to ensure that colleagues are confident on the council's standpoint and know where to go for support if they are experiencing discrimination.

Understanding our diverse communities and their specific needs

Progress so far includes development and socialisation of the second iteration of the neighbourhood profiles. These were presented to Area Committees in September 2024 along with an update on the neighbourhood and prevention work. Regular reporting in relation to EDI is now taking place at Senior Leadership Group and at Corporate Leadership Team meetings.

Next steps are to continue to develop data and embed the use of it across council directorates. Within the neighbourhood and prevention programme the data will be used to inform population health plans and opportunities to embed this in other key delivery programmes and commissioned activities are being explored. The work within this objective will inform the delivery of the above two equality objectives relating ('Ensuring that Stockport is a fair and inclusive borough' and 'Ensuring the workforce is representative of Stockport's communities').



Addressing inequality in our services

Recent work includes delivering the council's first all-colleague EDI Survey which had a high participation rate and provided insightful intelligence to shape the EDI Action Plan. The Local Government Association (LGA) EDI self-assessment was also applied across several directorates to help to understand where there are areas of good practice and where there is room for improvement. The council also achieved the Veterans Gold Award, for armed forces community support.

Next steps will be to complete the LGA self-assessments across directorates and to continue to develop the EDI Action Plan, ensuring that the council is clear on what it will deliver next, in what time frame and that this is clearly communicated to key stakeholders.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Performance data on the measure relating to this priority that has been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports is summarised in the table below. Commentary on the measure is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CCS 2.1: GM Community Safety Survey - % of respondents who feel their local area is a place where people with different backgrounds ..	High (Partnership)	75 %	79 %	80 % (30/06/2024)		Maximise		

Commentary on performance

CCS 2.1 (GM Community Safety Survey respondents who agree people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area)

The outturn for this measure is based on a sample of 1,300 responses from Stockport obtained in four quarterly surveys (325 respondents per survey) undertaken between July 2023 and June 2024. The margin of error is +/- 1.4%.

Note that the most recent survey included in this measure was undertaken **before** the recent unrest associated with right-wing protests that occurred across the country in late summer 2024. Whether or not that activity will have an impact on this measure, as well as on CCS 5.3 (GM survey respondents who report they feel safe in their local area), will be clearer when results from the next survey (July to September 2024) have been included in calculations. This will feature in the next report.

Priority 3: Connected Communities

Our five-year VCFSE Strategy sets out the One Stockport Partnership's collective commitment to supporting Stockport's vibrant local VCFSE sector, this is a key component of the One Stockport Neighbourhoods and Prevention programme. It outlines three strategic priorities:

- Investment
- Capacity building
- Community power, voice, and influence
- Stockport Local – helping to deliver services, information, advice and support closer to communities

The vision is for a strong, sustainable VCFSE sector, which is supported at all levels as an equal strategic and delivery partner, through collaborative relationships with Stockport Council, the Integrated Care System, Community Safety partners, housing providers, businesses, and residents, to help local people to live well and achieve their full potential.

Progress with delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2024/25 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Investing in the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Sector

The council has explored various funding options for the VCFSE sector. This includes testing various approaches through Sector3 including Social Finance and Corporate Social Responsibility. Internally there has been a focus on social value and introducing 'Match My Project', a digital platform that connects the private sector to the voluntary sector's needs. The council is currently reviewing grant models to ensure the approach is fit for the future.

The council grant programme The One Stockport Local Fund currently has five different funds open for communities and the wider VCFSE sector.

The council has sought to support networks with accessing sustainable funding, e.g. through collaboration with the Arts Council to channel investment into the sector, fostering growth and sustainability. Sector3 has conducted several key funding drop-in sessions, providing valuable guidance and support to organisations seeking to secure sustainable funding. Stockport Homes has provided the annual 'Funding the Future' event bringing together local, regional, and national funders.

Building the capacity of the VCFSE Sector

The council has invested in Sector3 to provide essential infrastructure support, ensuring that the sector has access to resources needed to thrive.

Investment in networks has been pivotal, alongside efforts in coordination and skills development, the aim to strengthen relationships and enhance collaboration between organisations in the VCFSE sector will support sustainability through the sharing of resources, skills, and ideas.

