

Public Document Pack



CABINET

Date: Wednesday, 12 November 2025

Time: 2.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: Lisa Jerome (01438) 242203

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeanette Thomas (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Coleen DeFreitas, Jackie Hollywell, Tom Plater, Lorainne Rossati, Simon Speller and Nigel Williams

AGENDA

PART 1

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

2. **MINUTES - CABINET 10 OCTOBER 2025**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2025.

Page Nos. 5 - 10

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

To note the following minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committees:

Environment and Economy Select Committee – 7 October 2025

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14 October 2025

Page Nos. 11 - 22

4. **SECOND QUARTER MONITORING REPORT FOR GENERAL FUND, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND CAPITAL MONITORING**

To receive an update on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2025/26 net expenditure and seek approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.

Page Nos. 23 - 56

5. MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

To receive a report updating Members on the Treasury Management activities in 2025/26 and review effectiveness of the 2025/26 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy including the 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators.

Page Nos. 57 - 76

6. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27

To update Members on the local Stevenage Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2026/27.

Page Nos. 77 - 90

7. BALANCING THE BUDGET 2026/27

To update Members on the Balancing the Budget priority and the 2026/27 onwards options that meet the required General Fund requirement.

Page Nos. 91 - 120

8. HRA BUSINESS PLAN

Report to Follow

9. MANAGEMENT OF ESTATES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS POLICY 2025-2027

To consider a draft Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 related to the on-going management of Housing Services and to ensure that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) delivers well maintained, safe and attractive places that residents can enjoy and take pride in.

Page Nos. 121 - 160

10. RECHARGE POLICY 2025 - 2027

To receive the draft Recharge Policy 2025-2027 related to the on-going management of Housing Services and to ensure that SBC has a fair, consistent and responsible approach as to when recharges might apply.

Page Nos. 161 - 198

11. ANNUAL REPORT AND EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE

To consider the annual summary of progress made on the eighteen actions set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) action plan 2024/25, and agree the proposed EDI Action Plan for 2025/26.

Page Nos. 199 - 262

12. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

14. PART II MINUTES - CABINET 10 OCTOBER 2025

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2025.

Pages

15. STATION GATEWAY

3

This receive an update on the Station Gateway vision under the current Development Management Service Agreement (DSMA) with Muse and the English Cities Fund (ECF).

16. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

3

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 12 November 2025 –

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

Agenda Published **Insert date of Publication**

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 8 October 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Coleen De Freitas, Jackie Hollywell, Tom Plater, Loraine Rossati, Simon Speller and Nigel Williams

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

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

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

2 **MINUTES - CABINET 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 September 2025 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

Cabinet received a summary of the issues covered at the most recent meetings of the Environment and Economy Select and Community Select including:

Environment and Economy Select Committee had considered recycling in flat blocks; the promotion of recycling champions and working with young residents; and consideration of the use of CCTV at Bring Bank sites to deter fly tipping;

The Community Select Committee had received a presentation on the Council's response to cases of damp and mould in the light of the implementation of Awaab's Law from 27 October 2025.

Members thanked the Members of the Scrutiny Committees for their work and welcomed the scrutiny undertaken on these matters and looked forward to working with them and receiving the outcomes of the reviews undertaken.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committee meetings be noted.

4 **FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7**

Cabinet received a report seeking approval for the proposed Fees and Charges for the financial year 2026/27, covering both the General Fund (GF) (some commencing

in January 2026) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance advised that the Council's 2026/27 Fees and Charges proposals formed a key part of the financial strategy to address ongoing budget pressures and supported the sustainability of vital services for the community.

It was noted that the proposals were aligned with the Council's 'Balancing the Budget' priority. The charges were also informed by inflationary pressures, service cost recovery, and benchmarking, and were reviewed by the cross-party Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG), with the majority of proposals receiving unanimous support.

Members were advised that the proposed changes were expected to generate an additional £314k for the HRA.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the General Fund (GF), as shown at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as shown at Appendix B to the report, be approved.
3. That 2026/27 Retail Outdoor Seating fees as shown at Appendix C to the report, be approved.
4. That 2026/27 Fast track/Accelerated Planning fees (pilot) as shown at Appendix D to the report, be approved.
5. That the Strategic Director & S151 Officer be given delegated authority to approve any final changes required to the Fees and Charges, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

5 **FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27 - TAXI TARIFFS**

Cabinet received a report considering the Council's proposal to increase the fees and charges relating to taxi and private hire licensing. The aim of the increase was to ensure that the fee structure remained fair, transparent, and proportionate to the actual cost of administering the service.

Members were advised that the findings of an assessment undertaken indicated that the existing fee structure fell short of fully recovering the costs of delivering the service. To address this, the proposed revised fees reflected material costs and officer time with the intention of ensuring sustainable service delivery from 1 January 2026.

The Portfolio Holder advised that in support of the Council's environmental objectives, it was also proposed that a subsidised licence fee be introduced for electric and hybrid vehicles, encouraging the transition to cleaner fuel alternatives.

It was noted that public consultation with the sector and taxi drivers had been undertaken and following analysis of the feedback received, it was recommended that the revised fees and charges be implemented through a phased approach over a two-year period.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the proposed fee increase with a phased implementation, whereby 50% of the proposed increase is applied in 2026/27, with the full increase coming into effect in 2027/28 plus any inflation related increase part of normal 2027/28 fees and charges review be approved.
2. That the advice of the Council's Climate Action Team be supported and a reduced fee structure to incentivise the use of environmentally sustainable vehicles be approved.
3. That it be noted that the discounted licensing structure will remain in place until the end of 2030 to align with the Council's target to achieve zero emissions by 2030 and National policy commitments, including the planned phased out of new petrol and diesel vehicle sales by 2030.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

6 **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2025**

Cabinet received the Climate Change 2025 update report outlining the Council's progress in implementing Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy setting out the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in. Key initiatives included:

- Retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency.
- Decarbonising the Council's vehicle fleet.
- Launching a Green Business Grant to support sustainable practices.
- Enhancing biodiversity through tree planting schemes.
- Engaging communities via the Climate Change Community Fund.

The report also highlighted action being taken by the Council at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the work being undertaken at neighbourhood and individual level to drive behavioural change across the town.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that in order to improve the accuracy and consistency of future emissions tracking, the Council was developing a new greenhouse gas baseline and a transparent reporting framework. It was noted that while Stevenage continued to make progress towards the national net zero target, achieving this by 2030 would require ongoing legislative and financial support from central Government.

Cabinet paid tribute to those Officers and Members who had worked to ensure

Stevenage was in the forefront of the Climate Change agenda. Members were pleased to note that all new developments in the town were taking on the best environmental standards in Climate Change quality assurance guarantees.

Members were keen to ensure that all Councillors used their Climate Change Community Fund for opportunities in their wards to fund schemes to improve the environment in their areas.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the progress made in delivering the 2020 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy over the past year across the eight strategic areas be noted. Of particular note is Stevenage's lowest historical GHG emissions in 2023, delivering a 7.2% decrease from 2022 levels, and 22.6% lower than in the baseline year (2018) resulting in Stevenage's per capita emissions in 2023 being lower than county, regional, and national averages.
2. That work to secure ongoing external funding, partnerships, and income-generating opportunities be endorsed, particularly in terms of renewable energy generation, to support delivery of the 2030 net-zero target and build long-term resilience.
3. That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change to review and update the Strategy over the coming year as required, to ensure it continues to align with the Council's corporate priorities.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

7 **RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY 2025/27**

Cabinet were presented with the updated Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy for 2025–2027, which set out the Council's approach to rent and service charge setting across its housing stock.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the policy reflected recent legislative updates and changes to the Rent Standard, and introduced rent flexibility.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That a new Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 (Appendix A).
2. That the relevant Strategic Director, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor updates and changes to this policy arising from new legislation.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

8 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part I business.

9 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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 the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

10 **PART II MINUTES - CABINET 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the Cabinet held on 17 September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 **ESTATES COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of a commercial opportunity.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

12 **SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE**

Cabinet received a Part II report outlining the progress towards delivering the Council's new Stevenage Sports and Leisure Centre.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

13 **REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Executive considered a Part II report giving a programme wide update across the Government's Towns Fund programme being delivered by Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Development Board partners.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

14 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES AND
SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

Cabinet received an update on the Council's subsidiary companies and those the Council has an interest in. The report set out the current financial position for each company, identifying any financial and operational risks and any mitigation measures that were being or needed to be implemented.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

15 **LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE DELIVERY AND DISPOSAL**

Cabinet received a report seeking to update Members on progress across the existing Land and Development programme, including updates on key sites and new opportunities.

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

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.
Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

16 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 7 October 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Leanne Brady (Chair), Jim Brown, Robert Boyle, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Dermot Kehoe, Claire Parris, Ceara Roopchand, Peter Wilkins and Jade Woods

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.30pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andy McGuinness.

2 **MINUTES - MONDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Environment and Economy Select Committee meeting held on 1 September were approved and signed by the Chair.

3 **RECYCLING IN FLAT BLOCKS SCRUTINY REVIEW INTERVIEWS**

The Committee considered the item on Recycling in Flat Blocks, as part of the ongoing scrutiny review. The Chair welcomed Councillor Broom as Portfolio Holder for environment and Officers to the meeting.

The Chair noted that several questions had been shared with Councillor Broom in advance and would be discussed during the meeting.

In response to a question about priorities for improving recycling in Stevenage, Councillor Broom explained that the current focus was on food waste and recycling within flat blocks. It was noted that the aim was to reduce contamination and increase recycling rates through clearer communication and engagement with residents.

The Committee discussed the forthcoming government mandated introduction of food waste collections. Officers confirmed that while the Council needed to meet a minimum standard by March 2025, there was an ambition to exceed the minimum government standards. It was noted that approximately 25% of food in the UK was wasted, and that the introduction of separate food waste collections would significantly help to improve recycling rates.

Councillor Broom stated that he was reluctant to set a specific numerical goal, but expected to see an increase in recycling rates by next year. It was noted that the

data would be reviewed in Summer and Autumn 2026 to assess progress.

Officers noted that the Council had a long-term target to achieve a 60% recycling rate by 2030. This would be supported by national measures such as the 'polluter pays' principle and efforts to reduce non-recyclable packaging.

Following a question to Councillor Broom about the barriers to improved recycling rates. In response, it was highlighted that resident engagement and participation were key challenges.

Members discussed the concept of introducing recycling champions within flat blocks. Councillor Broom and officers supported the concept, noting it had been trialled successfully in a pilot scheme, but had low participation. Members suggested introducing incentives, such as recognition through local awards for adult and junior champion categories, to encourage involvement.

Members sought clarification on the role of a recycling champion. Officers explained that, in the pilot scheme, a resident acted as a liaison between the Council and tenants, promoting recycling and achieving positive outcomes.

Members highlighted the need for recycling literature and leaflets to be available in translated formats and better education around safe battery disposal. Officers noted that work was underway to address the safe disposal of batteries. This was in response to national concerns about waste-related fires, with a focus on public awareness and operational safety.

Members also suggested engaging schools and incorporating recycling information into new tenancy inductions. Officers noted that engagement work had been undertaken in local schools through assemblies to encourage recycling among children, with the aim of influencing positive behaviour within households.

Members highlighted the need to consider community dynamics when selecting Champions to ensure positive engagement within flat blocks. Officers acknowledged this and noted that clear expectations and guidance would be important for any future recycling champion's scheme.

A question was raised to the Portfolio Holder to ask if he perceived Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as a possible threat to keeping a direct refuse and recycling service. It was noted that he did not see an immediate threat and supported the Council's current direct delivery model, as it offered local accountability and flexibility compared to outsourcing to third-party contractors.

Members commented that future LGR could potentially lead to reduced standards. It was noted that a joint waste contract for North and East Herts had been recently re-procured. Officers explained that existing arrangements typically remained in place during reorganisation processes, with future service structures depending on the priorities and approach of new authorities.

It was noted that benchmarking key performance indicators (KPIs) and costs against outsourced services would strengthen the Council's case in any future discussions,

particularly if it could demonstrate comparable or better value.

In response to a question regarding the future of recycling in Stevenage, it was noted that the Portfolio Holder hoped to see significant improvements over the next five to ten years. This would be supported by the initiatives such as food waste collections in flat blocks and the anticipated inclusion of low-density polyethylene recycling.

Councillor Broom considered Stevenage's current recycling infrastructure to be effective, with ongoing improvements in areas developing. It was noted that there had been a progress in reducing vehicle emissions by using hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) as fuel.

The final question asked to the Portfolio Holder was how the Council should measure success. In response, it was noted that measurements could be made through increased recycling rates, improved resident engagement and the delivery of low carbon and environmentally sustainable services.

Members discussed the importance of increasing the percentage of recycling while encouraging residents to produce less waste overall, in line with the waste hierarchy. Officers highlighted the role of the Council in promoting repair and reuse schemes and communicating these opportunities to residents.

It was noted that government initiatives and producer responsibilities, such as packaging taxes, were also contributing to reducing non-recycling waste.

It was noted that Members discussed the ongoing challenges of waste management and fly tipping. Members asked the Portfolio Holder to consider introducing a community collection scheme for bulky waste items each month to help reduce fly tipping, but the Portfolio Holder stated that he was not in favour of providing a free service but would consider other ways to tackle this issue.

These challenges were acknowledged, and it was confirmed that fly tipping enforcement would be considered in a forthcoming meeting. Councillor Broom noted that fly tipping and the practice of leaving items marked "free" outside properties negatively affected the appearance of neighbourhoods.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted existing enforcement including CCTV and warning letters, and stressed the importance of resident responsibility, noting that concessionary bulky waste collections were available at a set fee.

A question was raised regarding if the Council tracked any recycling outside council services such as at supermarket collection points. Officers confirmed that this was not currently monitored, and data could be obtained from the Environment Agency.

Members highlighted that while education and awareness supported responsible recycling, capacity issues at bring bank sites may pressure residents into fly tipping. It was noted that these sites were predominantly for recyclables, not residual waste, and that future monitoring, enhancements to flat block recycling, and targeted enforcement would help manage misuse.

Members noted that the Council could signpost retailers offering appliance recycling, which would provide residents with convenient options and potentially encourage more retailers to offer this service. Officers noted that Hertfordshire County Council had a “Recycle Now” tool which allowed users to find local retailers offering recycling as well as recycling centres. Officers would ensure that this resource was clearly linked on the Stevenage Borough Council’s website.

A question was raised about an update on the physical modifications to the flat blocks, including ramps and bin bays. Officers reported that approximately 23 sites had been revisited with engineers, and that drawings and pricing had been completed. A meeting was scheduled with officers from multiple departments, including leasehold resident services, to review all plans.

Dacorum Borough Council – Summary Report Review

Members reviewed the Recycling in Flats Summary Report provided by Dacorum Borough Council. It was noted that the findings aligned with Stevenage’s current approach. Members thanked the officer from Dacorum for providing the information to their review.

Key points included common barriers such as limited space, restricted bin access, low resident engagement, and challenges engaging privately managed flats.

The Council’s communications strategy, including leaflets, social media, and food waste campaigns, was highlighted. Differences from Dacorum’s rollout were noted, such as Stevenage Council not using bin apertures due to unintended issues like fly tipping.

Overall, Stevenage Borough Council was considered well placed to implement improvements due to the smaller scale of flat blocks across Stevenage.

Members were invited to submit any further questions for Dacorum to Officers.

4 **MEMBER FEEDBACK FROM THE SITE VISIT TO THE CAVENDISH ROAD DEPOT AND RIDE ALONG IN REFUSE & RECYCLING FREIGHTER**

Members shared their feedback on visits to Cavendish Road and freighter operations.

It was noted that the depot was very clean, well organised and safe, with effective systems for odour control, fire detection and recycling processes.

Members highlighted the efficiency, commercial awareness and professionalism of staff.

Observations included challenges with bulky waste, bin store access at the new Forster Park Development and potential risks to staff.

Officers noted these concerns and explained that Planning officers were inspecting

the site and liaising with the developer to establish short-term and permanent solutions.

Members discussed residual waste disposal including energy from recycling paper exported overseas, noting environmental and ethical considerations.

Overall, the visits were considered valuable for understanding operations and Members thanked officers for their time. Stevenage Direct Services officers invited any other Members who wished to visit the depot to contact them for an individual visit.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 14 October 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Philip Bibby, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.25pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received Councillors Sandra Barr and Peter Clark.

Councillor Roopchand declared a personal interest in Item 11 – Estates Commercial Opportunity as she had a relative working for the Company detailed in the report.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Part I Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the inclusion of Councillor Peter Clark in the list of apologies.

3 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7

The Assistant Director Finance gave an update on the proposed Fees and Charges for the financial year 2026/27, covering both the General Fund (GF) (some commencing in January 2026) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Members were advised that the Council's 2026/27 Fees and Charges proposals formed a key part of the financial strategy to address ongoing budget pressures and supported the sustainability of vital services for the community. The charges were informed by inflationary pressures, service cost recovery, and benchmarking, and were reviewed by the cross-party Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG), with the majority of proposals receiving unanimous support.

