

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CABINET
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 9 October 2024

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Conor McGrath, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller

Start / End Start Time: 2.00pm
Time: End Time: 3.30pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - CABINET - 18 SEPTEMBER 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18 September 2024 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

The Leader, on behalf of the Cabinet, thanked the Members of the Scrutiny Committees for the excellent work they were doing particularly in respect of the Skills Agenda and encouraging young people to look at the opportunities that there were in Stevenage. He reiterated that the work undertaken by these Committees added great value to the work of the Council in meeting the needs of businesses, residents and visitors to the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Minutes of meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees be noted –

Community Select Committee 9 September 2024
Environment and Economy Select Committee 16 September 2024
Overview & Scrutiny Committee 24 September 2024

4 **PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND PROPOSED REVOCATION OF THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT ON BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The Cabinet was presented with a report recommending approval to undertake public consultation on revised Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's). The SPD's provided detail to the policies included in the adopted Local Plan which were

used when the Planning and Development Committee considered different applications. The report proposed changes to three of the four Council's existing SPD's; Parking and Sustainable Transport, Developer Contributions and Design Guidance.

Members were advised that the fourth, SPD relating to Biodiversity was being revoked as recent changes, since April 2024, in national legislation and guidance had effectively replaced it. Members agreed that in relation to Biodiversity, Stevenage had been ahead of the previous Government through the Council's efforts to develop and maintain a local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Cabinet were advised that many of the amendments to the SPD's were technical in nature but they also highlighted some positive changes including a stronger commitment to providing apprenticeship opportunities through the Stevenage Works Programme, seeking contributions to the new cycle hire scheme across the town and seeking contributions for electric car hubs.

It was noted that the public consultation on the three revised SPD's would commence on 14 October for a minimum period of 4 weeks and would be of particular interest to stakeholders including developers and those with an interest in planning and development of land as well as industries in the local economy.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the revised Stevenage Supplementary Planning Documents be noted.
2. That consultation on three revised Supplementary Planning Documents, from 14 October 2024 be approved.
3. That the revocation of The Impact of Development on Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document be approved.
4. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the SPD documents prior to public consultation.
5. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and fed back to Cabinet.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

5 **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL): PRELIMINARY DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE - PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Cabinet was presented with a report proposing to increase Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates for residential development aligning them closely to the Hertfordshire average as well as proposing a new rate for industrial use. The Portfolio Holder explained that the CIL was a planning charge introduced as a tool

for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. He further explained that the money could be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure, such as transport schemes, schools, community facilities, parks and leisure facilities needed as a result of development.

Members were advised that the increases could unlock £14m to fund vital local infrastructure over the next five years. Public consultation would commence on 14 October 2024 for a minimum period of 4 weeks and the responses received would be reported back to a future meeting of Cabinet.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the updated evidence base for the Community Infrastructure Levy Review be approved.
2. That the draft Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (attached as Appendix A) be agreed for public consultation.
3. That the public consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule, for a minimum period of four weeks commencing 14 October 2024 be approved.
4. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director; Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance, to make such amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule.
5. That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and fed back to the Cabinet.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

6 **CLIMATE CHANGE - ANNUAL UPDATE - OCTOBER 2024**

The Cabinet was presented with a report and received a presentation from the Head of Climate Action which provided an overview of the measures the Council was implementing to address climate change. Specifically, the report detailed the most significant climate action efforts undertaken across the themes identified in the 2020 Climate Change Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance advised that Stevenage Borough Council, at local and county levels, was a leader in the work to mitigate climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He thanked his Cabinet colleagues for their collaborative working and in particular Councillor Barr, Portfolio Holder for Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods for her very important street-level work on the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF) Projects designed to support local residents in making positive environmental changes in their communities. Members recognised the importance of the Green Space Volunteers who could be instrumental in running CCCF projects and that the community engagement model followed by the Friends of Hampson Park could be adopted elsewhere in the Town.

Members were pleased to note the launch of the Stevenage Green Business Grant Scheme which assisted local businesses in adopting greener solutions. The report also highlighted a number of successes including the Beryl Bike Scheme, reducing emissions from the Council's waste and recycling fleet and decarbonisation projects in the Council's Housing Stock.

Members noted that Stevenage was relatively unique amongst District and Borough Councils in maintaining a Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had been holding regular meetings with the Stevenage MP Kevin Bonavia who had given reassurance that he would be using his power and influence with Government to support delivery against this key local and national agenda item.

Members thanked the Head of Climate Action for his thorough and informative report and presentation.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the progress in delivering the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy and action plan across the eight strategic areas, and delegating powers to the Portfolio Holder to make alterations following further engagement with other members be acknowledged.
2. That the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan 2024-2028, attached as Appendix 3, with a one-page summary in Appendix 4 and a neighbourhood breakdown in Appendix 5 be approved.
3. That the release of the Climate Change Action Plan tracker available at Stevenage Climate Action Plan (for further details, see 5.17 in Appendix 1) be noted.
4. That the updated national climate action context, especially the new UK Government's climate priorities (further details in "*Level 2 – UK National Climate Action*" in **Appendix 1**), and SBC's collaborative regional and countywide work be recognised.
5. That the launch of the Stevenage Green Business Grant Scheme to help local businesses implement greener solutions to reduce their carbon footprint (details in **Appendix 1**, "*Level 6 – Stevenage Level*" under "*Businesses*") be noted.
6. That the implementation of the "*Pathway 3 – People & Processes*", focusing on ways of working and service-related emissions, particularly the establishment of the Staff Climate Champions Group (details in **Appendix 1**, "*Level 6 – Stevenage Level*" under "*People*") be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

7 **FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26**

The Cabinet was presented with a report seeking approval of Fees and Charges

2025/26 for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation reminded Cabinet that the Council's Financial Security Group, a cross party group of members, had reviewed the proposals for the 2025 – 26 fees and charges on a case-by case basis and that Equality Impact Assessments had been undertaken across all service areas.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Fees and Charges 2025-26 for the General Fund, as shown at Appendix A, be approved.
2. That Fees and Charges 2025/26 for the Housing Revenue Account, as shown at Appendix B, be approved.
3. That the Strategic Director (CF) be given delegated authority to approve any final changes required to the Fees and Charges, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Transformation.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

8 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

9 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

10 **FUTURE VOIDS DELIVERY MODEL**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the Future Voids Delivery Model.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

11 **MAJOR PROJECT UPDATE - BRENT COURT GARAGES**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of a major Project Update – Brent Court Garages.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

12 **MAJOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE AND PIPELINE PROJECTS RESOURCING**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the Major Project Development Programme Update and Pipeline Projects Resourcing.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

13 **TOWNS FUND PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of the Towns Fund Programme Update.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

14 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR