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Daneshill House
Danestrete
Stevenage
Hertfordshire

14 January 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage on Wednesday, 22 January 2025 at 7.00pm and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Partridge
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 18 DECEMBER 2024

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18 December 2024.

Page Nos. 5 - 14

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive any communications that the Mayor may wish to put before the Council.

4. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

None received.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None Received.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None received.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition shall be given the opportunity to raise one matter relevant to the Borough that has arisen since the last meeting of the Council. The Leader of the Council shall then have the opportunity to advise the Council of matters relevant to the Borough that have arisen since the last meeting.

9. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the recent activities of those Committees.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

In accordance with Standing Orders, the following motion has been received for consideration:

Local Government Devolution

Labour councils and councillors across the East of England have, for years, been a beacon of hope in contrast to a disastrous and divisive Conservative Government.

Labour Councils have protected key services and delivered for residents' time and time again despite the difficult financial circumstances.

It is exciting to now have a Labour Government working with us hand in hand.

However Council does not underestimate the scale of the challenges ahead. The Conservative government left the NHS, Local Government and the economy in ruin, and it will take time to rebuild the foundations in the East and across the country.

Council resolves to:

1. Recognise the benefits of working with our new Government to fulfil its vital commitment of devolving power into the hands of local communities and;
2. Resolves to agree to play its part in supporting the Government in delivering on its mission to realise genuine devolution to councils across the East of England thereby supporting and empowering our residents and businesses

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

In accordance with Standing Orders, written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

- (A) Question from Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren

As we try to encourage residents to walk and cycle more can the Council, in conjunction with ward councillors, undertake a town-wide survey of pavements and footpaths, whether maintained by the County Council or the Borough Council, to reduce trip hazards and pavement obstructions by vehicles, ensuring safe and ease of passage for all including those with prams, disability scooters and walking aids?

(B) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

What assessment has been undertaken to consider the value of ward Councillors locality budgets?

12. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) - FINAL BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2025/26

To update Members on the proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2025/26.

Page Nos. 15 - 90

13. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

To note the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27 November 2024.

Page Nos. 91 - 94

14. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

To approve an appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer upon the recommendation of the Appointments Committee

Page Nos. 95 - 96

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A 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.

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 18 December 2024

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Mayor), Nazmin Chowdhury (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Sandra Barr, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Kamal Choudhury, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Coleen Houlihan, Mason Humberstone, Lin Martin-Haugh, Conor McGrath, Andy McGuinness, Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Simon Speller, Jeannette Thomas, Carolina Veres, Anne Wells, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Time: Start Time: 7.00pm
End Time: 9.35pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for Absence were received on behalf of Councillors Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Loraine Rossatti, Tom Wren and Deputy Youth Mayor Frankie Duncan.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 16 October 2024, the Special Council Meeting on 16 October 2024 and the Special Council Meeting on 2 December 2024 be approved as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor referred to a list of events he had supported since the last Council meeting on 16 October which had been circulated at the meeting and he provided a verbal report on a number of highlights including:

- The Paskong Pinoy Stevenage Annual Christmas gathering;
- Sakhi Milap Hertfordshire Diwali Party Celebration;
- Stevenage Men's Choir and the Christ the King Singers Concert – the Mayor informed Council that the Choir were keen to recruit new members;

- Upcoming events including 8 February – a film showing Stevenage as it was in 1967; a Ceilidh Dance on 1 March and the Arts Guild Musical Evening on 31 March and the Interfaith Event on 9 March;
- The Mayor also advised that he would be running the London Marathon in April on behalf of his charities.

At this juncture the Mayor invited the Youth Mayor to give a brief update on her activities alongside the Deputy Youth Mayor since taking up the role in May 2024. These included:

- The D-Day Beacon Lighting which had honoured the sacrifices made by veterans;
- Stevenage Day;
- Tri-partite Town Twinning hosted by Stevenage this year;
- A number of events targeted at the progression and development of STEM careers and experiences in Stevenage including a visit to Airbus;
- Firework Night at Fairlands Valley Park;
- Remembrance Sunday.

4 **COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

Council received a presentation from Jill Borchers, Tina Walker and Teun van Leeuwen from Cycling UK Stevenage following a resident survey they had undertaken over the summer of 2024 regarding people's views on cycling in Stevenage.

Council was informed that the results of the survey gave insight into the journeys that people cycled and wheeled, how they used the cycling infrastructure in Stevenage, and how they saw the future of cycling and wheeling in the town. Cycling UK advised that the presentation would help the Council with vital resident insight in support of its regeneration plans, potentially encouraging a modal shift in line with health, economic and climate change strategies, and ensuring Stevenage remained an inclusive and accessible place to live, work and visit.

In response to a number of comments and questions, the following answers were given:

- The Council would be resuming a regular contact with Officers and Members through liaison meetings with Cycling UK Stevenage;
- In the presentation the statistics relating to the difference between utility and leisure cycling had been very useful;
- In relation to electric bikes, the presenters advised that their view was that e-bikes enabled users to cycle and the positive usage statistics for the new Beryl Bike scheme had been encouraging although the parking bays for the bikes should be continually monitored;
- Maintenance of the cycle paths was a County Council responsibility. Regular meetings were held with HCC and a combined SBC and HCC group was being considered to look at all aspects of encouraging people to cycle;
- Tonight's presentation would be shared with all SBC and HCC Members following the meeting. Meetings with Ward Councillors could be arranged to look at issues around individual wards particularly where bikes were parked in front

gardens which could reflect a lack of safe and secure parking for bikes in that area;

- The Council's Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town ambitions were key;
- In relation to e-scooters, Cycling UK advised that although they were moving people away from car usage, they were currently. Safe and legal use of micro mobility should be encouraged where appropriate;
- In response to concerns regarding cycling on pavements it was recognised that although the practise was illegal, if the roads were unsafe, the Police would take no action if they were riding sensibly and safely.

The Mayor thanked Jill, Teun and Tina for their presentation and thanked Members for their comments and questions and wished the group well in their ongoing activities to promote and improve cycling facilities across the Town.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no petitions or deputations.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Council noted that a response to the question from the Youth Mayor regarding STEM Skills had been published in the Supplementary Agenda for the meeting.

The Youth Mayor asked the following supplementary question: What work was being done by the Council in relation to support for areas other than STEM such as the creative industry or legal sector. The Leader of the Council responded that work was ongoing with Herts Leaders to further develop the creative sector, and what could be done to encourage young people to become involved in those areas. He advised that a film offer was also being developed in Stevenage in collaboration with the College and Schools.

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stephen Booth, asked the following question: Does the Leader of the Council agree that the Government's latest proposals on devolution and the deadline of 10 January 2025 for responses to be sent in response to the consultation regarding local government reorganisation is grossly undemocratic and would destroy the link between elected local councillors and the people they serve. It also paved the way for the end of Stevenage Borough and similar district councils.

The Leader of the Council replied that current speculation on the Government's White Paper on Devolution had resulted in many meetings and email exchanges being held this week. The priority for the Leader was to make Stevenage Even Better, continue with the Regeneration of the Town, building Council homes, the creation of jobs and developing the Town's Leisure and Cultural Offer. Working to

ensure the best interests and opportunities of the Town and its residents. The view of the Leader of Hertfordshire Council that a single Unitary Council should be established was not the view of other authorities across the County and an urgent meeting of all Hertfordshire Leaders was being convened where the issue would be discussed.

The Council then received updates from the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders on the following matters:

- Health and Safety Courses;
- Follow the Star;
- Pioneering Young STEM Futures (PYSF);
- Social Inclusion Partnership;
- Household Support Fund;
- Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor;
- Mission 44;
- Leisure and Sports Centre;
- Underpass Competition;
- Progress at Independent Living Scheme;
- Shephall View Development Site;
- Environmental Strategies; and
- Regeneration.

9 **UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

Councillor Lin Martin-Haugh, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised that at its recent meetings, the Committee had considered the following issues:

- The decisions of the Cabinet including the Local Plan, Climate Change, Budget Monitoring, Performance Monitoring, Council Tax Support Scheme and Fees and Charges;
- ICT Provision and Cyber Security;
- Relocation of the Customer Service Centre; and
- SBC Website.

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Rob Broom, Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee gave an update on the work of the Community Select Committee including consideration of:

- A presentation from Everyone Active;
- An update on Damp and Mould reporting;
- Housing Asset Management;
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy; and
- An item related to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion to be considered in the New Year.

The Chair of the Environment & Economy Select Committee advised that the Committee had been continuing its work on:

- Climate Strategy focusing on the reduction of carbon emissions;
- Climate Change mitigation and action;
- Management of Green Spaces and bio-diversity; and
- The Skills agenda.

10 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Labour Government's Autumn Budget

Councillor Ceara Roopchand moved and Councillor Jade Woods seconded the following motion:

On Wednesday 30th October, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP delivered a Labour Government Budget for the first time in 14 years. With a strong mandate from the electorate in July, including 17,698 voters in Stevenage, the Chancellor vowed to restore stability to our economy and to begin a decade of national renewal, to fix the foundations and deliver change through responsible leadership in the national interest.

Council notes the significance of having the first female Chancellor in history deliver the budget, and what that signifies to young women and girls across the UK about unlocking opportunities and aspirations.

Council believes this is the first budget in 14 years to truly back the ambitions of Stevenage, from supporting residents with the cost of living to building affordable homes to supporting local industry to investing in key services such as health, education and transport.

The budget restored economic stability, plugging the devastating £22 billion black hole left behind by successive previous administrations whilst not raising a single tax on workers pay packets. Council notes this strong approach to fiscal responsibility is projected to lead to consistently low inflation and high growth which we will all benefit from.

Council supports the increase in the minimum wage that puts an extra £1,400 into the pockets of the lowest paid full-time workers, the freezing of fuel duty, £500 million investment into fixing potholes, £5 billion allocated to build new affordable homes, the largest increase in the carers allowance since its inception and the commitment to the triple lock on pensions which will lead to a £470 increase next year.

Council recognises that the £1.3 billion invested into local government marks a clear turning point from an era of austerity where councils will finally be given the funds needed to properly run services and support communities.

Council endorses the £22.6 billion increase to the healthcare budget, £6.7 billion increase to the education budget, £1 billion uplift for SEND provision and £650 million allocation for public transport as decisions that demonstrate the

Government's commitment to deliver on its promises to fix the foundations of our broken public services.

Lastly, Council celebrates the wide ranging support the budget gave to sectors that are prominent in Stevenage, namely £2.9 billion more for the defence sector, £1 billion for the aerospace industry, £2 billion for the automotive industry, £520 million for the life sciences sector and £6.1 billion for the medical sector.

Overall, this was a budget that comprehensively delivered for working people whilst starting to repair 14 years of economic ruin.

Council resolves to:

Endorse the Chancellor's Autumn Budget and recognise it as a critical step toward economic recovery, growth, stronger services and national prosperity for all.

In moving the motion, Councillor Roopchand advised that the Government's Budget Statement had signalled a clear commitment to the long term prosperity of the nation and addressed the needs of the local community. She stated that the budget focussed on empowering local government and there would be a substantial increase in funding to ensure Councils could continue to meet the growing demand for services particularly in key areas such as children's services and homelessness prevention. Cllr Roopchand referred to the additional funding particularly relevant for Stevenage including for the defence sector, the aerospace industry and the life sciences sector. She advised that the budget would help to create a fairer society and put local government at the heart of the vision for the future.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Woods stated that the budget was a welcome departure from the years of austerity which could not be sustained by local authorities. She referred in particular to the additional funding going to the NHS. She also welcomed the changes to the Right to Buy regime.

Councillor Phil Bibby advised that although he welcomed parts of the budget, he was of the view that the statement did not make economic sense. He stated that the Labour Government had inherited the fastest growing economy in the G7, with mortgage interest rates falling and inflation back to the Bank of England target.

Councillor Booth, Leader of the Opposition stated that although many things within the Budget were welcomed, a number of important Groups had been affected negatively including Pensioners, employers, women with pensions and farmers.

A number of Members responded to the Motion with the following comments:

- Economic growth would be less under this Government than the previous Government;
- The budget delivered was the first for 14 years that backed the ambitions of the Town and the Council;
- The budget would help home ownership; the fuel duty had been frozen; triple lock on pensions was guaranteed and carers would be supported;

- The budget from a strong fiscally responsible Government addressed the problems of budgets in the public sector by providing an injection of funding at an essential time.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

Labour Government's Autumn Budget

Councillor Phil Bibby moved the following Motion:

The Council notes that the labour Government inherited the fastest growing economy in the G7, with mortgage interest rates falling and inflation back to the Bank of England target, after the impact of the COVID pandemic and the energy price crises because of the war in Ukraine.

The independent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts that growth will now be lower, inflation will rise and mortgage interest rates will increase as a result of the Chancellor's budget on 30 October.

The OBR also forecasts that the policies in the budget directly:

- Increase tax take to an historic high at 38 per cent of GDP by 2029/30;
- Lower medium-term GDP growth to 1.5 per cent;
- Push up CPI inflation, projected to rise to 2.6 per cent by 2025;
- Increase borrowing by £19.6 bn this year and by £32.3 bn over the next 5 years;
- Reduce real household disposable income by 2029;
- Raise the bank rate and 5 year gilt yield higher than forecast; and
- Cut wages by £7.5 bn as a result of a hike in employers' national insurance.

The council rejects the Chancellor's tax on jobs, which will hit businesses workers in Stevenage. According to the OBR, "*policy changes leave nominal and real earnings growth lower over the remainder of the forecast, as employers pass on the national insurance contribution rise.*" The OBR further notes, "*in 2025/26 firms will pass on 60 per cent of the higher costs to workers and consumers, via lower wages and higher prices.*"

Council believes this budget is a tax on working people.

The Motion was not seconded and therefore not debated.

11 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

The Council received a question from Councillor Phil Bibby regarding the Multi Storey Car Park in St George's Way. The response to the question had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

Supplementary Question: has any thought been given to what would be the cost of sprinklers and what sort of timescale where we looking at?

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Transport advised that the Council was committed to reviewing options for fire safety and the detail would be shared once the review had been completed.

12 **APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER**

The Council considered a report in respect of the Appointment of Monitoring Officer in accordance with S5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council's current Monitoring Officer Simon Pugh would be retiring at the end of January 2025 and the report was for the Council to agree to the appointment of Victoria Wilders to the post with effect from 6 January 2025.

Victoria had been appointed as part of the Herts County Council and Stevenage Borough Council shared legal service as Assistant Chief Legal Officer with Lead responsibility for Stevenage and she was now eligible for appointment as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

If agreed, there would be a handover period ending on 31 January during which time Simon Pugh would act as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

The Chief Executive then, on behalf of the Council's Officer team and Members, thanked Simon for his work over the past 2 years. The Chief Executive stated that he was hugely grateful for all that he had done.

It was moved by Councillor Richard Henry, and seconded by Councillor Jeannette Thomas, and **RESOLVED** that Victoria Wilders be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer with effect from 6 January.

13 **MID-YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024/25**

The Council considered a report in respect of the Mid Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators 2024/25. It was noted that the report had been endorsed by both the Audit Committee and the Cabinet.

It was moved by Councillor Jeannette Thomas, and seconded by Councillor Carolina Veres, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Mid Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators 2024/25 be approved.

14 **AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 6 November 2024 were received.

15 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

16 **REMUNERATION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Council considered a Part II report in respect of the Remuneration of the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive left the Chamber during consideration of the item.

It was clarified that the new salary would come into effect following the appointment of the new Chief Executive.

Following further debate and upon being put to the vote it was **RESOLVED** that, the recommendation for the Appointments Committee proposing a revised pay scale for the recruitment of a new Chief Executive, be approved.

CHAIR

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Meeting CABINET / COUNCIL

Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development / Resources and Transformation

Date 15 JANUARY 2025 / 22 JANUARY 2025



FINAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2025/26

KEY DECISION

Authors Keith Reynoldson; Brian Moldon

Contributor Ash Ahmed; Andrew Garside; Clare Fletcher; Denise Lewis; Richard Protheroe; Kerry Clifford

Lead Officers Richard Protheroe; Clare Fletcher

Contact Officer Keith Reynoldson; Brian Moldon

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2025/26, to be considered by Council on 22 January 2025.
- 1.2 To update Members on the formula for setting rents for 2025/26.
- 1.3 To propose the HRA rents for 2025/26.
- 1.4 To propose the HRA service charges for 2025/26.
- 1.5 To update Members on the 2025/26 HRA budget, incorporating the decisions included in the HRA Draft Budget Report that was approved at the Cabinet meeting on the 11 December 2024 and the proposed 2025/26 fees and charges.
- 1.6 To update Members on further financial pressures identified since the Draft HRA Budget was approved in December 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the following proposals be recommended to Council on 22 January 2025

- 2.1 That HRA dwelling rents be increased (week commencing 1 April 2025) by 2.7%. This equates to an average increase of £3.21 for social rents, £5.02 for affordable rents and £3.94 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year).
- 2.2 That the 2025/26 service charges are approved as set out in paragraph 4.2.
- 2.3 That the HRA budget for 2025/26, set out in Appendix A, is approved.
- 2.4 The 2025/26 growth options as set out in section 4.4 are approved.
- 2.5 That the additional repair pressures of £2,674,860, as set out in 4.4.6, and the net salary savings of £551,920 at 4.4.10, are approved to be included in the working budget for 2024/25.
- 2.6 That the 2025/26 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix B are noted.
- 2.7 That the revised minimum levels of balances for 2025/26 shown in Appendix C are approved.
- 2.8 That Members note the Rent Increase Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA) appended to this report in Appendix D and the Rent Flexibility EqIA in Appendix F.
- 2.9 That Members note the Aids and Adaptations Policy Equalities Impact Assessments appended to this report in Appendix E.
- 2.10 That the contingency sum of £500K, within which the Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2025/26 (£400K in 2024/25) as set out in paragraph 4.9.3.
- 2.11 That the decisions taken on recommendations 2.1 – 2.10 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.

3. BACKGROUND

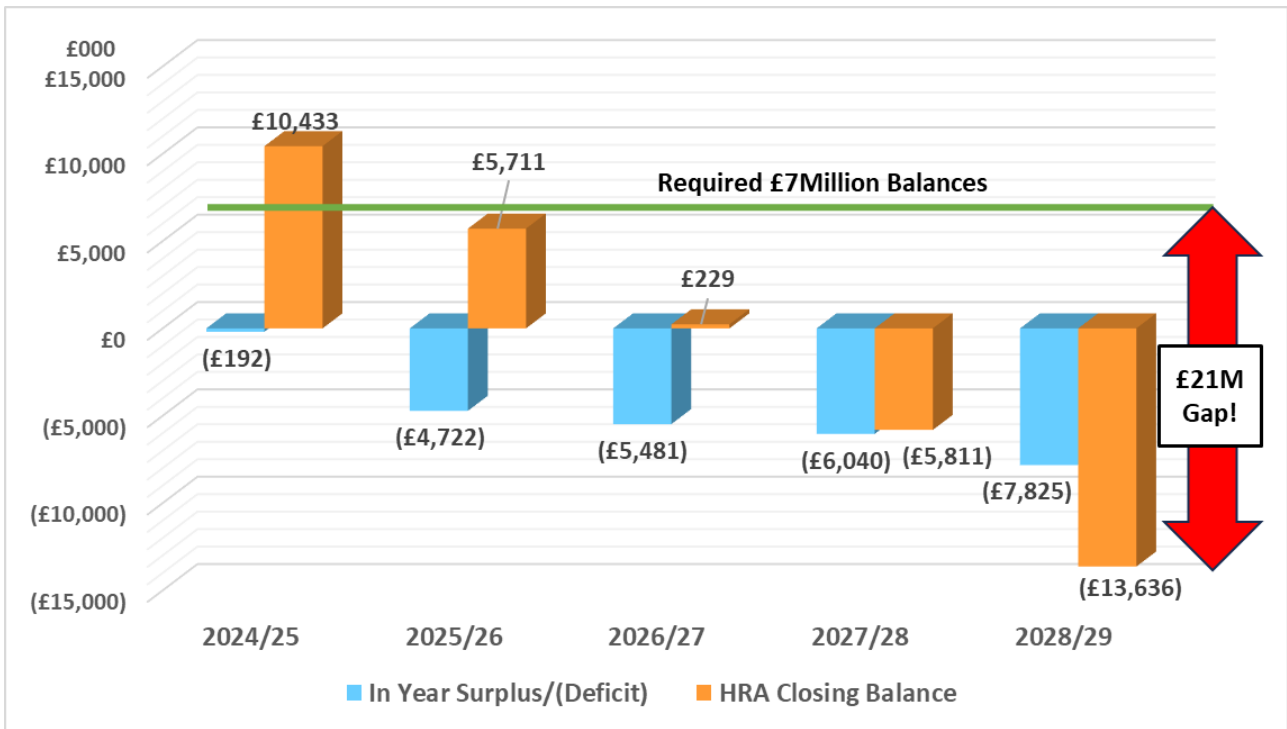
- 3.1 The HRA is a legally ring-fenced account that records the income and expenditure relating to the operation of the Council's housing stock. The main costs in the HRA relate to management, maintenance, depreciation (used to finance capital works) and interest on loans. This is primarily funded from rents that make up the majority of HRA income. Any surpluses are held in the ring-fenced area and are used to contribute towards capital and offset years where the account may be in deficit. The Council is required by law to avoid budgeting for a deficit on the HRA (Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 76).

3.2 The latest updated Business Plan went to Executive in November 2023 and underpins the Council’s key housing priorities for Stevenage as set out under ‘More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes (MSAGQH)’, one of the five strategic priorities of the Making Stevenage Even Better 2024-2027 Corporate Plan.

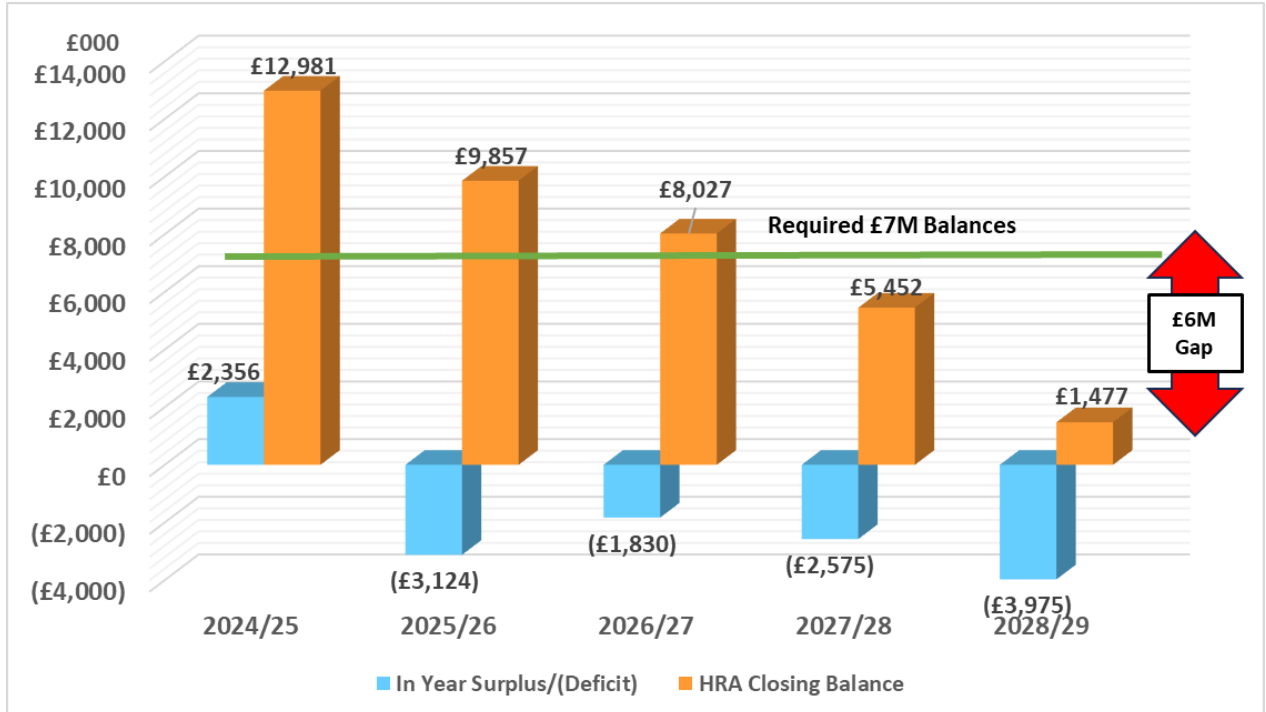
3.3 The table below provides a summary of the overall commitments set out at the last comprehensive review of the HRA Business Plan in 2023/24.

Borrowing and RCCO	Housing Development	Housing Asset Management	Housing Service Delivery
<p>New Borrowing for Capital Investment £351m (30Yrs)</p> <p>Refinanced debt to enable revenue operations £104m (30Yrs)</p> <p>Revenue contribution to capital £18m in (years 1-5)</p>	<p>Invest £734m in new stock (30Yrs)</p> <p>Deliver 2,253 units (30Yrs) 447 in next 5yrs</p> <p>Commence 3 new schemes to maintain dev. pipeline. Deliver new homes to 5 star promise</p> <p>Larger schemes phased for staggered delivery matched to funding. Switch to market purchase if supply needed urgently.</p> <p>Continue pilot projects for new tenures and sustainable design.</p>	<p>£893m stock investment funding (30Yrs)</p> <p>£482m repairs, void and cyclical maintenance (30Yrs). Efficiency target removed, due to regulatory pressures</p> <p>All properties to EPC-C by 2030</p>	<p>£818m in non-maintenance revenue funding (30yrs)</p> <p>Savings target £200k 24/25 then £500k pa for 8yrs. Total £20m in yrs 2-11.</p> <p>Growth of £200k pa to enable service improvement / efficiency</p>

3.4 Members received an update on the Business Plan at the November 2024 Cabinet, via the HRA Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29. The update highlighted that, since the previous year's Business Plan, changes to several national and local policies and subsequently identified financial pressures had resulted in a significant funding gap over the next five years that needs to be addressed, and this is summarised in the chart below.



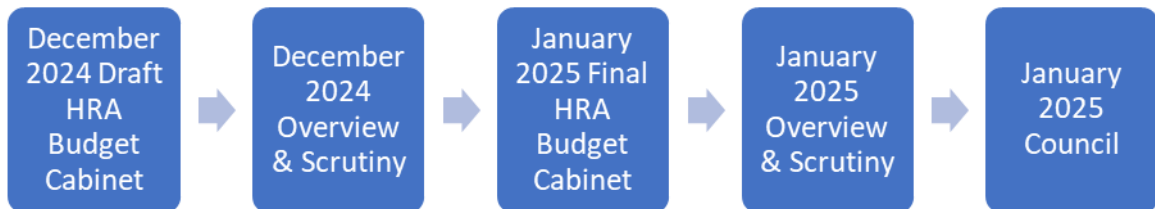
3.5 The MTFS report recommended a number of cost reduction and income generating proposals, which were approved, and these have been incorporated into the final HRA budget for 2025/26, which reduced the funding gap from £21Million to £6Million over the five-year period.



3.6 The funding gap identified above (to achieve a position closer to the minimum balance requirements by the end of the MTFS), meant that the savings target for the HRA has been increased from the business plan target of £500K per annum to circa £1Million per annum from 2026/27. If the savings target identified was achieved, HRA balances

would be £7.1Million by end of 2028/29, or at the recommended level of minimum balances originally set in the MTFS.

- 3.7 Since the November 2024 MTFS report, further pressures have emerged relating to the increased cost of subcontractors for response repairs and further information is included at paragraph 4.4.6 and reported in the December draft rent and budget setting report.
- 3.8 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget also includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the rents; decisions relating to the control of the Council’s borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits.



4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Rents

- 4.1.1. The total number of HRA homes in management on 31st October 2024 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2025/26 are based on current housing stock and any right to buys, or new schemes coming on stream after this date, may change the average rent per property type.

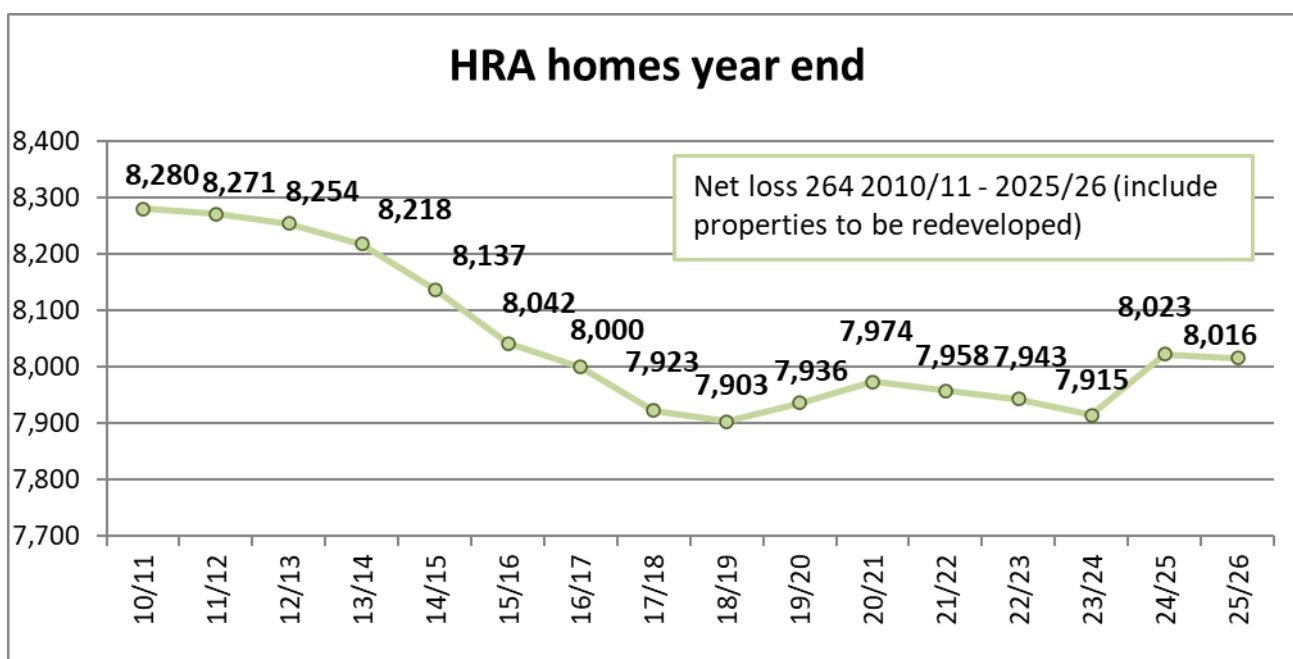
Stock Numbers at 31/10/2024	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	Shelt. Afford	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties	6,804	66	825	18	79	205	7,997

- 4.1.2. For 2025/26 rent has been set in accordance with the current Rent Standard of September CPI plus 1 %. The September CPI was 1.7% meaning rents will increase by 2.7%.
- 4.1.3. The proposed average rents per week for 2025/26 are set out in the table below, based on a 52-week year and the current housing stock in management.

Average Rents 2025/26	LSSO	Increase/ (decrease) %	social	Increase/ (decrease) %	Affordable	Increase/ (decrease) %
Average Rent 2024/25	£146.10		£119.06		£185.78	
Add rent impact 2025/26	£3.94	2.7%	£3.21	2.7%	£5.02	2.7%
Total 52 wk Rent 2025/26	£150.04		£122.27		£190.80	

4.1.4. The 2025/26 net rental income increase is estimated to be £1.9Million, which includes the estimated impacts of right to buys, expected new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment). This is consistent with the numbers used in the MTFS.

4.1.5. The total number of Council homes is estimated to have reduced by 264 between 2010/11 and the end of 2025/26 (based on the net impact of RTBs, new homes and homes awaiting development). The forecast numbers for 2025/26 reflect the impact of new developments and acquisitions compensating for RTB sales. They also take into account the projected impact of the lower purchase discount, detailed in paragraph 4.8.2.

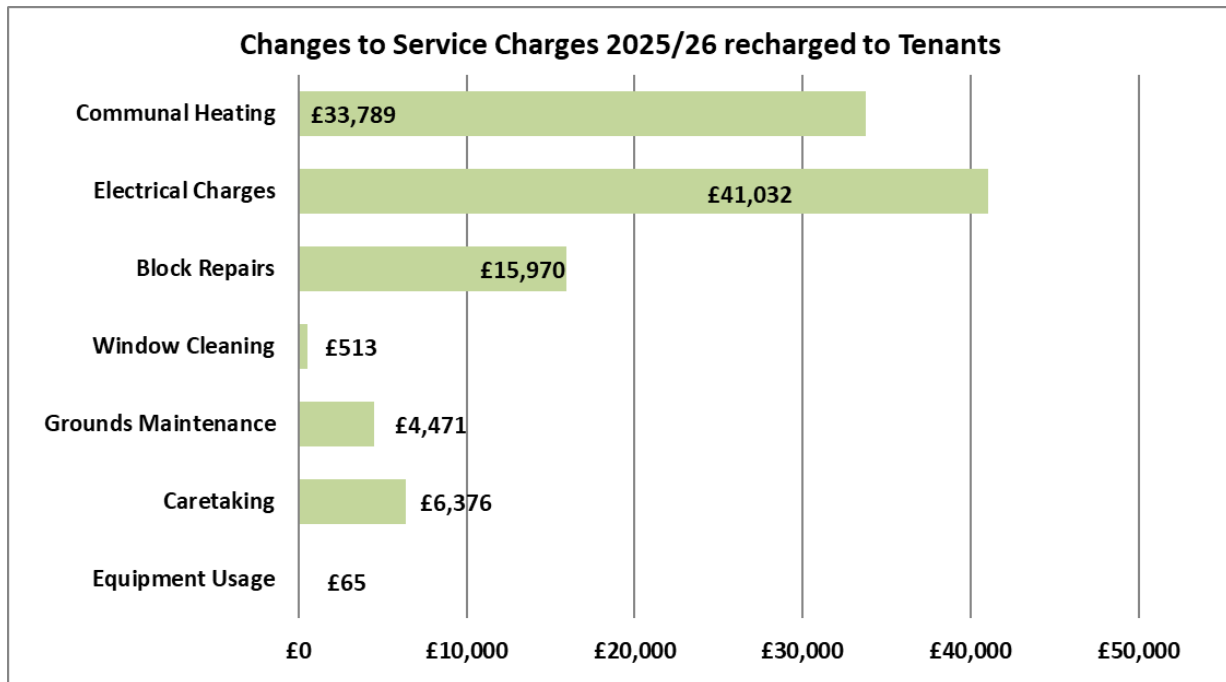


4.2 Service Charges 2025/26

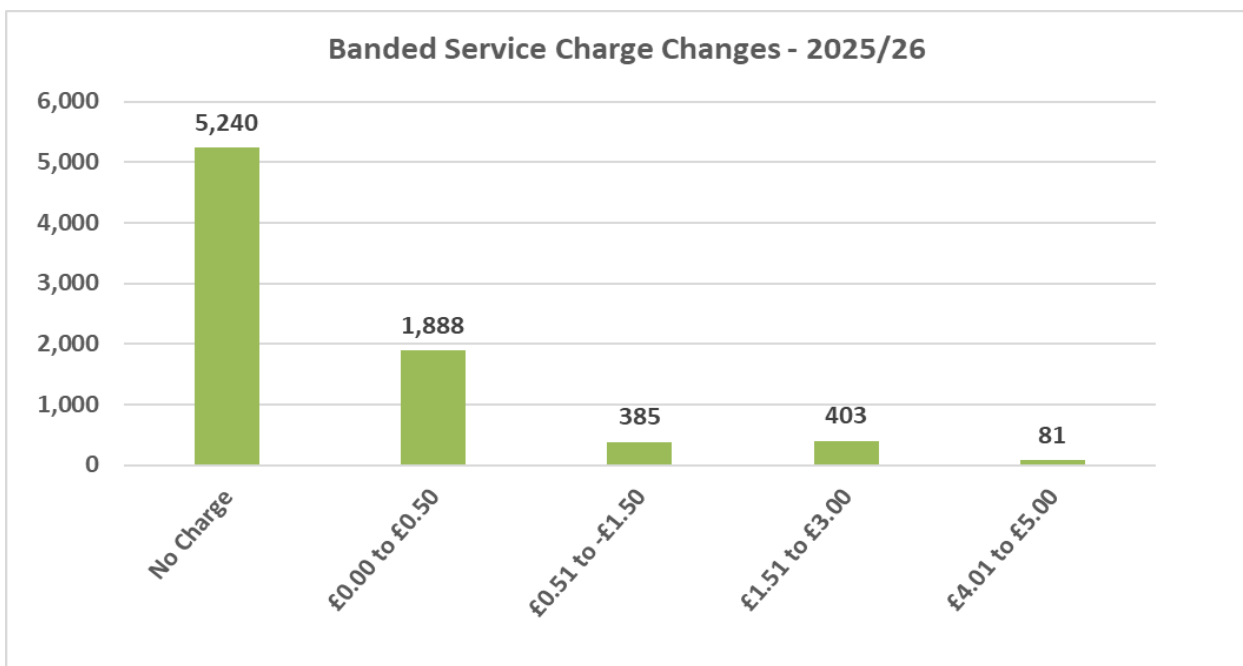
4.2.1. Service charges are calculated on an individual block basis for 2,757 properties, (2024/25 2,834) or 34% of current SBC tenanted properties.

4.2.2. Service charges are not subject to a 2.7% rent increase but are based on cost recovery or actual cost. So, for 2025/26, service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart below identifies the changes between 2024/25 and 2025/26 for service charges. The estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs for 2025/26, with the exception of block repairs, which are 'smoothed' over a five-year period to eliminate individual in-year spikes in repairs spend. The

graph illustrates that energy prices are still expected to cause the largest increase year to year but are still much lower than the exceptional spike in prices seen in 2022/23. These changes are in line with the forecasts included in the MTFs.



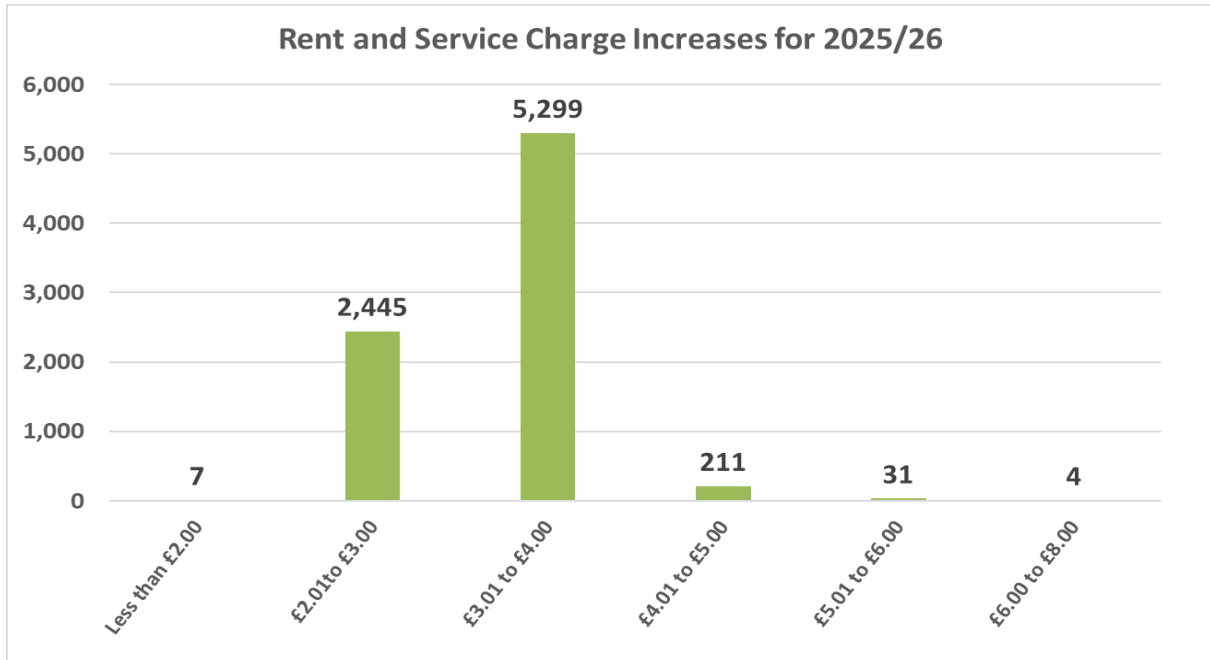
4.2.3. The spread of service charge changes for all tenants in 2025/26 is shown in the chart below, including utility charges and communal heating schemes that are not eligible for housing benefits. However, 5,240 (66%) of homes do not have service charges, of the 2,757 properties that are liable 1,888 (68%) will have increases of less than 50p per week. The remaining properties with higher increased costs, have been driven by utility cost increases which are still projected to be higher than general inflation.



* note increase per week

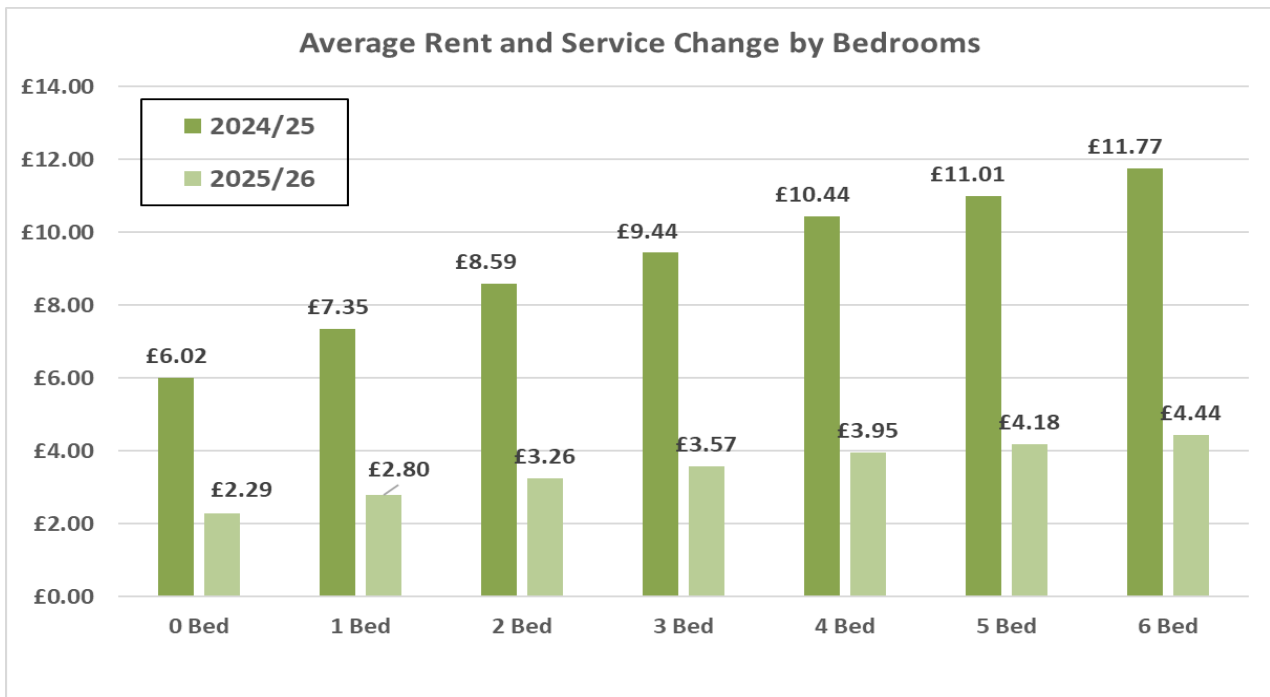
4.3 Rents and Service Charges

4.3.1. The impact of the 2025/26 rent increase and service charges is that 7,751 homes, or 97%, receive a weekly rent and service charge increase below £4.00 per week. This increase is substantially less than last year and is due to the lower September CPI level of 1.7% compared to 6.7% last year. There are 246 properties with an increase over £4 per week and 84 of these are affordable rent properties. The full distribution of the 2025/26 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below and remain unchanged from the December report.



*note increase per week

4.3.2. The average rent and service charge increase by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below. This also illustrates the much lower rent increase due to the September CPI figures.



4.3.3. The comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week, for one to four-bedroom properties, is shown in the table below. The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that private sector rents in Stevenage have increased substantially from last year. A three-bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 142%, (2023/24, 95%) more per week than an SBC council home and 34% more than the affordable rent properties, (2023/24 8%).

	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Median Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance	Median % v SBC Social	Median % v SBC Affordable
1 Bed Property	£105.65	£156.66	£216.46	£176.36	105%	38%
2 Bed Property	£122.13	£201.65	£280.15	£224.38	129%	39%
3 Bed Property	£135.79	£245.11	£329.08	£287.67	142%	34%
4 Bed Property	£149.88	£287.13	£456.69	£368.22	205%	59%

Private rent Data from ONS as at October 2024 and the Local Housing Allowance is based on current rates. Please note the SBC rents are April 2025 prices and the private rents October 2024 prices.

4.3.4. The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) shown in the table above is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

4.4 Growth included in the HRA

4.4.1. The following growth items have been included within the 2025/26 HRA budget.

Included within the November MTFS report:

4.4.2. **New posts re Regulatory Demands £103K** – This growth was approved by Council in July 2024 in relation to the new regulatory requirements aiming to improve digital services and data quality for the Housing Revenue Account and enhance performance and resident engagement in response to new legislation and regulations from the Regulator of Social Housing.

4.4.3. **Void New Delivery Model £704K** – This growth was approved by Cabinet in October 2024 as a new delivery model for void works, aiming to improve performance and process management.

4.4.4. **Insurance premiums £37K** - The latest insurance renewal schedules show a cost pressure for 2025/26. The budget allowed for a 5% increase; however, the actual rise was 10%.