A Member expressed concern that although fees and charges had increased generally just above 3%, the first hour for car park charges had increased by 20% from £1 to £1.20.

Officers advised that there was a wide differential between car parking prices across the Town and would collate comparative figures across these car parks and also

those in neighbouring authorities. It was suggested that if the Member's concerns still persisted once the detailed costings had been shared, the option of bringing forward an alternative budget proposal relating to car parking charges was available to Members during the upcoming budget process.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

4 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7 - TAXI TARIFFS**

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing Manager presented the Cabinet's decision to increase the fees and charges relating to taxi and private hire licensing. The aim of the increase was to ensure that the fee structure remained fair, transparent, and proportionate to the actual cost of administering the service.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

5 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2025**

The Head of Climate Action gave an update on the report submitted to Cabinet which set out the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy. Key initiatives included:

- Retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency.
- Decarbonising the Council's vehicle fleet.
- Launching a Green Business Grant to support sustainable practices.
- Enhancing biodiversity through tree planting schemes.
- Engaging communities via the Climate Change Community Fund.

The report also highlighted action being taken by the Council at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the work being undertaken at neighbourhood and individual level to drive behavioural change across the town.

It was noted that Cabinet had paid tribute to those Officers and Members who had worked to ensure Stevenage was in the forefront of the Climate Change agenda and Members had been pleased to note that all new developments in the town were taking on the best environmental standards in Climate Change quality assurance guarantees.

It was reported that Cabinet Members were keen to ensure that all Councillors used their Climate Change Community Fund for opportunities in their wards to fund schemes to improve the environment in their areas.

A question was raised in relation to recycling rates and the reasons why Stevenage performance appeared lower than neighbouring authorities. Members were advised that multiple factors were being considered by the Council to increase these rates. These factors included significant work by Officers and also the Environment and

Economy Scrutiny Committee who were currently carrying out a review to introduce improvements to the recycling facilities in flat blocks which should increase recycling rates significantly.

In response to a question regarding the levels of residual waste and non-recyclable items and packaging in Stevenage, officers agreed to ask the Assistant Director, Stevenage Direct Services, to look into this matter but it was agreed that although the Council could not directly influence what people should buy, they could encourage the proper disposal of waste and help make residents aware of purchases that are recyclable

Officers agreed to respond in writing regarding a question from a Member about how the tree canopy cover was measured.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

6 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY 2025/27

The Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhoods provided an update to the Committee on the updated Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy for 2025–2027, which set out the Council’s approach to rent and service charge setting across its housing stock.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that the National Formula Rent calculation took into account national average rent, the property's relative value, and the number of bedrooms and that the calculation increased annually in line with inflation.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

7 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There was none.

8 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

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 the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

10 **PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

There were no Part II Minutes.

11 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - ESTATES COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Strategic Director (CF) informed the Committee of a commercial proposition and responded to a number of questions from members relating to this.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

12 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE**

The Assistant Director, Regeneration informed the Committee of the current position in relation to the Sports and Leisure Centre and responded to a number of questions from Members.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

13 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Regeneration gave an update to the Committee on the current position with the Regeneration Programme.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

14 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES AND SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

The Strategic Director (CF) presented to the Committee a report on the Council's subsidiary companies and those the Council has an interest in. The report set out the current financial position for each company, identifying any financial and operational risks and any mitigation measures that were being or needed to be implemented. Members asked and Officers responded to a number of questions on the report.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

15 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE DELIVERY AND DISPOSAL**

The Chief Officer, Land and Development updated Members on progress across the existing Land and Development programme, including updates on key sites and new

opportunities.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

16 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

17 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

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Meeting: CABINET

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: Resources and Performance



Date: 12 November 2025

2ND QUARTER REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2025/26 – GENERAL FUND AND HRA

KEY DECISION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2025/26 net expenditure and seek approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.
- 1.2 To update Members on the reserves and balances available to support revenue expenditure and seek approval for revisions to the allocated reserves.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

General Fund

- 2.1 That the 2025/26 second quarter projected net increase in General Fund expenditure of £1,380 be approved.
- 2.2 That Members approve the use of EPR reserve funding for the initial supply of caddy liners, at a cost of £11,120.
- 2.3 That Members note the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.3.1.
- 2.4 That Members approve Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) of £150,000 to fund future urgent unplanned capital works.

Housing Revenue Account

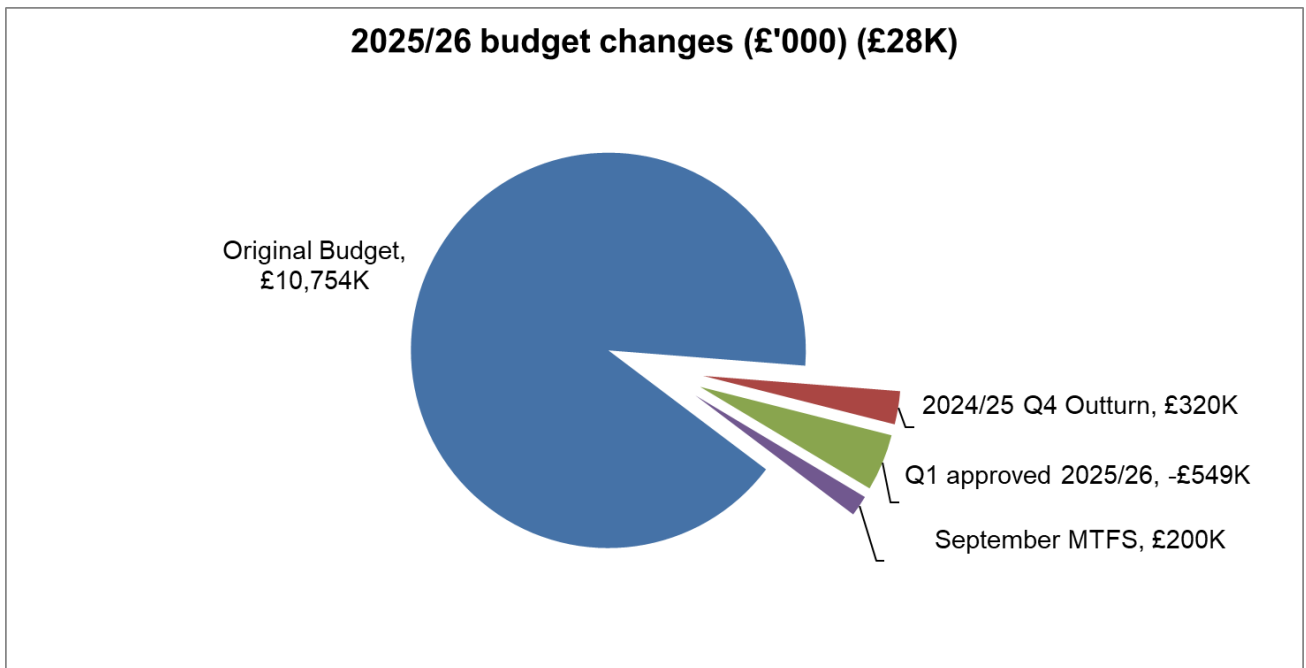
- 2.5 That the 2025/26 second quarter net decrease in HRA expenditure of £164,550 be approved.