The Sector3 Business Development role has been instrumental in helping VCFSEs access external funding, thereby expanding their financial sustainability and growth potential.

This quarter, the council supported networks with targeted investments and facilitated a meeting with services and network chairs through the quarterly Fair and Inclusive meeting. This was crucial for sharing feedback and creating a space where updates on strategic objectives and work programmes can be shared, fostering an environment of collaboration with VCFSE partners.

Community Power: Working to improve the voice and influence of the VCFSE Sector

In September, Sector 3 working with the council and sector leaders, launched the VCFSE Alliance, creating a dedicated space for the sector to collaborate, elevate the voice of communities, and work together.

The council has also actively involved Sector3 to ensure equitable access to key strategic boards. This involvement is crucial for ensuring that the VCFSE sector is well-represented and has a strong voice in local decision-making processes. The sector is represented on the following strategic boards The One Stockport Family Partnership, The One Stockport Health and Care Board, One Stockport Safety Partnership, Economic Alliance, VCFSE Alliance and the Youth Alliance. This has facilitated greater engagement of the VCFSE sector, ensuring that their perspectives and contributions are recognised and valued in strategic discussions and planning.

This deliberative engagement of the VCFSE sector is designed to enhance the influence and representation of communities, ensuring communities can play a key role in shaping service design.

Stockport Local

Stockport Local (the council's neighbourhoods and prevention approach) aims to enable the delivery of key services, information, advice and support closer to communities (including Stockport Local appointments, Citizens Advice appointments in the community and Family Hubs).

Adult Social Care continues to deliver Stockport Local appointments at a variety of library venues. The equipment and adaptation team delivered face-to-face appointments from Central Library. Social Care colleagues are now delivering face-to-face appointments at a variety of libraries, including Adswood & Bridgehall, Bredbury and Offerton.

Citizens Advice continues to offer drop-ins and appointments, including five days a week in Stopford House reception and regular weekly drop-ins and appointments within community libraries. Library staff continue to signpost residents into Citizens Advice appointments system, as well as, offering free phones and WhatsApp chat options for residents. This is in addition to the Cost of Living helpline and wider support offered by the council's Resident Advice Service and its partners.

Libraries continue to be a vital Family Hub partner with council libraries designated as Family Hub bridges, enabling residents to access face-to-face and digital support for enquiries.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Performance data on measures relating to this priority that have been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports is summarised in the table below.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CCS 3.1: Number of VCFSE organisations supported by "Match My Project"	High (Council)			26 organisations (30/09/2024)	50 organisations	40 organisations	G	
CCS 3.2: Number of volunteers applied via the Volunteer Hub website	High (Council)			649 volunteers (30/09/2024)		N/A	N/A	
CCS 3.3: Number of VCFSE Organisations Supported to build their capacity by Sector 3	High (Council)	120 organisations	836 organisations	242 organisations (30/09/2024)		170 organisations	G	

Priority 4: Culture, Libraries and Active Lives

This priority is about ensuring that residents remain active and healthy, have access to information, advice and support in their communities and can enjoy Stockport's many cultural assets. Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2024/25 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Working in partnership to further develop and embed the Stockport Moving Together

Distributed leadership continues to drive change through partnership and community engagement with the oversight of both the Active Communities Strategic Network and the Active Communities Implementation Partnership.

In addition to the wider universal provision of opportunity and access for all, an action research methodology continues to inform new ways of working where need for the most inactive residents and protected characteristic groups is not being met. This is very much focused on differing need and implementation across neighbourhoods, with specific focus on older people, patients with long-term conditions and children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. This is achieved through a focus on behaviour and culture change, creating a social 'movement for movement,' sustainability, delivery designed by local people, linking community assets and organisations, increasing partners' understanding and awareness of the importance of being active.

Longer-term funding needs to be secured to do this at scale but comparatively modest short-term funding will allow some expansion of the work into priority areas.

Future capital and infrastructure investment can be aligned to further build on this work to help deliver the '5 Big Things' considered as long-term catalysts for change and ultimately reduce inequality in the borough over the next 15 years' (One Stockport One Future).