From the Autumn Statement:

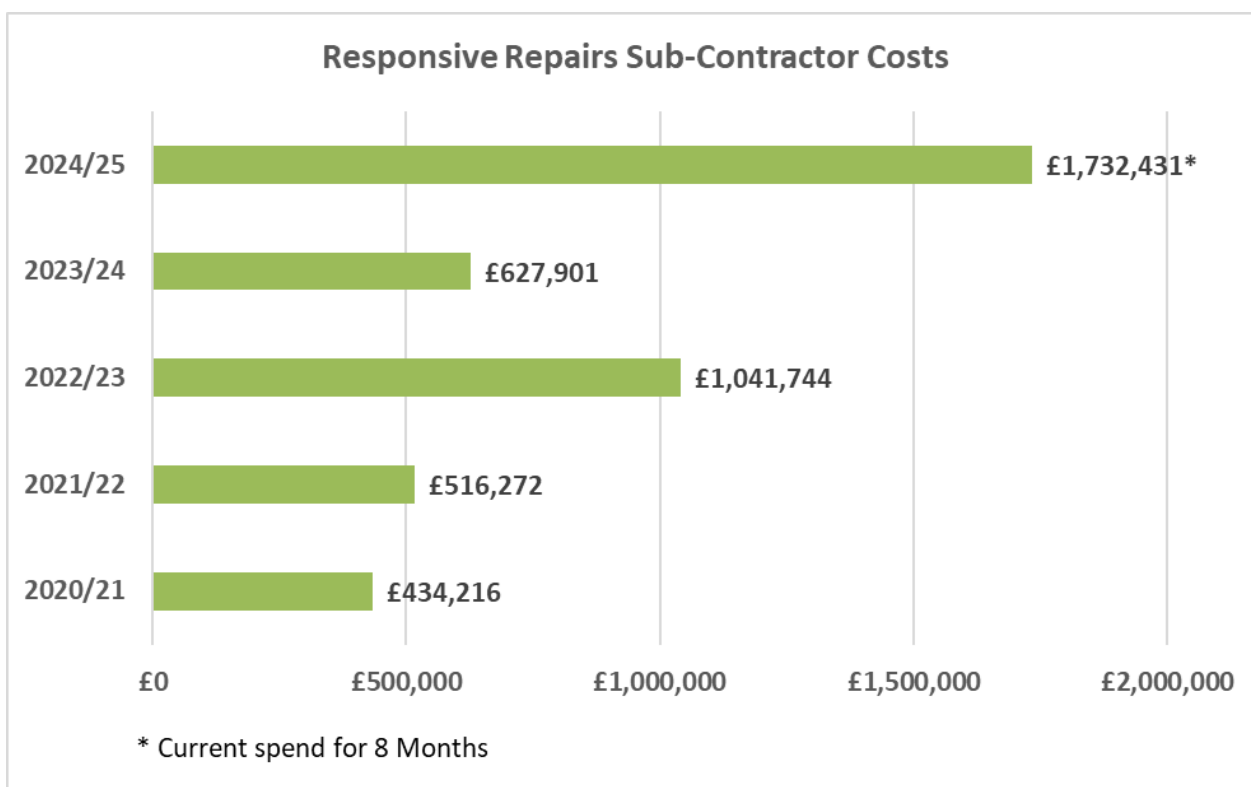
4.4.5. **National Insurance increase in contribution rate net £285K** - On the 30 October the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered an Autumn Budget Statement and announced an increase in the Employer's National Insurance contributions rate from 13.8% to 15.0% from April 2025 and a reduction to the threshold which employers become liable to pay National Insurance to £5,000. The impact of these changes to the HRA will be circa £285K and was anticipated to be recovered (Draft Budget

December Cabinet report), but HRA funding was not included in the provisional finance settlement published on the 18 December.

Further new pressures:

Responsive Repairs and Disrepairs Demand

4.4.6. As indicated in the Draft HRA report in December, a significant budget pressure has been identified relating to responsive repair costs. It was recognised earlier in the year that there was an increase in demand and an additional £500K was added to the budget in the report to the July 2024 Council meeting. However, there has been a further increased level of demand in the number and cost of contracted specialist maintenance jobs, including those where the Council has a statutory responsibility to act. The graph below illustrates the unprecedented increase in costs during this financial year to November. The current projection for these budgets is a £2,674,860 budget pressure in 2024/25 and this would be in addition to the current working budgets of £15.2Million for all revenue maintenance and repair work.



4.4.7. The main two areas of pressure are on disrepair claims and roofing and guttering work, but there are also increased levels of demand for works on windows and doors, drainage works and fencing repairs. While the additional cost associated with administration and compensation were included in the approved growth (July 2024 council) for disrepair claims, the higher costs of work relating to these complex cases was not accounted for and this has meant much higher expenditure in completing the actual work associated with these claims.

4.4.8. A series of mitigations are either already in place, or are being enacted, to control and reduce the cost of this work moving forward and these include:

- Maximising the number of jobs carried out by the in-house team and investigating areas currently completed by sub-contractors that they would be able to complete.

- Continue to exercise tight spending controls on sub-contractor work and any requested variations to orders.
- Carry out further trend analysis to identify ongoing areas of concern and to produce a more accurate estimate of the impact of this pressure on the current and next year's budget.
- Ensure that all major repair elements that may have been included within the sub-contractor payments have been removed and counted within the major repair budgets.

4.4.9. The ongoing cost pressure on this service for 2025/26 has been estimated at £1,991,450 and this takes into account the mitigations detailed above, but is also realistic in setting targets to find efficiencies and reduce costs over the next financial year. Through these mitigations and the clearance of any historic work during 2024/25 it is anticipated that costs in next year will be lower than the current projected outturn. However, it is likely that the underlying base cost of the service has increased. This will mean that the 30-year HRA Business Plan model will need to be amended to reflect the service cost levels and balance them against the other spend areas in the HRA. It is intended that this work will be completed during the last quarter of the current financial year, to be presented to Cabinet in the first half of 2025/26.

Other Savings in 2024/25

4.4.10. The latest salary projections have been calculated for 2024/25 and these currently indicate that there is a net £551,920 underspend on these budgets, mainly due to vacancies, especially on new growth areas where recruitment is currently in progress. This saving is against a current net salary budget of £12.3Million for the HRA and includes meeting the budgeted vacancy allowance of £356K. This saving has reduced the cost pressure of £2.7Million detailed in 4.4.6 to a net £2,122,940 increase to the working budget in 2024/25.

Other Changes to the Draft HRA Budget

4.4.11. In addition to the increase in responsive repairs costs detailed above there have also been a number of other changes included in the final HRA 2025/26 budget.

- **Net Overhead changes from/to the General Fund - £124K.** After the final recharges between the two funds have been finalised there is a net increase to the HRA of £124K on overall charges of £10.1Million.
- **Pension Lump Sum - £11K.** The Council make additional payments into the pension fund to cover any projected deficits in the scheme and the final estimate for 2025/26 has been increased slightly by £11K.
- **Loss of Herts County Council (HCC) Grant - £53K.** In partnership with HCC, the Council has been operating some specialist units with enhanced care arrangements, supported by grant funding. However, the county council have decided to withdraw funds from this provision. Officers are currently reviewing the arrangement and seeking other funding options, but at the time of setting the budget this has not been resolved.
- **Saving Implementation Costs - £200K.** In order to stabilise the HRA finances and ensure that the account remains in line with the MTFs forecasts, large annual revenue savings targets are going to be required over the next five years in excess of the £1Million currently identified in the HRA MTFs. This will

be challenging and the CFO considers this is likely to need additional resources to achieve this.

- 4.4.12. As a result, on the increased cost pressure caused by the demand and cost for responsive repairs in the current and next financial year, the planned revenue contribution to capital expenditure has been replaced with loan financing in the budget. This will release £5.2Million back into HRA balances, but will increase interest payments by an estimated £276K per annum. This intervention is required to allow minimum balances to be maintained into 2026/27 to give time for efficiencies and cost reductions to be implemented. However, this approach cannot continue into future years and the 30 year business plan will require refreshing. It is vital that revenue spending in the HRA is re-balanced over the medium term and this will be addressed in a full re-write of the business plan in early 2025/26.

4.5 Savings Options

- 4.5.1. Due to the cost pressures identified in the HRA MTFs and before higher projected repair costs (as set out in para 4.4.6-4.4.9), the HRA required savings to be identified to avoid running out of balances as set out in the November 2024 MTFs report. The savings proposed for inclusion in the HRA are a combination of options included in the November MTFs 2024 report and the HRA share of the Balancing the Budget savings options also presented to the November Cabinet meeting and are as follows:

Capital Changes reducing revenue contributions to capital in the HRA:

- **Changes to New Build for Social Housing** – there are two changes to the current programme resulting in a saving of £1.1Million over the MTFs. These were additional grant from the Local Authority Housing Fund of £325K and a £822K reduction from the asset review budget because this work can be incorporated in the development project appraisals within the current programme.
- **Decarbonisation** – Members agreed to a lower cost programme in the MTFs, however this still means a bid for 500-550 homes under the current Government's grant scheme. This reduces the HRA capital costs from the current projection of £20.7Million to a revised cost of £13.3Million.
- **Aids and Adaptation** - While demand is likely to remain high given the ageing demographic of tenants, this type of spend needs to be balanced against affordability and other unavoidable areas of investment like fire safety measures which cannot be reduced. Factors that have been considered when proposing this include offering more suitable homes to tenants, such as Independent Living schemes and/or already adapted homes. In addition to existing stock, the housing development programme is also delivering new homes targeted at tenants with specialist needs.

The Community Select Committee will be reviewing the existing policy in due course and the demand and budget will be closely monitored during 2025/26 by the Executive Housing Working Group, as well as through the quarterly budget monitoring process. In the event that the budget is not sufficient it will be reviewed and addressed as part of subsequent HRA updates. However, based on the need

to make cost reductions the annual budget provision for adaptations has been reduced to £550K per annum. This means a saving to the HRA of £2.7Million over a four-year period.

- **Other Capital Changes** - Alongside these capital programme changes the funding for the programme has also been reviewed and this has allowed a further £1.1Million reduction in funding costs across the MTFS 2024/25 to 2028/29.

4.5.2. Members should note that even with the level of proposed capital savings there are still significant elements within the HRA that are required to be spent on capital works, like RTB receipts from housing sales and depreciation charges for the housing stock that is transferred into the Major Repairs Fund. The current capital programme over 2025/26 and 2026/27 is still forecast to be £51.4Million and £57.2Million respectively. However, capital investment in new and existing stock is a major component of the HRA Business Plan and will be review as part of the re-write of the plan.

4.5.3. Revenue Changes:

- **Tightening void procedures and cost control** – A review of voids works is currently underway reviewing specification raised against works subsequently completed. This measure, together with a new procurement, means officers consider that the average cost budgeted for a void can be reduced, while still ensuring the correct level of works are done.

Early estimates suggest potential annual savings of around £500K and these have been included in the HRA over the medium term. These savings are based on the average cost of voids works reducing from circa £8.2K in Quarter one to around £5K in Quarter three. However, it should be emphasised that this work is demand led and costs will be impacted by the volume and condition of properties that are vacated in 2025/26. Sustaining this trend will be achieved through continued tighter controls on the specification of works, as the client/contractor model is fully established. Through the tenancy audit programme and pre-termination visits it is further expected that this will have a positive impact on the condition of properties when they become void which will mitigate against the higher average void costs experienced over the last 12-18 months. However, costs will be closely monitored to understand what is driving spend and what other mitigations could be put in place to avoid high void costs (and associated rent loss from longer relet times).

- **Rent Flexibility Level** – the current projected rental income does not meet the investment need required for the Council stock. Under current regulations the Council can implement rent flexibility, subject to consultation taking place. This allows rents to be set at up to 5% above the formula rent for general needs properties and up to 10% for sheltered accommodation. This would happen only

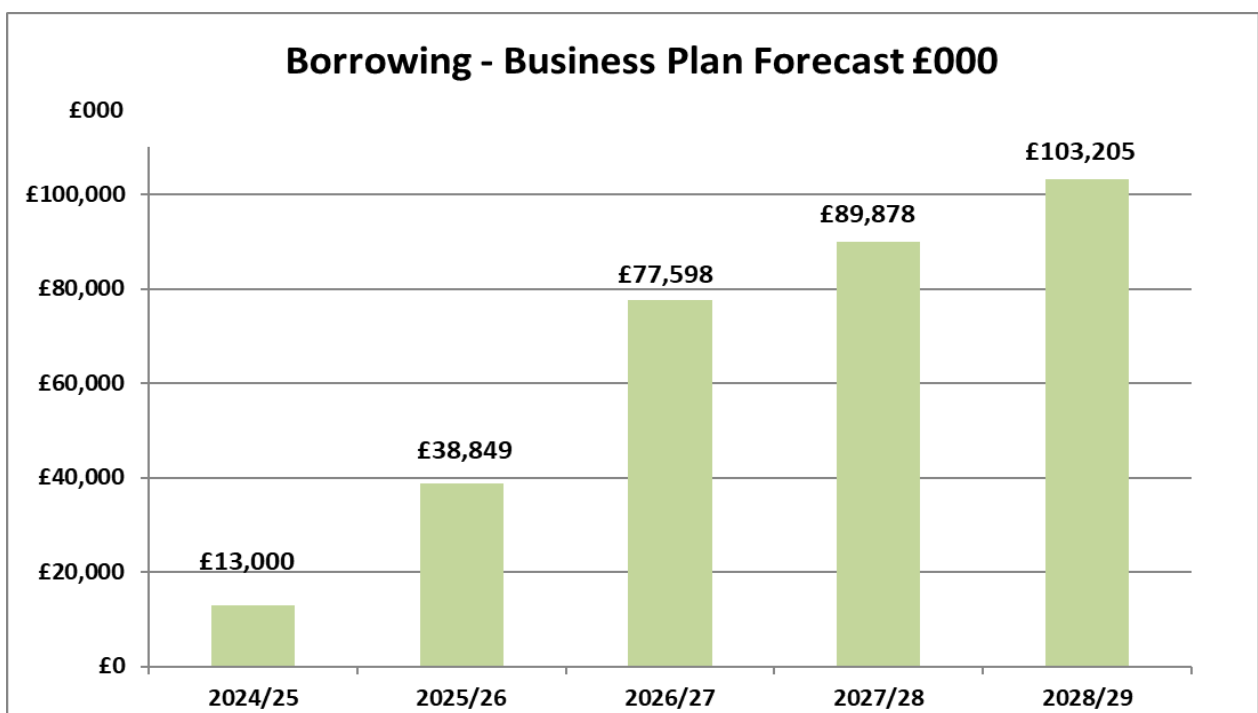
when a property becomes vacant (void) and any works have been completed, to ensure the property meets the decent homes standard and is ready for re-letting to a new tenant. Current tenant's rents would not be changed. This would potentially raise £50,000 in 2025/25 and £800K over the MTFs period up to 2028/29.

- The remaining £17,000 is the HRA share of the “Balancing the Budget options” to November 2024 Cabinet.

4.6 Borrowing

4.6.1. Based on current forecasts, new loans totalling £13Million and £31.4Million are expected to be taken in the current and next financial years for 2024/25 and 2025/26. However, the timing of when to take the new borrowing will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) rates. The interest payable in 2024/25 and 2025/26 is estimated to be £8.2Million and £10.1Million respectively. This includes the impact of replacing revenue financing with loan finance detailed at 4.4.12.

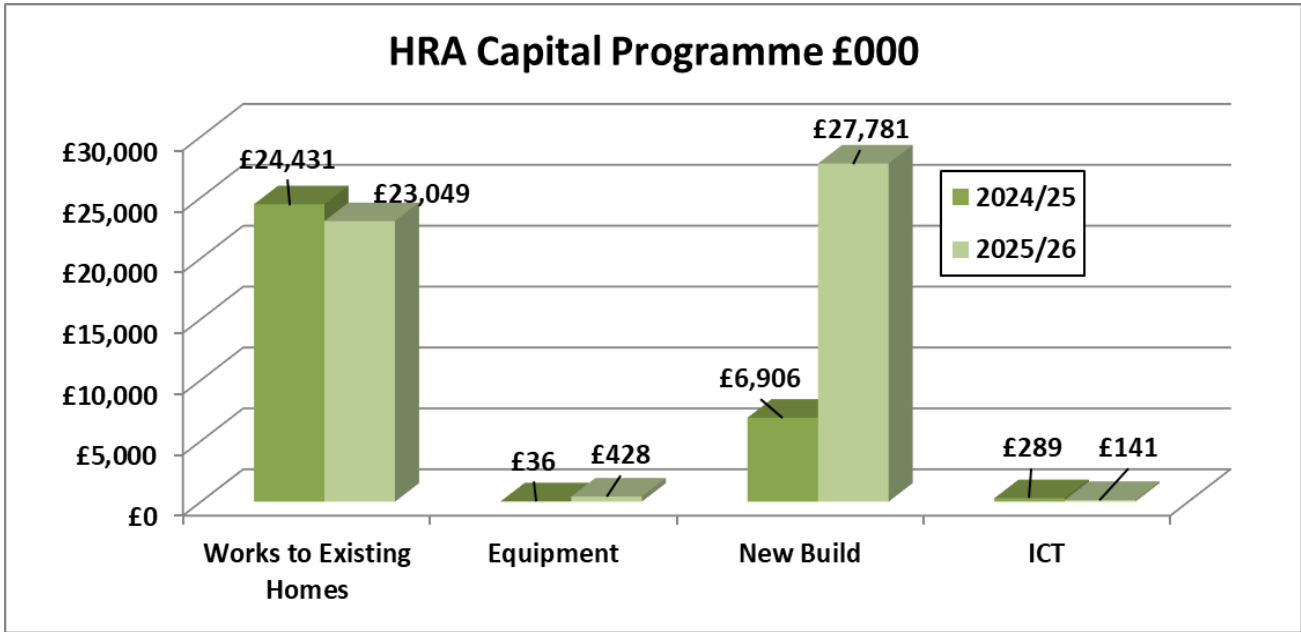
4.6.2. Currently interest rates have continued to stay higher than the unusually low levels seen in the past decade. For next year the Budget assumes an average rate of 4.4%, with the HRA Business plan assuming a long-term average of 4%. The government allows HRA's a preferential rate for borrowing from the PWLB and this discounted period was extended in the recent Autumn Statement, lasting until 31 March 2026. The discount is 40basis points lower than the certainty rate which the Council can access for General Fund borrowing requirements.