Capital Programme

- 2.6. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £6.4 Million from 2025/26 to future years be approved.
- 2.7. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £3.6 Million from 2025/26 to future years be approved.
- 2.8. That net changes to budgets fully grant and external contributions funded of (£246K) in paragraph 4.9.2 be noted.
- 2.9. That General Fund virements in section 4.10 be approved.
- 2.10. That an additional £150K be added to the deferred works reserve funded by revenue contributions to capital in 2025/26.
- 2.11. That the proposed changes to the funding of the General Fund and HRA capital budgets in section 4.11 be approved.

3. BACKGROUND - GENERAL FUND

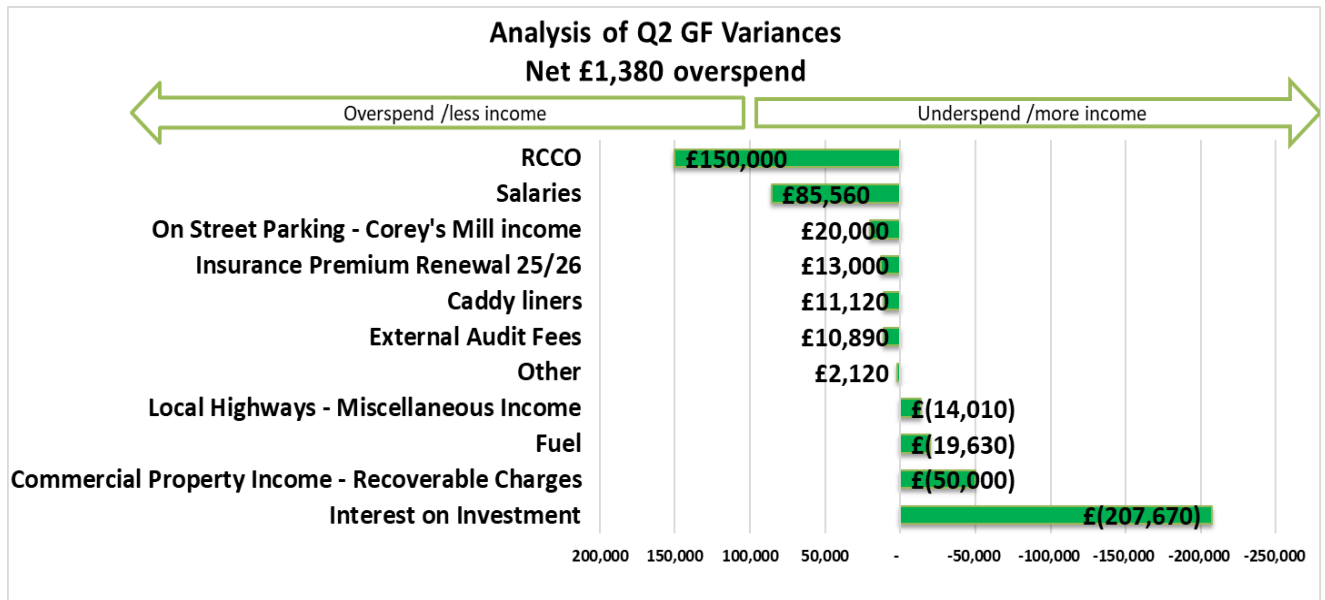
- 3.1. Since the General Fund net budget of £10,753,540 was approved at February 2025 Council, Members have approved net budget changes of £28,460 as detailed in the chart below:1.1.3



4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 General Fund – Budget Review

4.1.1 Following the second quarter review of the General Fund budgets officers are projecting an increase in the forecast budget spend for the year of £1,380.



4.1.2 The reasons for the overspend or less income are detailed below:

- **Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO) £150K** – as detailed in section 4.10.5 of this report, there is a shortfall in capital resources and, consequently, approval is sought to increase the deferred works reserve by £150K, from revenue reserves which are projected to be £6.599 Million and £93K above the Original Budget projection. Due to restricted availability of capital resources, only approved schemes are being considered for funding. Therefore, this contribution will provide additional flexibility to support any urgent unplanned works during 2025/26 and potentially beyond.
- The overall **salary budget** is forecast to **overspend by £86K**, primarily due to pressures within specific service areas. At the 1st Quarter, the pay budget increased by £262K, mainly relating to transitional vacancy.
 - i) **Stevenage Direct Services £45K** – this variance relates to additional agency staffing costs required to cover the weekend working, overtime, and sickness absence. Similar pressures have been experienced in previous years; therefore, a business unit review is scheduled to commence later in the year to address both the operational and financial challenges within the existing establishment structure.