Developing libraries as community hubs

Libraries launched a service handbook highlighting the key role libraries play to support residents, ensuring staff are empowered to find answers for residents themselves. This was reinforced with 'Make Every Contact Count' training as part of the Library Service staff awayday. The service continues to support anti-poverty interventions with support for the 'Reloved – Uniform for All' project. Residents continue to drop off school uniforms at each of Stockport's 16 libraries. The large number of uniforms donated reinforced libraries as key focal points for residents to support both anti-poverty and Climate Action Now ambitions. Working with the Cherry Tree Project, libraries were also collection sites for new school bags for families unable to afford to buy their own.

Libraries continue to celebrate their role as community hub with a wide range of events and activities for residents. For example, actor Christopher Eccleston celebrated his love of libraries to a large group of residents during a 'Q&A' at Central Library. Christopher was particularly keen to highlight how libraries were a place of sanctuary during his youth.

Libraries delivered two theatre productions at Central Library, with 'Queenie and The Pooka' celebrating Roma history, and 'Scrumptious!' entertaining families in the summer holidays.

Libraries championed children's reading for pleasure in Stockport again with successful programmes. The 29th annual Stockport Children's Book Awards saw over 6,000 children take part in online author visits and parents and children from thirty-five schools attended the book awards ceremony at Stockport Town Hall. The Summer Reading Challenge encouraged children to read six books over the summer holidays, receiving prizes along the way and culminating in a certificate and medal. Over 1,700 children took part this year!

Key support for all residents was celebrated with a variety of events. Libraries hosted a stall at Stockport Pride and welcomed LGBTQ+ groups into the Library for an International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia event. Libraries supported asylum seekers and economic migrants with a programme of events to celebrate Refugee Week.

Libraries also support residents in the community and at familiar settings. This was illustrated perfectly by the Silent Disco event at Walthew House where twenty visually impaired attendees danced around the room with staff joining in. During the Easter school holidays, libraries delivered multiple storytimes to children at Holiday Activities and Food Clubs run by Life Leisure staff.

Work in partnership to build a thriving cultural and creative Stockport

Working with Culture Stockport, the council has drafted a framework for revised cultural strategy developed in partnership with the sector. This will have a number of components: Creative Vision, Creative Campus, Creative Programme, Creative Networks and Creative Support. It will be designed to align with the Stockroom Creative Programme and the Stockport Creative Campus project (funded via Cultural Development Funding from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sports) and will deliver expressed ambitions to progress from Town of Culture including:

- Raising the aspirations of the cultural and creative sector.
- Growing ambition, partnership, and investment levels across the sector.
- Inspiring new connections through collaboration between networks and venues.
- An annual programme of events and activities.
- Bringing more cultural investment into Stockport.

A key Town of Culture legacy progression project has been the delivery of the Helen Clapcott 'A Portrait of Stockport' exhibition at Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery. This exhibition of one of the North's most renowned artists has received national profile already and has a programme of events and activities linked to it. This is the start of an initiative to develop programming of the War Memorial Art Gallery to celebrate locally significant artists, stories and works of art and achieve a balance of contemporary, community and council collections in the space. This will help to grow the gallery's significance in the cultural life of the borough, aligned to Stockroom.

The lasting impact of the Town of Culture programme and the reopening of Hatworks continues to be felt across the council's museums portfolio. These were boosted in Quarters 1 and 2 by popular spring and summer activities at Bramall Hall.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Performance data on measures relating to this priority that have been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports is summarised in the table below.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CCS 4.7: Museum Visits	High (Council)	88499 visits	126798 visits	66,648 visits (30/09/2024)	125000 visits	100000 visits	G	↓
CCS 4.8: Number of users accessing libraries in self-service mode (Open+)	High (Council)	21867 users	31350 users	27,175 users (30/09/2024)	28000 users	25000 users	G	↓
CCS 4.9: Number of attendees at community support and outreach events held	High (Council)	11219 attendees	36358 attendees	19,684 attendees (30/09/2024)		13000 attendees	G	↓
CCS 4.10: Number of e-loans for books/audio/magazines/newspapers	High (Council)	187607 e-loans	324488 e-loans	224,405 e-loans (30/09/2024)		197000 e-loans	G	↑

Priority 5: Delivering against the priorities of the One Stockport Safety Partnership (OSSP)

Delivery of the OSSP Plan 2022-2025, with activity relating to its three main themes.