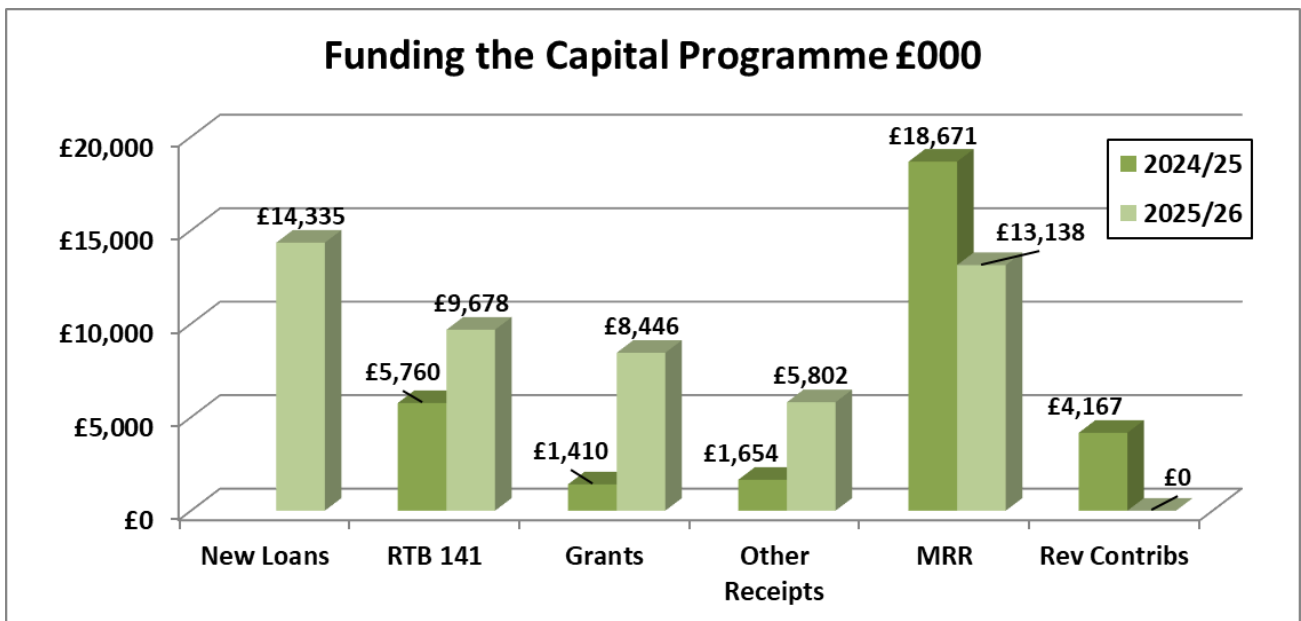
4.6.3. This graph shows the cumulative borrowing projected in the HRA MTFs. The debt to be taken for 2024/25 and 2025/26 is £44.4Million, of which £30.0Million is converting internal borrowing to external debt.

4.7 Capital Expenditure

4.7.1. The table below shows the revised capital programme for 2024/25 and the proposed spend for 2025/26. The final HRA Capital programme will also be included in the 2025/26 Capital Strategy to February Council.



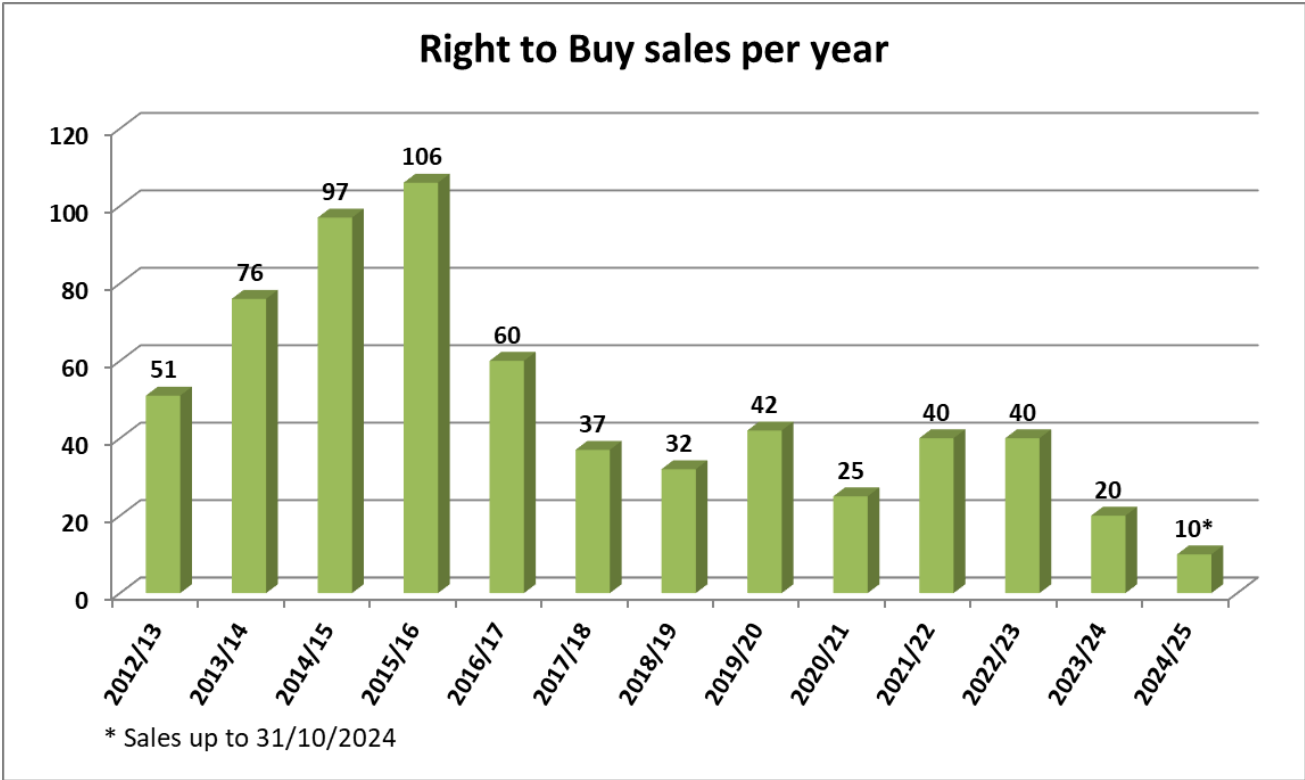
4.7.2. The majority of the capital expenditure relates to work on existing homes and the new build programme. The capital works on the housing stock is projected to be in line with the current year and the projected spend on new schemes is in line with the development programme included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The chart below shows the funding sources for the programme. Most of the work to existing homes continues to be financed from the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) (funded from depreciation charges to the HRA) and the new build costs from loans and receipts.



4.8 Use of One for One Receipts

4.8.1. The Council has an ambitious development programme and is currently completing a major redevelopment scheme at the Kenilworth Road site, a new specialist temporary accommodation scheme and is developing plans for a major neighbourhood centre renewal project. This has helped to ensure that RTB receipts have been spent within the new time limits and the Council has been able to make full use of the Government’s decision to allow authorities to retain all of the receipts from sales.

4.8.2. Currently sales of RTB properties remain historically low, with only ten sales in 2024/25. This has been reflected in the forecast for this year that has been reduced from 35 to 15, based on current applications, time to complete the sale and the conversion of applicants to actual sales. However, there is likely to be a surge in RTB sales in 2025/26 due to the new government legislation to reduce the level of eligible discounts. The changes are effective for all applications after 21 November 2024, which resulted in a significant increase in applications between the Chancellors budget announcement and the deadline. As a result, the HRA assumes 50 RTB for 2025/26 up from the 35 originally expected.



4.9 Final Budget Proposals

- 4.9.1. The Final 2025/26 HRA budget is estimated to be a net deficit of £667,980. The table below lists the main movements in the budget from the draft position presented to Members in December. Overall, this shows a significant reduction in the HRA deficit from the draft position of £2.5Million, despite a large increase in repair costs, due to the replacement of direct revenue funding of capital with loan finance, as detailed in 4.4.12 above.

Summary of 2025/26		
Draft HRA 2025/26 budget		£3,243,420
Changes from Draft to Final Budget		
Net Overhead changes from/to the General Fund	£124,470	
Pension Lump Sum change	£11,010	
Repairs and Voids Growth	£1,991,450	
No compensation for NI increases	£285,370	
Loss of HCC Flexicare Grant	£53,230	
Saving Implementation Costs	£200,000	
Replace Revenue Contributions to Capital with Loan Finance	(£5,240,970)	
Total Changes:		(£2,575,440)
Final HRA 2025/26 budget		£667,980

- 4.9.2. After this budgeted draw down from reserves the table below shows that this will leave £10.1Million in balances. This is above the risk assessed minimum level, but the reserves are required to cover current additional service pressures and forecast deficits in the MTFs.
- 4.9.3. A risk assessment of balances has been completed and is in Appendix C to this report. This is slightly lower than the level indicated in the MTFs report from November and is shown in the table below. There is also a recommendation to increase the Cabinet limit on supplementary estimates from £400K to £500K, recognising this limit has not changed for a number of years of high inflation and the current volatility in demand led service areas.

HRA Balances:	2024/25	2025/26
	£	£
HRA Balance 1 April	(10,584,486)	(10,817,676)
Use of balances in Year	(233,190)	667,980
HRA Balance 31 March	(10,817,676)	(10,149,696)
Minimum Balances	(6,262,520)	(6,262,520)
Forecast deficits and service pressures	(4,555,156)	(3,887,176)

4.10 Consultation

- 4.10.1. The proposals in this paper are the result of detailed consultation with Cabinet Members, Members at the Executive Housing Working Group on the 7 November 2024 (where it was noted), Senior Executives and service managers across the Council. They also reflect customer priorities identified through the Tenant's Survey.
- 4.10.2. Following the MTFS report approval at the November Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny raised concerns around the reduction in funding for Aid and Adaptations budget from £1.05M to £0.5M in 2025/26. Members were concerned with the level of demand versus the reduced budget. Officers responded to by stating that the aids and adaptation works would be applied in line with the policy and that for complex works/cases alternative accommodation more suited to a tenant's needs may be available. However, if the budget was insufficient this would be addressed through the budgetary monitoring process with a view to increase the level and seek alternative savings.
- 4.10.3. The Government sort views (closed on 23rd December) on a proposed five-year rent settlement, which would allow housing associations and stock-owning council to raise social rents by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% each year, in line with the current Council MTFS and Business Plan.
- 4.10.4. There will also be consultation with tenants and relevant stakeholders regarding the implementation of rent flexibility, as approved in the MTFS Cabinet report in November 2024.
- 4.10.5. Further consultation will take place following this Cabinet meeting, including consideration by relevant Member committees before the proposals are presented to Council for agreement in January 2025.

4.11 CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER STATEMENT

- 4.11 The HRA is currently experiencing a high level of financial and operational volatility. Demand for services, regulatory and legislative changes and recent high inflation have had a significant impact on the ring-fenced account since the completion of the last HRA Business Plan in November 2023. This has led to a need to keep balances by substituting RCCO for borrowing for 2025/26, in order to maintain balances at a sufficient level and ensure that the HRA remains viable in the medium term.
- 4.12 The current HRA Business Plan anticipated that there would be significant contributions from revenue towards the capital programme and this was estimated at £5.2Million for 2025/26. With the increased costs for responsive repairs in both this and the next financial year (4.4.6), it was clear that the risk to overall balances was too great to make the planned contribution to capital. This financing is now planned to be met by new loans.
- 4.13 While this has stabilised the account for 2025/26 and maintained balances above the risk assessed minimum, the HRA still faces significant challenges in the coming years, with very high savings targets to meet in order to keep the fund in balance. Converting the revenue contribution to debt also has an ongoing impact on revenue, as interest payments will now be increased across the life of the loan. This decision will also need to be incorporated into the longer term balancing of the fund in the 30 year business plan process.

4.14 This intervention has enabled the Council to set a realistic and affordable budget for the HRA for 2025/26, but it will be necessary to rebalance the fund in the upcoming business plan revision, to ensure that current spending plans are sustainable over the medium and longer term.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1. Financial implications are included in the body of the report.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1. Legal implications are included in the body of the report.

5.3 Staffing Implications

5.3.1. The unions will be consulted on the options contained in this report, where there is an adverse impact on staffing resources. Human Resources staff will co-ordinate centrally the implementation of any staff related savings from the budget process.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1. Historically the ring-fenced account has relied almost solely on rent income to finance both revenue and capital works. Rent levels are set and regulated in accordance with Government policy and do not allow the Council any significant discretion to reflect local needs and priorities. In recent years the previous Government had put in place a series of restrictions on rent setting, including four successive 1% reductions and a rent cap in 2023/24. These changes have resulted in the loss of hundreds of millions of pounds from the Council thirty-year business plan. It should be noted the current Government is looking to put a longer-term agreement on rents in place. However, because rents are based on the CPI+1% formula if inflationary pressures from repairs and utilities and regulatory demand are higher than the rent increase this will lead to further pressures for the HRA.

5.4.2. Currently one of the continuing risks to the account is a large rise in arrears. These have increased, in part as a result of tenants switching from housing benefits to Universal Credit, but also due to the post covid cost-of-living crisis.

5.4.3. The full operational implications of regulatory changes are still being implemented, in particular the response to the Social Housing Regulation Act, Building Safety Act and the Fire Safety Act. As policy and best practice is developed this could increase budget pressures on the HRA. The impact from the Housing Inspection is still to be identified and this will be reported in the Final Budget report for January if additional resources are required.

5.4.4. There is a risk of interest rates being higher than projected and leading to a reduction in the amount of expenditure for both revenue and capital. There is also a risk that the PWLB rate differential between gilts and borrowing rates for the HRA might be adjusted from the current 60bps and leading to a reduction in the amount of expenditure for both revenue and capital.