- ii) **Stevenage Works £29K** – an outreach programme was established to deliver workplace learning opportunities within the community. This initiative was initially funded through contributions from contractors involved in the housing refurbishment programme. As this external funding is nearing depletion (see paragraph 4.3), the £29K variance represents a shortfall required to maintain the service until the end of the current financial year. A growth bid is being considered for inclusion in the 2026-27 budget to ensure ongoing sustainability.
- iii) **Pay award £58K** – following the conclusion of the national pay negotiations a pay award of 3.2% was agreed between the Employers and Unions and implemented in the August payroll. This represents a 0.2% increase above the original budget assumption of 3% resulting in the reported overspend. The table below summarises the increased cost per service.

Service	Pay Award 0.2% £
Finance	5,096
HR	4,852
Regeneration	2,318
Business and Improvement	4,500
Housing & Neighbourhood	8,157
IT	6,092
SDS	14,161
Corporate	6,197
Planning & Regulatory	6,809
Total	58,184

- **On Street Parking £20K Reduced Income** – a reduction in income is anticipated due to the temporary closure of approximately twelve bays at Corey's Mill for three weeks in November followed by a further closure period of three months from January 2026.
- **Insurance Premium Renewal £13K Overspend** – the annual insurance renewal, effective from October, has resulted in higher than anticipated premiums despite the Council's brokers' best efforts to secure competitive rates. The overall annual increase equates to £75K (6%) across both the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This is then split over two funds HRA and GF. The GF share of this pressure is £13K with the main increase relating to Public Liability insurance costs.
- **Caddy liners £11K Additional Spend** - in July 2025, Cabinet agreed to the spend of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding to improve participation in recycling, with this funding primarily aimed at recycling improvements at flat blocks. To support the role out of separate weekly food waste collection, it is now proposed that Cabinet approve the use of EPR funding reserve (see paragraph 4.3) to fund the purchase of an initial free supply of food waste caddy liners for all residents at the launch of the new weekly food waste service in March 2026. There is evidence that demonstrates it is both

best practice and improves participation in a food waste recycling service when caddy liners are provided. The ongoing supply of liners, beyond the initial launch period will be reviewed.

- **External Audit Fees £11K Overspend** – this variance is as a result of additional audit fees for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, where the final costs exceeded the original budget assumptions due to the additional work required to address disclaimer issues.
- **Other Variances £2K Overspend** – a combination of small variances across the service.

4.1.3 The reasons for the underspend or more income are detailed below:

- **Local Highways (£14K) Additional Income** – income from street naming and numbering of residential areas is projected to exceed budget by £14K, driven by residential development activity across Stevenage.
- **Fuel (£20K) Underspend** – the average price per litre for fuel during the first six months of the year has been slightly below the budgeted rate, resulting in a saving of £20K. Forecasts for the remainder of the year assume prices will return to the budgeted level.
- **Recoverable Charges (£50K) Additional Income** – Additional income has been generated from recharges of commercial property insurance premiums to tenants. These costs have increased in line with higher property valuations and revised rental levels. Additional insurance premium costs have been accounted for within this monitoring.
- **Interest on Investment (£208K) Additional Income** – this reflects the continuation of the favourable trend reported at Quarter 1, with income benefiting from sustained higher cash balances and a positive interest rate environment. Based on the Council's latest cashflow projections, investment returns are expected to remain above the original budget assumptions for the remainder of the financial year.

The cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget, remain within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Cabinet.

Cabinet Delegation - General Fund	£'000
Original Net General Fund Budget	10,754
Previously approved Budget Changes	(28)
Revised GF Budget agreed	10,725
Quarterly monitoring Q2 projection	1
Updated GF Budget	10,726
Increase Variation Limit Delegated	400
Variations to date	(27)
Within Cabinet Delegated Limit	427

4.2 Collection Fund

4.2.1 The Council is responsible for the collection of both Council Tax and Business Rates, also known as National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), which are administered through the Collection Fund. Income from these sources is monitored throughout the year and compared against the anticipated levels set during the budget-setting process.

4.2.2 Although the income credited to the Council's General Fund revenue account is determined through the annual Council Tax precept (approved by Council each February) and the NNDR1 government return (which sets the Council's share of business rates income), any variance between actual and budgeted income is retained within the Collection Fund. These variances are carried forward as either a surplus or deficit and are subsequently redistributed or recovered from the General Fund in future financial years.