Progress with each of the delivery projects aligned to this priority in the 2024/25 Portfolio Agreement is summarised below.

Protecting Vulnerable People

OSSP has updated the format of its Prevent Partnership Plan based on recommendations given by the Home Office to structure a delivery plan based on local risks and threats identified through local risk assessments.

The partnership has also set up a Communication and Community engagement Task and Finish Group that will oversee the Stockport Prevent offer to improve awareness and information for professionals and communities.

Due to the national unrest and growth in community tensions nationally over the summer, a Community Cohesion approach is being developed. Hate Crime, Community Engagements & Investment and safe and welcoming spaces are three of the five strands at the heart of this pathway. The council and OSSP are striving to make progress around cohesion and this will correlate to building stronger relationships with communities and networks to support the wider Prevent agenda.

Stockport has received funding from Homeland Security to provide an array of training and interventions to upskill and enhance workforce development, improve knowledge and awareness of prevent themes for practitioners, further education, and community setting. This is expected to take place between October 2024 and March 2025.

Public Safety and Protection

A Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) evaluation has been completed that will inform the development of Operation Barometer, the partnership's youth antisocial behaviour (ASB) approach. Work is also being developed on the future of the youth work offer (particularly in relation to Detached Youth Work), as this is currently funded through Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding – current posts are confirmed to March 2025.

OSSP's Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) relating to the new Serious Violence Duty (SVD) was completed and presented to OSSP earlier in the year, and an accompanying action plan completed based on the identified priorities. This continues to be monitored. A delivery plan is also in place for the VRU. Funding for the VRU and the SVD is confirmed to March 2025, and the current model is aligned to the GM VRU Plan. The VRU-funded community-led initiatives are having an impact through the partnership work being delivered in Adswold and Bridgehall, which includes a number of community initiatives informed through local consultation.

Preventing offending and reoffending

Council work focuses on young people – work on adult offending is led by GM Probation Service.

- **Youth Justice:** The Youth Justice Plan has now been approved through full council and the national Youth Justice Board has confirmed that it meets the terms and conditions of the grant. Youth Justice Performance is carefully monitored. The number of First Time Entrants initially increased, but these are now and are now fairly stable. The custody and remand rate is low. Reoffending showed higher in Quarter 1 (there is always a data lag on reporting) but this is based on relatively low numbers so subject to fluctuations.

The Youth Justice Service has been selected by HMI Probation to have a pilot full-service inspection at the end of October 2024. This will be based on the new HMI framework standards that are due to come into effect from February 2025.

In April 2024, Youth Justice and Complex Safeguarding merged under one management structure. There has therefore been a significant amount of focus on workforce development to move towards a model of joint working and aligned with the principles of the Adolescent Safeguarding Framework (see below)

- **Adolescent Safeguarding Framework:** The last quarter has really focused on starting to expand the model from Complex Safeguarding to a model of early intervention and implement the Adolescent Safeguarding Framework.







Training has been developed to deliver across Stockport Family around ‘working with adolescents.’ This will be delivered over four sessions between November 2024 and March 2025 and will include training around the ‘Adolescent Safeguarding’ principles.

Over the summer, joint activities were undertaken with young people at risk of child criminal exploitation open to complex safeguarding and/or youth justice. Referral processes for Complex Safeguarding have been amended to capture the use of consultations better and track young people through the system.

Over the next quarter there will be a focus on replacing the current ‘Phoenix’ assessment with a screening tool which will then feed into consultations with a view to advice and guidance or co-allocation.

Measuring Performance and Reporting Progress

Performance data on measures relating to this priority that have been updated since publication of the 2023/24 Annual Reports is summarised in the table below. Commentary on any measures that have a ‘Red’ RAG rating, as well as those rated ‘Amber’ with a deteriorating trend, is set out beneath the table.

Indicator Name	Good Perf.	2yr Prev. (YE)	Prev. Year End	Values	Forecast	Target		
CCS 5.1: All crime (per 1000 population)	Low (Partnership)	93 crimes	81.12 crimes	75.51 crimes (30/09/2024) 22619 / 299545		Minimise		
CCS 5.2: Anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents recorded by police per 1000 population	Low (Partnership)	21.96 incidents	24.9 incidents	25.66 incidents (30/09/2024) 7687 / 299545		Minimise		
CCS 5.3: GM Community Safety Survey - % of respondents who report that they feel safe or very safe in their local area	High (Partnership)	93 %	93 %	94 % (30/06/2024) 1220 / 1300		Maximise		

Note that the outturns for the final measure in the above table is based on a sample of 1,300 responses from Stockport obtained in four quarterly surveys (325 respondents per survey) undertaken between July 2023 and June 2024. The margin of error is +/- 1.4%.

Commentary on performance

CCS 5.2 (Antisocial behaviour incidents recorded by police)

The Neighbourhood policing strategy, utilising Bee in the Loop¹ (GMP's community messaging service) and holding PACT (Police and Community Together) meetings, is to encourage the reporting of instances of ASB. This encouragement has resulted in an increase in the number of reported incidents relating to the use of off road or E bikes riding in an anti-social manner. This also however helps GMP and its partners to fully understand the problem and where it is particularly prevalent, to allow intelligence-led targeting.

GMP has made additional improvements to its online reporting capability, and the average time to answer non-emergency 101 calls is now under a minute on most days, meaning the community has significantly improved reporting facilities. This has contributed to more incidents being recorded and members of the public being more willing to contact the police, knowing their call will be answered. There were 167 more reports of ASB compared to 2023.

With the move to the District Operating Model and with the introduction of 'Right Care Right Person'², it is expected that the Neighbourhood Policing team will have increased capacity to tackle ASB. As the intelligence-sharing process with the public is promoted, other police resources, such as the off-road motorcycle traffic wing and drone technology, can be used to help to target off-road bikes/E bikes. Where appropriate GMP will use both criminal and civil law to enforce offences.

CCS 5.3 (GM Community Safety Survey respondents who feel safe in their local area)

Note that the most recent survey included in this measure was undertaken **before** the recent unrest associated with right-wing protests that occurred across the country in late summer 2024. Whether or not that activity will have an impact on this measure, as well as on CCS 2.1 (GM Survey respondents who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well in their local area), will be clearer when results from the next survey (July to September 2024) have been included in calculations. This will feature in the next report.

¹ www.beeintheLOOP.co.uk

² An agreement between policing, health and other relevant partners that sets out the principles around the Right Care, Right Person approach which aims to ensure that individuals in mental health crisis are seen by the right professional (click [here](#) for more information).

COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND SPORT

2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND MONITORING



2.1 Revenue – Cash limit

Budget at Outturn:

Previously Reported Q1 £000	Increase / (Reduction) £000	Current Budget Q2 £000
7,777	NIL	7,777

Budget Changes since previously reported at Quarter 1:

Description	Movement(s) £000
N/A	

Quarter 2 Forecast:

Net Cash Limit Budget	Forecast Net Expenditure	Covid Scarring Allocations	Forecast Net Appropriations from Reserves	Forecast Net Expenditure after Scarring & Reserves	Forecast (Surplus) / Deficit Q2	Forecast (Surplus) / Deficit Q1
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
7,777	9,359	(1,404)	(143)	7,812	35	85

The Quarter 2 forecast position for the Communities, Culture & Sport portfolio is a deficit of £0.085m which represents 0.5% of the cash limit budget of £7.777m and represents a favourable variance of £0.050m compared to the Quarter 1 forecast.

A deficit is forecast because the 2024-25 staffing savings in the Libraries service has had only a part-year effect compared to the full year budget saving included in the 2024-25 MTFP.

Other deficits include income pressures in Hygiene Action & Pest Control, Taxi Licensing and Premises Licensing which are offset by vacancies within School Crossing Patrol and Commercial Standards, additional Registrars income and by a forecast underspend on Community Grants.