5.4.5. The latest revision of the HRA medium term financial position included a required savings targets of £1Million a year between 2026/27 to 2028/29. However, the additional pressures detailed at paragraph 4.4.6 will require additional savings to be found. In reality this level of savings would not be achievable without significant cuts to both capital and revenue. As stated in paragraph 4.4.9, the current and emerging pressures on the HRA will require a re-write of the Business plan after the budget

process has completed. This is very likely to indicate that savings will be required beyond the medium-term position and the structural financing of the HRA will need to be adjusted to accommodate any ongoing operational pressures.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.5.1. In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act replaced three previous equality legislations – the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A) and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the needs described in the legislation. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2024.
- 5.5.2. To inform the decisions about the Budget 2025/26 officers have undertaken Brief Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related budget proposals, which will be further developed as proposals are agreed and implemented. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers have identified further action needed to inform a final decision and to mitigate the impact where this is possible.
- 5.5.3. Attached as Appendix D is an EqIA for increasing the rent charged by 2.7% per annum, including the mitigations that will be implemented to lessen the impact wherever possible.
- 5.5.4. Attached as Appendix E is an EqIA for the budget impact on the Aid and Adaptations policy.
- 5.5.5. Attached as Appendix F is an EqIA for the impact of exercising Rent Flexibility in 2025/25 as part of the budget proposals.

5.6 Climate Change Implications

- 5.6.1. The anticipated revised decent homes standard and the targets set within the HRA Asset Management Strategy will continue to improve the environmental performance of the existing stock. The Housing Asset Management Service is committed to review its approach to reducing the impact of the housing stock on the environment through actions set out in the HRA Asset Management Strategy and this will in turn contribute to the actions within the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, subject to affordability of measures required and availability of grant funding.
- 5.6.2. Future housing developments will consider the environmental performance of the designs and features and look to introduce technologies and materials that help to improve the environmental performance of the buildings.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Setting and Rent Report 2024/25 - January 2024 Council.
- BD2 Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 and On-Going Cost Pressures – July 2024 Council.
- BD3 Future Voids Delivery Model – October 2024 Cabinet.

- BD4 Housing Revenue Account MTFs Review – November 2024 Cabinet.
- BD5 Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Report 2025/26

7. APPENDICES

- Appendix A - Housing Revenue Account Summary
- Appendix B - Fees and Charges
- Appendix C - Risk Assessment of Balances
- Appendix D - EQIA for HRA Rent
- Appendix E - EQIA for the Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Appendix F - EQIA for Rent Flexibility

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APPENDIX A	HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUMMARY			
	Actual 2023/24 £	Original Budget 2024/25 £	Working Budget 2024/25 £	Original Budget 2025/26 £
Summary of Expenditure				
Supervision and Management	9,650,837	10,524,000	11,356,400	12,457,960
Special Services	7,079,956	7,603,260	7,146,146	7,693,866
Rent, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	731,017	797,320	798,204	870,784
Repairs and Maintenance ⁽¹⁾	13,638,415	13,115,370	17,519,960	15,930,890
Depreciation	12,879,968	14,843,650	12,755,510	13,138,170
Corporate and Democratic Costs	1,169,072	1,165,590	1,165,590	1,081,490
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	368,125	423,440	423,440	439,270
Total Expenditure	45,517,390	48,472,630	51,165,250	51,612,430
Summary of Income				
Rental Income:				
Dwelling Rents	(44,856,382)	(49,678,160)	(49,020,250)	(50,984,660)
Non Dwelling Rents	(97,509)	(94,120)	(94,120)	(104,050)
	(44,953,891)	(49,772,280)	(49,114,370)	(51,088,710)
Charges for Services & Facilities - Tenants	(3,283,159)	(3,165,960)	(3,176,170)	(3,275,840)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(1,350,271)	(1,087,120)	(1,338,470)	(1,254,930)
Contributions Towards Expenditure	(285,814)	(344,020)	(345,020)	(365,880)
Reimbursement of Costs	(328,462)	(325,040)	(342,040)	(348,540)
Recharge Income (GF & Capital)	(2,304,774)	(2,272,400)	(2,382,070)	(2,813,320)
Total Income	(52,506,370)	(56,966,820)	(56,698,140)	(59,147,220)
Gain/(Loss) on disposal of HRA Non-Current Assets	5,540,482	0	0	0
Interest Payable	7,568,593	9,448,620	8,233,640	10,146,840
Interest Receivable	(1,809,732)	(1,487,450)	(1,180,160)	(1,444,070)
Capital grants & Contributions receivable	(3,117,103)	0	0	0
Capital Financed from Revenue Contributions	834,786	6,715,130	4,167,220	0
Net (Surplus)/Deficit For Year	2,028,045	6,182,110	5,687,810	1,167,980
Movement on the HRA				
Accounting basis to funding basis under statute	(2,011,098)	0	0	0
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(82,907)	(5,921,000)	(5,921,000)	(500,000)
Housing Revenue Account Balance				
Net Expenditure/(Income) for Year	(65,959)	261,110	(233,190)	667,980
Balance B/Fwd 1 April	(10,518,527)	(10,584,486)	(10,584,486)	(10,817,676)
HRA Balance C/Fwd 31 March	(10,584,486)	(10,323,376)	(10,817,676)	(10,149,696)

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HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2025/26

Service	Fees and Charges for 2025/26	2024/25 Fee	2025/26 Proposed Fee	2025-26 Proposed Increase (£)	2025-26 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2024/25	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Housing Revenue Account							
Specialist Support							
Guest Bedrooms	Silkin Court, Walpole Court, Scarborough Avenue, Southend Close, Pinewoods & Fred Millard.	£14.40	£14.90	£0.50	3.50%		
Guest flats	Norman Court, Silkin Court	£24.60	£25.40	£0.80	3.24%		
Short Stay Units	Assessment (per day)	£12.50	£12.90	£0.40	3.20%		
	Respite*	£24.50	£25.30	£0.80	3.28%		
						£4,670	£1,034
Laundry Charges	Independent living/flexicare laundry wash	£3.50	£3.60	£0.10	2.84%		
						£21,600	£544
Room Hire	Hairdressing at Silkin/Fred Millard, (Hourly charge) *	£6.40	£6.60	£0.19	3.03%		
	Private chiropodist and other services, (per hour) *	£6.40	£6.60	£0.19	3.03%		
						£2,000	£0
Support Services and Care connect 24/7 for HRA tenants	Housing related support (includes all services shown under careline alarms)	£19.65	£19.65	£0.00	0.00%		
	Additional pendant for 2nd service user (additional weekly charge) (50 weeks)		£0.50				
	independent living and flexi care support charge for previous HRS protected clients and new residents entitled to HB	£10.50	£10.50	£0.00	0.00%		
	response service for new customers (50 weeks)	£8.70	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%		
	Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	£4.92	£4.90	-£0.02	-0.41%		
	Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	£3.90	£3.90	£0.00	0.00%		
						£587,390	-£5
Care Connect 24/7 alarm - private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)	Response service (52 weeks) *	£8.70	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%		
	Additional pendant (52 weeks)*		£0.60				
	Response service out of area (52 weeks)*	£8.70	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%		
	Response service to other provider equipment (52 weeks)*	£4.92	£4.90	-£0.02	-0.41%		
	Monitoring only service (52 weeks) *	£3.90	£3.90	£0.00	0.00%		
						£128,000	£0
	Winkhaus keys	£15.36	£15.90	£0.54	3.48%		
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Black)	£24.65	£25.40	£0.75	3.04%		
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Shark)	£14.72	£15.20	£0.48	3.25%		
Replacement Pendants	Tynetec pendant	£64.02	£66.10	£2.08	3.24%		
	Chiptech	£56.53	£58.30	£1.77	3.12%		
Key safe	Supply	£22.50	£23.20	£0.70	3.11%		
	Fit	£65.00	£67.10	£2.10	3.23%		
Lock Change		£99.85	£103.00	£3.15	3.15%		
						£3,850	£327
General Needs Tenants and Leaseholders:							
Key Fobs	Old Style "Black fobs**"	£24.65	£25.40	£0.75	3.04%		
	New "Shark" Fobs*	£14.72	£15.20	£0.48	3.25%		
Communal door entry keys	Replacement keys for entry doors to flat blocks.	£23.56	£24.30	£0.74	3.15%		
Laundry charges - Roundmead	Wash tokens	£6.66	£6.90	£0.24	3.57%		
	Dry Tokens	£3.59	£3.70	£0.12	3.29%		
Management Fees for Westwood Court & Kilner Close	Administration Fees	£1.34	£1.40	£0.05	3.85%		
						£1,930	£57

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2025/26

Service	Fees and Charges for 2025/26	2024/25 Fee	2025/26 Proposed Fee	2025-26 Proposed Increase (£)	2025-26 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2024/25	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Stores	Use of store	£7.47	£7.70	£0.23	3.07%		£520.67
Lock change	Callout	£162.61	£167.80	£5.18	3.19%		
	Admin charge	£58.26	£60.10	£1.84	3.16%		
	Charge	POA					
						£17,000	£521
Tenant's Retrospective Charges							
Inspection charge - depending on cost of work	From £0 to £999	£250.75	£258.80	£8.05	3.21%		
	From £1,000 to £1,999	£256.08	£264.30	£8.22	3.21%		
	From £2,000 to £2,999	£277.42	£286.30	£8.88	3.20%		
	From £3,000 to £3,999	£288.09	£297.30	£9.21	3.20%		
	From £4,000 to £4,999	£341.44	£352.40	£10.96	3.21%		
	From £5,000 to £5,999	£458.81	£473.50	£14.69	3.20%		
Administration	Administration	£181.39	£187.20	£5.81	3.21%		
						£6,720	£0
Leasehold charges for services (VAT not applicable. All fees are additional income for SBC)							
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*	10 working day response - from date of payment	£202.73	£209.20	£6.47	3.19%		
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*	3 working day response - from date of payment	£309.43	£319.30	£9.87	3.19%		
Re-mortgage enquiries*	Enquiries raised at a time of remortgaging	£96.03	£99.10	£3.07	3.20%		
Copy of lease*	fee for providing a copy of the lease	£48.02	£49.50	£1.49	3.10%		
Copies of quarterly service charge invoice*	additional inspection fee	£42.68	£44.00	£1.32	3.08%		
Copies of service charge estimate or actual statement*	additional inspection fee	£42.68	£44.00	£1.32	3.08%		
Deed of Postponement		£138.71	£143.10	£4.39	3.16%		
Notice of Charge		£48.02	£49.50	£1.49	3.10%		
Notice of Transfer/Assignment		£48.02	£49.50	£1.49	3.10%		
Lease extension	Valuation fee	£373.45	£385.40	£11.95	3.20%		
	Legal fee	£810.92	£836.90	£25.98	3.20%		
	Administration fee	£192.06	£198.20	£6.14	3.19%		
	Deposit - £260 or 10% of the premium, whichever is higher	£277.42	£286.30	£8.88	3.20%		
Collective enfranchisement	Valuation fee	£778.91	£803.80	£24.89	3.19%		
	Legal fee	£810.92	£836.90	£25.98	3.20%		
	Administration fee	£192.06	£198.20	£6.14	3.19%		
Consent fee/sub let fee	Cost of requesting permission to sublet the property	£74.69	£77.10	£2.41	3.23%		
						£0	£0
Leasehold Alterations							
Minor alterations - these are internal works within the demised premises that do not require planning permission or building control approval	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£213.40	£220.20	£6.80	3.19%		
	Minor application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£426.80	£440.50	£13.70	3.21%		
	Letter licence - deed	£288.09	£297.30	£9.21	3.20%		
	Full licence - issued by Building Surveyor	£437.47	£451.50	£14.03	3.21%		
	Extension of the letter licence period	£256.08	£264.30	£8.22	3.21%		
Major alterations	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£256.08	£264.30	£8.22	3.21%		
	Major application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£693.55	£715.70	£22.15	3.19%		
	Landlord licence - deed	£501.49	£517.50	£16.01	3.19%		
	Supplemental lease/deed of variation additional premises/restrictions)	£224.07	£231.20	£7.13	3.18%		
	Extension of the letter licence period	£341.44	£352.40	£10.96	3.21%		
Minor alterations - these are internal works within the demised premises that do not require planning permission or building control approval	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£304.10	£313.80	£9.70	3.19%		
	Minor application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£560.18	£578.10	£17.93	3.20%		
	Retrospective letter licence	£458.81	£473.50	£14.69	3.20%		
Major alterations	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£346.78	£357.90	£11.13	3.21%		
	Major application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£1,002.98	£1,035.10	£32.12	3.20%		
	Supplemental lease (extension of demised premises)	£437.47	£451.50	£14.03	3.21%		
	Landlord licence - deed	£714.89	£737.80	£22.91	3.20%		

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2025/26

Service	Fees and Charges for 2025/26	2024/25 Fee	2025/26 Proposed Fee	2025-26 Proposed Increase (£)	2025-26 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2024/25	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
Unauthorised alterations (The cost of this will depend on whether it is Minor or Major Works and the figure given is the minimum for major works)	Minor assessment and ruling	£533.50	£550.60	£17.10	3.21%		
	Major assessment and ruling	£789.58	£814.90	£25.32	3.21%		
	Stop and make safe notification (including liaison with other council officers)	£389.46	£401.90	£12.44	3.19%		
	Re-instatement minor works	£789.58	£814.90	£25.32	3.21%		
	Re-instatement major works	£1,045.66	£1,079.10	£33.44	3.20%		
						£0	£0
	GRAND TOTAL					£773,160	£2,478

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**APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES
2025/26**

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	There is a potential risk that the budgeted income from activities where the Council charges for services will not be achieved. This is largely anticipated due to the challenging economic conditions, but could also result from increased void rates, lower collection rates, and disputed bills. All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. Budgets are profiled over the year based on previous experience.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Rechargeable works not raised or recovered	-£166,560	10.00%	£16,656
Leaseholder charges not realised (excluding insurance)	-£1,094,410	5.00%	£54,721
Rental income (increase in voids rates)	-£50,931,590	0.75%	£381,987
Service Charges (increase in voids rates)	-£2,243,770	0.75%	£16,828
Heating charges	-£511,520	5.00%	£25,576
Total			£495,768

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	There is a potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide services will increase significantly, including due to regulatory requirements. Individual budgets are reviewed as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. Budgets are profiled over the year based on previous experience, so any variances should be identified during the year.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Storm damage and fire damage uninsured costs (excess is £25,000 for fire damage)	£25,000	100.00%	£25,000
Response and Emergency repairs increase as a result of inflationary pressures or unforeseen repairs	£11,512,470	10.00%	£1,151,247
Unforeseen Capital works not budgeted for requiring a contribution to capital (based on a proportion of the capital programme)	£51,399,200	3.00%	£1,541,976
Inflation pressures on capital works requiring additional revenue resources to fund the shortfall	£51,399,200	0.75%	£385,494
There is an insufficient budget identified for Void, Fencing, Aids and Adaptation, and Damp and Mould.	£1,500,000	50.00%	£750,000
Total			£3,853,717

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5% not achieved	£384,910	10.00%	£38,491
Increase in bad debt provision	£439,270	10.00%	£43,927
Utility inflation (Electricity increase in April 2025, Gas increase from Oct 2025)	£1,312,320	5.00%	£65,616
Pay award is higher than budgeted for	£13,948,820	1.00%	£139,488
Total			£287,522

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required

**APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES
2025/26**

Savings Options delayed or not realised over MTFS	£3,000,000	15.00%	£450,000
Total			£450,000

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Gross Expenditure (excluding fixed interest costs and depreciation and RCCO and cost covered above)	£2,864,080.00	5.00%	£143,204
Total			£143,204

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Greater exposure to interest rate changes	The latest Business Plan revision includes re-financing of existing debt and a higher level of borrowing in the first 10 years of the plan. To mitigate this reserve values have been increased related to future debt		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
5 Year Assumed new borrowing - interest rates 1% higher than projected	£103,205,050	1.00%	£1,032,051
Total			£1,032,051

Level of Balances Assumed in Housing Revenue Account Based on risk

£6,262,518



HRA: Rent and Service Charge 2025/26

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

December 2024 – December 2025

Date created	November 2024
Approved by	Executive/SLT
Owner	Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods
Version	1
Author	Elizabeth Ddamulira, Income Services Manager
Business Unit and Team	Housing and Neighbourhoods, Housing Management

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqIA?