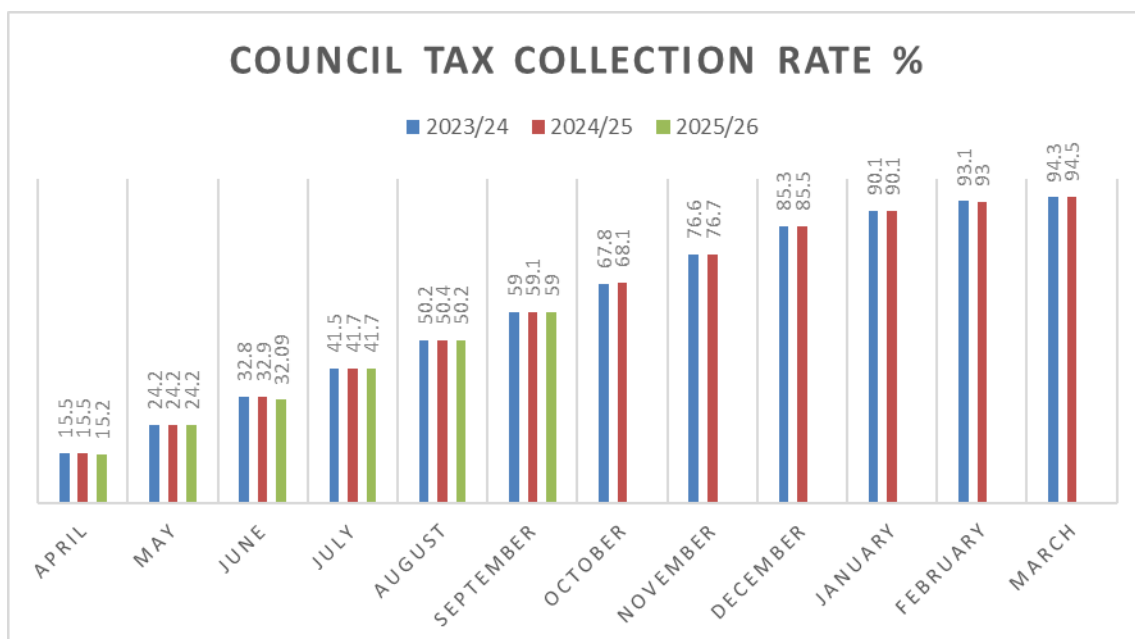
4.2.3 Council Tax Receipts

4.2.4 Council Tax income is collected on behalf of all precepting bodies (Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and the Hertfordshire Police Authority) and distributed in accordance with the approved precepts.

4.2.5 For 2025/26, the total Council Tax liability raised for collection (after allowing for discounts, exemptions, and reductions) amounts to £65.974 Million, of which £7.125 Million (10.8%) represents the Council's share.

4.2.6 Monitoring performance involves assessing the proportion of cash collected at the end of each accounting period, expressed as a percentage of the total amount billed. This is compared against historical collection trends to determine whether current performance is on target, exceeding expectations, or underperforming.

4.2.7 The graph below shows how current year collections compare against previous years:



4.2.8 As at the end of September 2025, total Council Tax collections equated to 59% of the total liability (59.1% 2024/25 and 59% 2023/24), which is only marginally below the corresponding percentage collected in September in previous year.

4.2.9 Council Tax – Tax Base

4.2.10 The Council Tax Base represents the estimated number of chargeable properties within the Borough, adjusted for discounts, reliefs, and exemptions, and expressed as a number of band D equivalent properties. This figure is further adjusted to reflect the assumed collection rate, accounting for potential bad debts.

4.2.11 For 2025/26, the approved tax base was 29,155 Band D equivalent properties (prior to adjustments for non-collection). This estimate carries an inherent level of risk, as any variation between the forecasted and actual number of chargeable dwellings will result in either a surplus or deficit within the Collection Fund which will impact on the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.

4.2.12 Monitoring as at end of August 2025 indicates a current tax base of 29,221 which is slightly above the budgeted tax base. This positive variance reduces the risk of the Collection Fund reporting a deficit at the end of the financial year. However, the position will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year, as fluctuations are expected due to new property completions and removals from the rating list.

4.2.13 Council Tax Forecast

4.2.14 Taking the above matters into account and projecting to the end of the financial year, early indications suggest that the Collection Fund in respect of Council Tax is forecast to deliver a surplus of £0.822 Million in 2025/26. Although the current in-year collection rate of 59% is slightly below the 60% target, this shortfall is offset by an increase in number of chargeable properties and a

reduction in discounts. Based on the latest tax base and bad debt provision, this has resulted in an overall improvement in the projected collection fund position. If the surplus is realised, the Council's share would be approximately £88K which would be credited to the General Fund in 2026/27.

	Shares %	Budget 2025/26 £	Forecast Year End Position £	Variance £
Gross Council Tax income for 25/26		(60,224,606)	(73,163,207)	
Less: Council Tax Support		6,286,015	6,709,309	
Net Collectible Council Tax		(66,510,621)	(66,453,899)	
Increase/ (decrease) to BDP		1,330,212	451,657	
Council Tax Income		(65,180,409)	(66,002,242)	
Allocation of Council Tax				
Stevenage Borough Council	10.80%	(7,040,510)	(7,128,242)	(87,732)
Hertfordshire County Council	77.58%	(50,568,372)	(51,204,539)	(636,168)
Hertfordshire Police Authority	11.62%	(7,571,527)	(7,669,461)	(97,934)
Total Allocation		(65,180,409)	(66,002,242)	(821,833)

4.2.15 Business Rates

4.2.16 Business Rates income can significantly vary due the impact of appeals and changes in valuations, vacant properties, making in-year monitoring of cash collections more complex and provides less certainty about the final outturn position.

4.2.17 Given these factors, Business Rates monitoring focuses on projecting the year-end outturn and the resulting surplus or deficit position on the Collection Fund, rather than solely tracking in-year cash collection performance.

4.2.18 The table below summarises the forecast business rates income for the year as at the end of September, compared with the original estimates set out in the NNDR1 return:

	Shares %	Budget 2025/26 (NDR 1) £	Forecast Year End Position £	Variance £
Gross Business Rates Income		(70,023,017)	(66,446,113)	3,576,904
Forecast appeals in 2025/26		3,251,000	93,166	(3,157,834)
Transitional protection relief		287,533	(202,978)	(490,511)
Reliefs		8,929,944	9,095,547	165,603
		(57,554,540)	(57,460,378)	94,162
Increase/ (decrease) to bad debt provision		672,000	152,706	(519,294)
Net Collectable Business Rates		(56,882,540)	(57,307,672)	(425,132)
Transitional protection payment due to Council		(287,533)	202,978	490,511
Cost of Collection Allowance		108,306	108,306	0
Renewable Energy		1,597	1,597	0
Net Business Rates Income Total		(57,060,170)	(56,994,790)	65,380
Allocation of Business Rates Income				
Central Government	50%	(28,530,085)	(28,497,395)	32,690
Hertfordshire County Council	10%	(5,706,017)	(5,699,479)	6,538
Stevenage Borough Council	40%	(22,824,068)	(22,797,916)	26,152
Total Allocations		(57,060,170)	(56,994,790)	65,380