Covid Scarring Budget is being utilised to fund Leisure Management Fee (1.359m) and partly offset the under recovery of income in Premises (£0.019m) and Taxi Licensing (£0.026m).

2.2 Earmarked Reserves

Most earmarked reserves are held at a corporate level and services produce a business case to drawdown funds, which is approved through Corporate Leadership Team and Members. This strategic approach is designed to provide financial resilience for the council and to ensure that council reserves are used on an invest-to-save basis and to support council priorities. The exceptions to this are ringfenced reserves and the Directorate Flexibility Reserve.

The table below reflects planned use of reserves at Quarter 2 and is after the review of the council's reserve policy which was presented to Cabinet on 18 September 2024 (Agenda item 11)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 18th September 2024, 6.00 pm - Stockport Council](#)

Transfer from reserves:

Reserve Category	Reserve Narration	To be used for	Reserve / Approved Use Balance £000	Planned / Approved use of Reserves £000	Balance of Reserve £000
Corporate Reserves					
Strategic Priority Reserve	Community Investment Fund	Stockport Local Fund	29	29	0
Strategic Priority Reserve	Cabinet Positive Investments	Digital Inclusion and Financial Inclusion to Support Residents	25	25	0
Strategic Priority Reserve	Contain Outbreak Management Reserve	Investment Plan Post-Covid Reserve - Previously COMF reserve	364	364	0
Strategic Priority Reserve	Cabinet Positive Investments	22/23 Digital inclusion – enhancing library provision (£0.100m)	43	43	0
Corporate Reserves	Revenue Grant Reserve (includes ringfenced reserves)	Trading Standards Grant	7	0	7
Strategic Priority Reserve	Cabinet Positive Investments	Digiknow	50	0	50
	Total		518	461	57

- Approved use of the reserves balance is £0.518m.
- Planned drawdown from these reserves is £0.461m.
- Reserves held outside this portfolio being used to fund expenditure within this portfolio is £0.211m.
- Reserves funding expenditure reported in other portfolios is £0.529m.

Please note that reserves have been reviewed in line with the policy and reduced where deemed appropriate.

2.3 Portfolio Savings Programme

The savings aligned to this portfolio for 2024/25 are shown in the table below:

MTFP Driver	Proposal	Value of Savings £000's	RAG
Robust Corporate Governance	Libraries	320	AMBER
Robust Corporate Governance	Service Efficiencies in Corporate & Support Services	50	GREEN
Robust Corporate Governance	Increase Fees & Charges across Place Management	47	GREEN
Total: Communities, Culture & Sport		417	

Risk rating

Green – good confidence (90% plus) the saving is/will be delivered or minor variances (<£0.050m) that will be contained within the portfolio.

Amber – progressing at a reasonable pace, action plan being pursued, may be some slippage across years and/or the final position may also be a little unclear.

Red – Significant issues arising, or further detailed consultation required which may be complex/contentious.

2.4 Capital Programme

Programme

Expenditure as at 30 Sep 2024 £000	Scheme	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
0	Security Capital Works	37	0	0	0	0
608	Marple Community Hub	7,061	13,678	375	0	0
608	TOTAL	7,098	13,678	375	0	0

* This relates to expenditure on SAP and accruals for goods received or work performed up to the period end.

Resources

Resources	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000
Capital Grants	7,098	11,489	375	0	0
Capital Receipts	0	2,189	0	0	0
TOTAL	7,098	13,678	375	0	0

Progress against individual schemes

Scheme	Description
Security Capital Works	Capital works required to facilitate the transfer of security services from TLC to SHL.
Marple Community Hub	<p>Stockport Council was awarded with Capital Levelling up funding in April 2023 to deliver a new active community hub within Marple.</p> <p>The council has now appointed a main contractor to deliver the scheme and RIBA Stage 3 and Stage 4 design is being undertaken.</p> <p>A planning application for the scheme was submitted in March 2024 and the project remains on track to hit its key milestones. Works are due to start on site later in 2024, with the new building due to be completed in 2025/26.</p>