Title:	HRA Rent and Service Charges 2025/26	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		Yes
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		No
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes
Encourage good relations?	Yes

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqIA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqIA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqIA is needed to inform the decision on the .

Name of assessor:	n/a	Decision approved by:	n/a
Role:	n/a	Role: Assistant Director	n/a
Date:	n/a	Date:	n/a

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		HRA Rent and Service Charges 2025/26			
Lead Assessor	Karen Long			Assessment team	Elizabeth Ddamulira Keith Reynoldson
Start date	April 2025	End date	April 2026		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	Nov 2026				

Page 47

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	All tenants
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>To assess the impact of the proposed rent increase and Service charge increase for 2025/26 on Stevenage Council tenants.</p> <p>Rent increases are regulated by Government and it is extremely difficult not to apply their determination annually. Current directions on rents were issued by the previous government in 2019 and 2023. For 2025/26 the permitted increase to rents is CPI plus 1%, based on the September 24 CPI figure. This follows the previous Government's extension of the current settlement by one year. Rent increases will be permitted at up to 2.7 per cent after CPI rose by 1.7 per cent in the 12 months to September 2025. The Government has launched a consultation on a new social housing rent settlement, which will provide direction on the new rent policy from April 2026.</p> <p>To increase the rent on dwellings from week commencing 7 April 2025 by 2.7%, which is an average increase of £122.27 for social rents, £190.80 for affordable rents and £150.04 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year). This has been calculated in accordance with</p>

	<p>the current Rent Standard issued by the Government and the Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy which provides a framework for setting rents and service charges within legislative requirements. The rent and service charge income underpins the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan's key housing objectives to deliver effective services, to invest in its properties to ensure homes are of a modern standard and to provide new social housing to rent. The policy has been reviewed and is subject to governance approvals.</p>
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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	<p>The aim of the Rent & Service Charge Policy is to provide a fair method of calculating rents and service charges for all of our tenants. It also aligns with the Council's Concessions for Fees and Charges Policy, and the principle of recovering the cost of providing services.</p>	Encourage good relations	

Page 48

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, February 2019 • Direction on the Rent Standard, 2019 • Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 • Housing and Planning Act 2016
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent and service charge policy agreed by Exec December 2019 and recommended to Council in January 2020 • Rent account information • Housing System data (NEC) • Supported housing service data
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>The average rent increase for 2024/25 is 2.7%, in line with the current rent standard.</p> <p>When calculating rents and service charges, consideration will be taken of the need to balance any increase in the combined rent and service charge with the potential financial impact on customers. This relates to 34 % of homes to which a service charge applies, which are predominantly flats as well as sheltered accommodation. The Council aims to recover the actual cost of providing the service, as they change due to inflationary pressures and changes in usage.</p> <p>The impact of the 2025/26 rent increase and service charges is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,751 homes or 97% receive a rent and service charge increase below £4 per week; • 246 homes or 3% of households will receive a weekly rent and service charge increase of between £4 and £8 (based on 52 weeks). <p>We had 6,804 general social rented properties, 66 affordable rent properties, 843 Independent Living/Flexicare Accommodation and 79 LSSO as at October 2024. The setting of a proportion of new build lets at affordable rents will contribute positively to increasing the supply of new homes in Stevenage. All target groups will benefit given the need for affordable housing is common across all socio-economic and minority groups. The current low supply of new affordable housing and the high cost of the private rented sector in Stevenage have impacted adversely on those groups whose incomes are average or below average.</p> <p>This also further supports work with people who need help to live independently at home and those at risk of homelessness, through wider housing options, continued provision of support, and financial assistance for adaptations and more homelessness preventative programmes respectively.</p>
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	Any groups that are potentially disadvantaged are still expected to be able to benefit from a council property set at a social rent and receive benefit support to cover affordable rent properties.
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Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Page 50

Age				
Positive impact		Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on older people and disabled people, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on pensions and/or benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation).	Unequal impact
				<p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. A proportion of tenants may see an increase in service charges in any given year. The majority of tenants who are charged for services live in flats and/or independent living accommodation. Tenants living in independent living do so because they have additional needs that require support relating to age, disability or both. The minimum age for entry into independent living is 60 years and data from Northgate indicates that the proportion of tenants aged 60+ in independent living, is almost three times the proportion for all tenant housing.</p> <p>In relation to flat blocks, the data indicates that there is a higher proportion</p>

				<p>of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks compared with all SBC housing who may also struggle to pay.</p> <p>For people living in independent living/flexicare schemes, in addition to basic rent and service charges, those who pay for the support/emergency response services that are not eligible for Housing benefit may see an increase in overall payment due each week.</p> <p>We currently know that the general economic challenges and Cost of Living are disproportionately of particular risk to older people and those with underlying conditions. This may result in in this age group incurring extra expenses that may affect their ability to pay rent and service charges.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page 5			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Ongoing and day to day consultation will take place with residents in 2024/25 to establish the impact of the rent & service charge	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

	<p>increase. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section below, most of which will also apply to this protected characteristic group.</p>		
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Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness				
Positive impact		Negative impact	<p>Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on people with a disability, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation) The Welfare Advice and Debt team will provide to support to ensure that this group attracts maximum income to through benefits</p>	Unequal impact
				<p>The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability is collected at the lettings stage and in most cases their circumstances may change and recorded as and when we are updated .Some tenants may not have provided it.</p>

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page two and three.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Page 53

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Page 54

Pregnancy & Maternity				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.			

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Religion or Belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Page 55

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Northgate reports on those in rent and service charge arrears and those supported. At the end of Q2 2024 35% were in rent arrears.				

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Identify and support those who are struggling utilising various support streams such as downsizing for those who are under occupying.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	
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<p align="center">Additional Considerations</p> <p align="center">Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts</p>				
<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>Negative impact</p>	<p>The rent increase for 2025/2026 will be applied across all tenancies regardless of circumstances. Those reliant on Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) Housing costs to cover their full rent and eligible service charges won't be affected by the increase in rent and service charges as their benefit award will be recalculated. Those who receive partial or do not receive any benefits and experience affordability challenges will be supported accordingly .</p> <p>The number of bids on the new build properties let at affordable rents are similar to the number received for new build let at social rents. There is a mixture of employed and unemployed applicants. Applicants in receipt of benefits are not excluded or unfairly treated.</p> <p>Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of those services. Heating and Water charges are exempt from HB and</p>	<p>Unequal impact</p>

			<p>tenants are expected to pay this from other income or benefits.</p> <p>Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment with increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. We will use the Household Support Fund to assist those identified as in need.</p> <p>Households in the general rented homes, especially those on lower incomes, in general pay more of their income on housing costs and have less resilience to cope with financial shocks. This is anticipated to lead to a significant increase in fuel poverty. Income services Team will monitor this and provide or signpost to support .</p>		
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>See page two and three</p>				
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>The policy allows for capping of service charges, subject to any legal constraints. As a means of mitigating the impact of an increase that would cause hardship, the council may subsidise the costs.</p> <p>Rent increase information will be published on the Council website early February 2024 to start preparing tenants.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>Staff in the Income Services and Finance team will closely monitor, through day-to-day income management and tenant account management, to establish the impact of the rent & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly. This is done in April and May .Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section above</p>		

The rent notification letter (to be sent out at the end of February) will offer tenants the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with staff. It will explain why the rent has increased and also explain any increase in service charges.

Where support charges are also included (mainly but not exclusively for sheltered and flexi care schemes) separate notifications will be sent out to these residents to ensure it is clearly set out how each element of the weekly charge is made up.

To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website and hard copies available for those who need them.

The policy states that the Council will have regard to the Local Housing Allowance when setting affordable rents. If affordable rents are set at this level, HB/ UC housing cost will cover the rent in full for those tenants who are entitled to the maximum amount of housing benefit. Setting at the Local Housing Allowance will also benefit tenants who are, for example on a low wage or zero-hour contracts and where partial housing benefit can be paid.

For those moving into Affordable Rent (AR) properties a comprehensive

	<p>affordability assessment is carried out prior to offer to ensure that the tenancy is sustainable.</p> <p>The implementation of the policy in respect of Affordable Rent will be kept under review by the Housing Development Working Group and should adverse impacts be identified this will inform future decision making in this regard.</p> <p>Support provision for this group has been increased as part of an Income Recovery Action plan and it has been extended for a further 2 years to ensure that they can pay through sustainable arrangements to maintain payments towards rent and service charges and have access to required support.</p> <p>The Council will make links to support and guidance clear on all of its communication platforms.</p> <p>The Council will prepare staff to enable them to respond effectively and empathetically with tenants.</p>		
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Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	N/A	Residents?	Staff in the income services and Finance team will closely monitor through day-to-day income management and tenant account management to establish impact of the rent & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly. This is done in April and May .Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section above.
Voluntary & community sector?	N/A	Partners?	N/A
Other stakeholders?	The report will go through the Council's pre-budget scrutiny meetings before being presented to the Full Council in January.		

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>The future viability of the HRA Business Plan is reliant upon us being able to maximise income collection, recover arrears and the costs of service provision where it's possible to do so.</p> <p>Only a proportion of new builds will be at affordable rent in line with the revised HRA Budget plan. The proposal to offer a mix of new build rents at affordable rent levels and at social rent levels would result in</p>

		additional income to the HRA over 30 years which makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of the plan and the Council's ability to build new homes and to deliver other housing priorities.
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:

Page 62

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Monitor through day to day income management and tenant account management to establish the impact of the rent increase challenges relating to affordability and provide tenants with support accordingly	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities. Put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly	Elizabeth Ddamulira	Oct 2026	Current practice is to assess cases or groups that are experiencing challenges and putting in place processes and systems to mitigate impacts.

To be Approved by Cabinet (December 2024)

Date: 11/12/2024

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.



Aids and Adaptations Policy

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

June 2024 – June 2026

Date created	June 2024
Approved by	SLT
Owner	Assistant Director – Denise Lewis
Version	2
Author	Charlotte Carter (Business Improvement Manager)
Business Unit and Team	Building Safety and Housing Property Services Housing Asset Management

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email
equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

Title:	Aids and Adaptations Policy	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		Yes
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		Yes
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes
Encourage good relations?	Yes

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the .

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role: Assistant Director

Date:

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Aids and Adaptations Policy			
Lead Assessor	Keith Peirson, Programme Manager, Stevenage Borough Council			Assessment team	Charlotte Carter, Business Improvement Manager, Stevenage Borough Council Andrew Garside, Head of Housing Asset Management, Stevenage Borough Council.
Start date	June 24 (updated Nov 2024)	End date	June 26		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		June 2026 or as/when Policy is amended or reviewed if sooner			

Page 65

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	<p>Current tenants of Stevenage Borough Council.</p> <p>Those who may be living with current tenants.</p> <p>Prospective tenants</p> <p>Staff at Stevenage Borough Council</p>
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail the approach to aids and adaptations requests within tenanted properties • Ensure that our customers are treated in a fair and consistent way. • Focus on working in partnership with our tenants and social care • Where reasonably practical, ensure that homes are maintained to the required habitable standard and the internal environment is safe and in a healthy condition and the fabric of the property is protected from damage. • Comply with statutory requirements and good practice. • Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to offer value for money

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Ensuring all are treated fairly and in a consistent way.	Promote equal opportunities	Allow those with disabilities to remain in their homes if suitable.	Encourage good relations	Pro-active response to requests for installations of aids and adaptations to build confidence with tenants. Encourage partnership working.

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970</p> <p>The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996</p> <p>Children Act 1996</p> <p>Equality Act 2010</p> <p>The Care Act 2014</p> <p>Mental Capacity Act 2005</p> <p>Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002</p> <p>The Housing Act 1985</p> <p>The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)</p> <p>Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013</p> <p>Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023</p>
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there	It is important that, as a Local Authority, we monitor and assess the impact this policy may have on people requiring adaptations to their home. We need to ensure that there is no indirect, or direct, discrimination, contrary to our public sector equality duty. We are morally and legally accountable for ensuring our homes are
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any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>maintained to the Quality and Safety standard and ensuring that doesn't put any individuals or marginalised groups at a disadvantage.</p> <p>We understand there is a proportion of customers who will be considered vulnerable. In these instances, we will make reasonable adjustments on a case by case basis to support them as best we can. Refresher training and raising awareness to staff on Equality Act 2010 will help promote equality and inclusion overall going forward.</p>
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Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Page 67

Age					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>An estimated 16.0 million people in the UK had a disability in 2021/22. This represents 24% of the total population. The prevalence of disability rises with age: around 11% of children were disabled, compared with 23% of working age adults and 45% of adults over State Pension age.</p> <p>As this policy is more likely to impact those of state pension age, we have incorporated best practice and this policy has been drafted in partnership with the Specialist Support Services who offer specialist accommodation required for those over the age of 60. These properties are often adapted with wet room, level access entry as well as additional support that could be required for those needing adaptations.</p> <p>Customers can report a need for adaptations via their housing Online account, email, the Customer Service Centre or seek guidance at reception at Daneshill House. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis and alternative format of information is available.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Age</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p>				

	<p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.</p> <p>https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf - UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>This policy is designed to make the homes of our tenants more accessible for those with disabilities that are residing in the property. The policy uses the definition of disability from the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) if they have any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired • Mental disorder or impairment of any kind • Physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairment present <p>Although this is definition is industry standard, the policy incorporates reviewing any recommendations for adaptations for those with other disabilities within the Equality Act 2010, “if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities”. Those normal daily activities are likely to be assisted with any changes we make to properties under this policy. The intention of the policy is so tenants affected by disabilities are able to remain in their home with reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Disability</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</p>				

	2021 Census Profile: https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9602/CBP-9602.pdf - UK disability statistics: Prevalence and life experiences		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impact – this is not something that we assess or discriminate against in management and maintenance of homes. We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Transgender https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243 2021 Census Profile: https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in tenancy management and maintenance of homes</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Marital or Civil Partnership Status</p> <p>Diversity Profile - Districts Stevenage Report Builder for ArcGIS (esriuk.com)</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Pregnancy & Maternity

Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>The drafted policy incorporated previous provisions that stipulates that an adaptation could be provided if the adaptations are required for more than 12 months (unless life threatening). This is to ensure value for money and any significant changes to stock profile are required in the long term for the tenant. It is likely because of this that a temporary disability caused by pregnancy or early maternity would not be covered within the 12-month adaptation criteria, we do however review each application on a case-by-case basis. SBC will assess if aids and adaptations to a property could support a tenant or family member long-term, which may in turn benefit them if they are also pregnant.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Early Years Profile</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/c0060a87d61a4c0ddea7bfebb6fbf84e/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p>				

		https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Page 71

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not impacted – not compulsory question for recording tenant profile. It is not something that we assess or discriminate against in management and maintenance of homes We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Ethnicity https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243 2021 Census Profile: https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes

<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>No impact – this is not something that we assess or discriminate against in management and maintenance of homes</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Religion</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Possible cultural differences – larger families / more than one family looking to share accommodation, resulting in increased condensation</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Sex</p>					
<p>Positive impact</p>		<p>Negative impact</p>		<p>Unequal impact</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>No impact – this is not something that we assess or discriminate against in management and maintenance of homes</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile - Gender</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.</p>				
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>N/A</p>	

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>No impact – this is not something that we assess or discriminate against in tenancy management and maintenance of homes.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account - Herts Insight Diversity Profile – Sexual Orientation</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/638ca3f75a2541799e068399579d719e/E07000243</p> <p>2021 Census Profile:</p> <p>https://www.reports.esriuk.com/view-report/79b7917a1c72415ea39bca5ed45c6094/E10000015?clear=true</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	N/A		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Socio-economic¹					
e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	<p>Tenants with caring responsibilities for those within their household will be able to request aids and adaptations to their property to enable care to be provided adequately.</p>				

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

you used to support this assessment	<p>Customers can report a requirement for aids and adaptations via their housing Online account, email, the Customer Service Centre or seek guidance at reception at Daneshill House. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case by case basis and alternative format of information is available.</p> <p>We have taken these data sources into account -Herts Insight Economy, Work & Education Profile</p> <p>https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/herts-insight/topics/economy-work-and-education.aspx</p> <p>https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000243/ - latest changes in Stevenage</p>
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What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Page 74

Additional Considerations				
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?		Residents?	An on-line consultation is being carried out which closes in early December 2024 and the feedback will be used to inform any changes
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			to the Policy before it is presented to Cabinet for approval no later than March 2025.
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	The OT service at Herts CC will be consulted on any proposed changes to the Policy.
Other stakeholders?	The Community Select Committee will be consulted on the Policy and any proposed changes in advance of these being presented to Cabinet for approval.		

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Page 75

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified	This EIA demonstrates the proposed policy is robust and there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. All opportunities to promote equality have been taken.	
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Equality Act 2010 Training for staff	Ensure staff have refresher training on act to ensure equality is promoted.	Andrew Garside	TBC	On-going training review

Review Aids and Adapts Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Select Committee will be consulted on the Policy ahead of consideration by Cabinet for approval. • The policy will continue to promote the most suitable solution for each case. 	Denise Lewis/Andrew Garside	March 2025	Policy will be reviewed against financial and non-financial KPI's.
Budget monitoring and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget and actual spend will be monitored during 2025/26 and any variances included as part of the quarterly monitoring reports and adjusted if necessary. 	Denise Lewis/Andrew Garside	April 2025 onwards	This will form part of the regular (monthly and quarterly) budget monitoring arrangements during 2025/26.

To be Approved by Cabinet (December 2024)

Date: 11th December 2024

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.



Introduction of Rent Flexibility

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

December 2024 – December 2025

Date created	November 2024
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods
Version	1
Author	Kerry Clifford, Assistant Director Housing & Neighbourhoods
Business Unit and Team	Housing and Neighbourhoods, Housing Management

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqIA?

Title:	Introduction of Rent Flexibility	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		Yes
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		No
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes
Encourage good relations?	Yes

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the .

Name of assessor:	n/a	Decision approved by:	n/a
Role:	n/a	Role: Assistant Director	n/a
Date:	n/a	Date:	n/a

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

Page 79

What is being assessed?		Introduction of Rent Flexibility			
Lead Assessor	Kerry Clifford			Assessment team	Keith Reynoldson
Start date	TBD	End date			
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		If post consultation, SBC decides to introduce rent flexibility, a full EQIA will take place to support a change to the Rent and Service Charge Policy			

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	New and transferring tenants
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>To consider the introduction of 'rent flexibility', which is provided for within the rent standard and allows providers of social housing to set rents at up to 5% above formula rent (10% for supported housing).</p> <p>The Council is proposing to consult with tenants to introduce rent flexibility for all newly let properties, both general needs and independent living and the acceptable tolerance levels that would apply.</p> <p>Rent flexibility will provide the Council with additional income to underpin the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan's key housing objectives which is to deliver effective services, to invest in its properties to ensure homes are decent and safe and to provide new social housing</p>

What **positive measures** are in place (if any) to help **fulfil our legislative duties** to:

Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, February 2019, updated 2022 • Rent account information • Housing System data (NEC) • Supported housing service data
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	The Policy statement on rents for social housing recognises that registered social providers should have some discretion over the rent set for individual properties, to take account of local factors, in consultation with tenants.
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Page 80

Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact	The increase would be applied to all newly let properties; whilst the	Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on older people and disabled people, who may	Unequal impact	The increase would be applied to all newly let properties; properties would be advertised at the new rent level at the point of letting, therefore prospective tenants can decide whether it is affordable to them.

	<p>Government Policy allows for an rent flexibility increase of 10% on supported accommodation, tolerance levels will be identified through public consultation.</p>		<p>have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment and may also have lower income / be reliant on pensions and/or benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation).</p>		
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>See page 5</p>				
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>To introduce rent flexibility, a period of statutory consultation must take place with tenants for a period of no less than 6 weeks.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>			

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness

Positive impact		Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on people with a disability, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation) The Welfare Advice and Debt team will provide to support to ensure that this group attracts maximum income to through benefits	Unequal impact	The increase would be applied to all newly let properties; properties would be advertised at the new rent level at the point of letting, therefore prospective tenants can decide whether it is affordable to them.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Page 82

Gender Reassignment

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Page 83

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	A cohabiting couple, including those married or in a civil partnership, who both are in employment, with or without children, may find it easier to meet increased costs than a single person household or single parent with children.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Pregnancy & Maternity					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Those who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be impacted to a greater degree by this change if they need to move to larger accommodation as a result on lacking a bedroom, however rent is advertised before the tenancy starts and tenants are aware of what they will be expected to pay when bidding on suitable properties.				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Race					
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Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
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What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Page 84

Religion or Belief					
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Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
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What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic¹

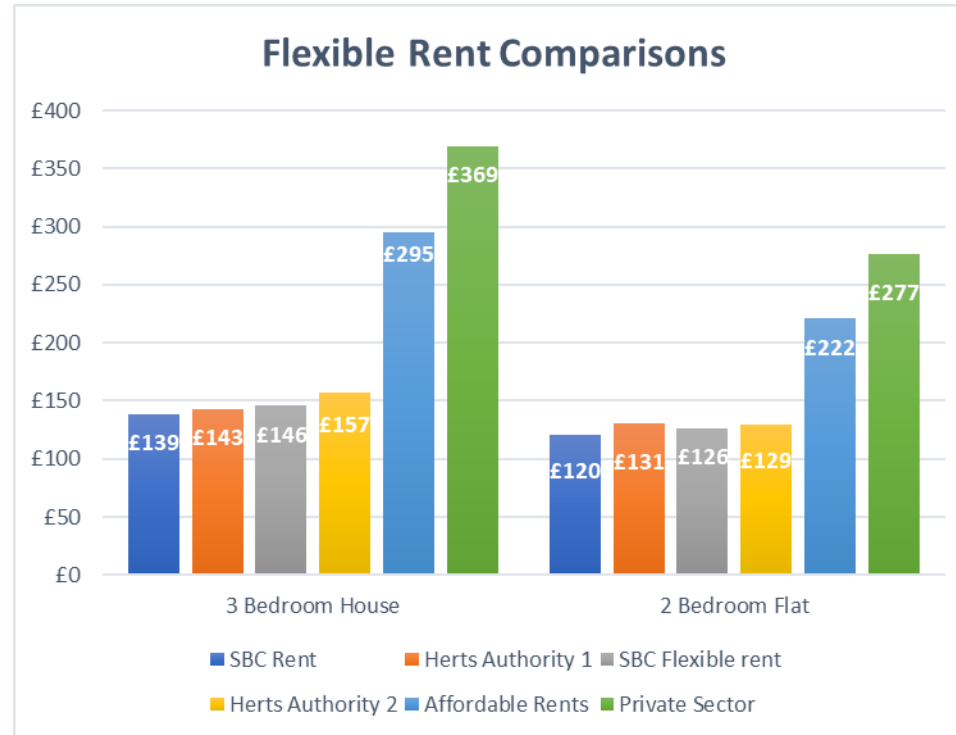
¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement				
Positive impact		Negative impact	Rent and Service Charge increase could negatively affect residents in a lower socio-economic standing as they may already have financial challenges.	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Housing Management systems reports on those in rent and service charge arrears and those supported. At the end of Q2 2024 35% were in rent arrears. Transferring tenants should not have any former tenant arrears and the new rent would be advertised at bidding stage, therefore the prospective tenant would be aware of the rent level before accepting a property.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Identify and support those who are struggling utilising various support streams such as downsizing for those who are under occupying.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Page 86

Additional Considerations				
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	If rent flexibility is implemented, all properties will be advertised at the new rent levels, and Income Recovery staff will work with any new tenants who may be impacted by this change to ensure that they are claiming all of the financial assistance to which they may be entitled. Also, the authority has Welfare and Debt Advice Officers and continues to fund Citizen's Advice (CA), who will also support tenants in ensuring they are aware of wrap around support that may be available, including debt management advice, discretionary housing payments, household support fund and Community Chest.			

Average rents will still be below the Local Housing Allowance and significantly less than affordable or market rents. To explore the option of rent flexibility, a review of the Council rents compared to other local providers and the private sector has been conducted. The comparison is illustrated in the graph below, which shows where the Council's flexible rents would be for two types of properties (a 3 Bed House and a 2 Bed Flat) compared to two other local housing providers in Hertfordshire, as well as the rates charged for affordable rents and rent in the private sector, as depicted below;



The calculations are based on rent levels for 2024/25 and demonstrate that proposed rent flexibility levels are broadly comparable with other local providers of social housing and significantly below affordable rents or what tenants would be expected to pay in the private rented sector. It should be noted that approximately 60% of households are in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Based on void trends and the time required for consultation, the MTFS has forecasted 50% of additional income in the first year, representing approximately £50K extra income, and £100K in each subsequent year to invest in services and ensure homes are decent and safe.

<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>		<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>Staff in the Income Services and Finance team will closely monitor, through day-to-day income management and tenant account management, to establish the impact of the rent flexibility increases and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly.</p>
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Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Page 88

<p>Staff?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Residents?</p>	<p>A statutory consultation of 6 weeks will need to be undertaken before SBC can introduce rent flexibility. A full EQIA will be undertaken if there is a change to the Rent and Service Charge Policy arising from the decision to introduce rent flexibility.</p>
<p>Voluntary & community sector?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Partners?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Other stakeholders?</p>	<p>The report will go through the Council's pre-budget scrutiny meetings before being presented to the Full Council in January.</p>		

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Explain the **overall findings** of the assessment and **reasons for outcome** (please choose one):

1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	The future viability of the HRA Business Plan is reliant upon SBC being able to maximise income collection, recover arrears and the costs of service provision where it's possible to do so.
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations:

Page 89

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Monitor through day to day income management and tenant account management to establish to establish the impact of the rent increase challenges relating to affordability and provide tenants with support accordingly	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities. Put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly	Elizabeth Ddamulira	Oct 2026	Current practice is to assess cases or groups that are experiencing challenges and putting in place processes and systems to mitigate impacts.

To be Approved by Cabinet (December 2024)

Date: 11/12/2024

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 27 November 2024

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshil House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Carolina Veres (Chair), Tom Plater (Vice Chair), Lloyd Briscoe, Philip Bibby CC, Robert Boyle, Ceara Roopchand, Anne Wells and Tom Wren

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.17pm

1 **APPOINTMENT OF PERSON TO PRESIDE**

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Jeannette Thomas be appointed to preside over the meeting which was held jointly with the Statement of Accounts Committee.

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

At this juncture, the Chair outlined the procedure that would be followed for the joint meeting.

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Mason Humberstone and Lynda Guy.

3 **2021/22 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT AND 2022/23 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Chair invited the Assistant Director (Finance) to present their report.

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented an update on the financial accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23, highlighting that due to a backlog in audits across the country, no audits had been undertaken for those years for Stevenage. The Committee heard that the government had introduced backstop arrangements requiring a disclaimer for any accounts up to 2022/23 that had not been audited.

The Assistant Director (Finance) advised the Committee that there were minimal changes since the previous reports presented to Members, with adjustments to asset valuations—one correction of a valuation error amounting to £1.9 million, and a reclassification change for 2022/23. Both adjustments had no impact on the general fund or HRA balances.

The Assistant Director (Finance) noted that for the 2023/24 accounts, they would provide more up-to-date information when presented to Members by February 2025.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director (Finance) and invited Ernst & Young to present to the Committee.

Ernst & Young presented the completion report for the audit of Stevenage Borough Council for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23. They noted that due to the ongoing audit backlog and the backstop arrangements in place, a disclaimer of opinion was anticipated for the 2022/23 audit, as the 2021/22 audit could not be completed within the set timeframe.

Ernst & Young outlined the work plan for the audits, which included confirming independence, setting materiality, issuing inquiry letters to management, and reviewing potential risks such as fraud, non-compliance with regulations, and unusual transactions. The audit process would also include reviewing the consistency of the accounts and performing value for money reporting, which had been previously presented to the committee.

Ernst & Young highlighted the differences in the audit opinion structure for those years, noting that the opinion would state that no opinion would be expressed on the financial statements due to the limitations imposed by the backstop dates and incomplete work.

At 18:10hrs the Statement of Accounts Committee **RESOLVED** to adjourn until the rise of the Audit Committee.

A Member asked for clarification on an error reference in the report related to asset valuation on page 5. Ernst & Young explained that this was not an error but rather a broken automatic cross-reference in the document.

The Committee discussed the expected disclaimer of opinion for both 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts. Ernst & Young explained that this disclaimer would likely remain in place for the next few years. Full revaluation of assets would occur in the 2024/25 audit to provide auditors with assurance over valuations. Members sought clarification about the audit's extent, and Ernst & Young confirmed that while the value-for-money aspect had been completed, no work had been done on the actual accounts due to the government's backstop dates.

Members asked about the visibility of the disclaimer for the public. The Assistant Director (Finance) confirmed that once the accounts were signed off, the disclaimer would be included in the final published version, clarifying the situation regarding the incomplete audit.

The Audit Committee expressed its support to the recommendations contained in the report.

It was therefore **RESOLVED**:

- That the report be noted.
- That the 2021/2022 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts for Stevenage BC be received, and the Chief Financial Officer be authorised in consultation with

the Chair of Audit Committee/Statement of Accounts Committee to approve the accounts following the conclusion of the external audit.

- That the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Annual Governance Statements, which form part of the statement of accounts, be approved.
- That the Chief Financial Officer be authorised, after consultation with the Chair of Audit Committee, to sign the letters of representation required as part of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 external audit process.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

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Meeting: Council

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: Resources and Transformation

Date: 22 January 2025

APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

NON-KEY DECISION

Author	Kirsten Frew –	Head of Human Resources
Contributor	Clare Davies –	Head of Human Resources
	Victoria Wilders-	Monitoring Officer and Borough Solicitor
Lead Officer	Clare Davies –	Head of Human Resources
	Kirsten Frew –	Head of Human Resources
Contact Officer	Clare Davies –	Head of Human Resources
	Kirsten Frew –	Head of Human Resources

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To approve an appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer upon the recommendation of the Appointments Committee.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Council:

- i) Approve the appointment of Thomas Pike, with effect from 14 April 2025 as:
- Chief Executive
 - Head of the Paid Service
 - Returning Officer
 - Electoral Registration Officer
- ii) Approve that Thomas Pike be appointed to the Chief Executive Salary range of £145000-£165000

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following an external recruitment exercise the Appointments Committee met on Wednesday 8 January 2025 to interview candidates for the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. Candidates were also required to give a presentation, undertake a written exercise and to undertake a Leadership competency profile assessment. Additionally, candidates met with a staff and stakeholder panel. In making the appointment the Council were assisted by Sajida Bilje, Chief Executive – Hertsmere Borough Council.

4.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Appointments Committee interviewed 4 candidates for the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.
- 4.2 The Appointments Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that Thomas Pike be appointed to the post.
- 4.3 All Members of the Cabinet were afforded the opportunity to object to the appointment. No objections have been received.
- 4.4 The holder of the role of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service also acts as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer and Council is recommended to appoint Thomas Pike to these posts.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from the appointment of the new Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service. The appointment is proposed in line with the appropriate grade and therefore in accordance with the budget provision for the Chief Executive's post.

Subject to Council approving the appointment, Thomas Pike will receive a starting salary of £145000

5.2 Legal Implications

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires every local authority to designate one of its officers as Head of Paid Service. There are statutory procedures for the appointment of the Chief Executive, which have been observed in this case.

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 2001 require Council to approve the appointment of the Head of Paid Service before an offer of appointment is made.5.3

Equalities and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.