	Budget 2025/26 (NDR 1) £	Forecast Year End Position £	Variance £
Net yield	(57,060,170)	(56,994,790)	65,380
Stevenage share of yield	(22,824,068)	(22,797,916)	26,152
Tariff	19,488,317	19,488,317	0
Share net of tariff	(3,335,751)	(3,309,599)	26,152
S31 grant payable	(2,210,373)	(2,136,638)	73,735
Baseline Funding Level	(2,851,146)	(2,851,146)	0
Gains before levy applied	(2,694,978)	(2,595,091)	
Gains applicable for levy	(1,854,678)	(1,710,224)	
Ley due 50%	927,339	855,112	(72,227)
Retained Business Rates	(4,618,785)	(4,591,125)	27,660

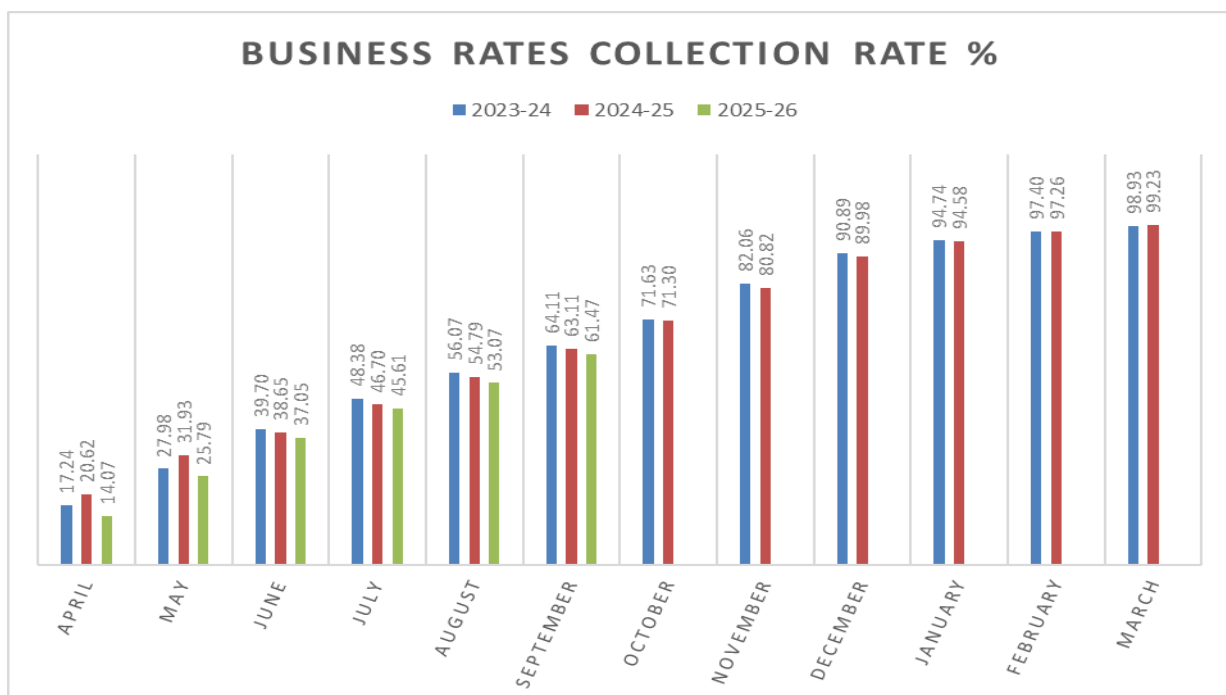
4.2.19 The data indicates that gross rates payable (before reductions for reliefs or exemptions) have decreased by £3.577 Million compared with the original estimate. However, this reduction has been largely offset by movements within the appeals provision, which accounts for the majority of refunds and adjustments arising during the year.

4.2.20 After accounting for the appeals provision of £3.158 Million, alongside adjustments for bad debt and both mandatory and discretionary reliefs, the net position reflects a deficit of £65K within the Collection Fund. Of this, approximately 40% (£26K) is attributable to the Council and will be charged to the General Fund in future financial years however, this impact is expected to be mitigated through the use of reserves.

4.2.21 Overall, current projections for the Council show a net adverse variance of £28K compared to initial estimates. This position will continue to be monitored closely throughout the remainder of the financial year.

4.2.22 Although this represents a deficit position for the Council, it should be noted that a £1.2 Million gain was budgeted for 2025/26, of which only £200K has been recognised in the General Fund, with the remaining balance held in reserves. Therefore, any deficit arising in year can be accommodated through a drawdown from reserves.

4.2.23 The following table illustrates the business rates collection rate achieved to the end of September 2025, compared with the same period in previous years:



4.2.24 Analysis shows that the collection rate for September 2025 stands at 61.47%, which is above the Quarter 2 target of 60%. Although this represents a marginal decrease compared with exceptionally strong collection rates achieved in previous years (63.11% in 2024/25 and 64.11% in 2023/24), the current performance remains positive and indicates that the Council is on track to meet its overall collection target for the year.

4.2.25 Early indications suggest that the reduction in the retail relief has resulted in increased payment pressures for some ratepayers, leading to a rise in arrears

cases. The Revenues and Benefits team plans to undertake a detailed review of outstanding accounts and will continue to monitor collection activity closely, with a view to improving recovery performance over the coming months.

4.2.26 Housing Benefit

4.2.27 Based on the latest information available, the Housing Benefit is showing a net underspend driven by slightly lower benefit payments and a higher level of subsidy claimed. This favourable variance is expected to offset the reduced spend in the Housing Benefit budget, with no material impact on the General Fund. The budget for the year will be adjusted to reflect these changes.

4.3 Review of General Fund Balances

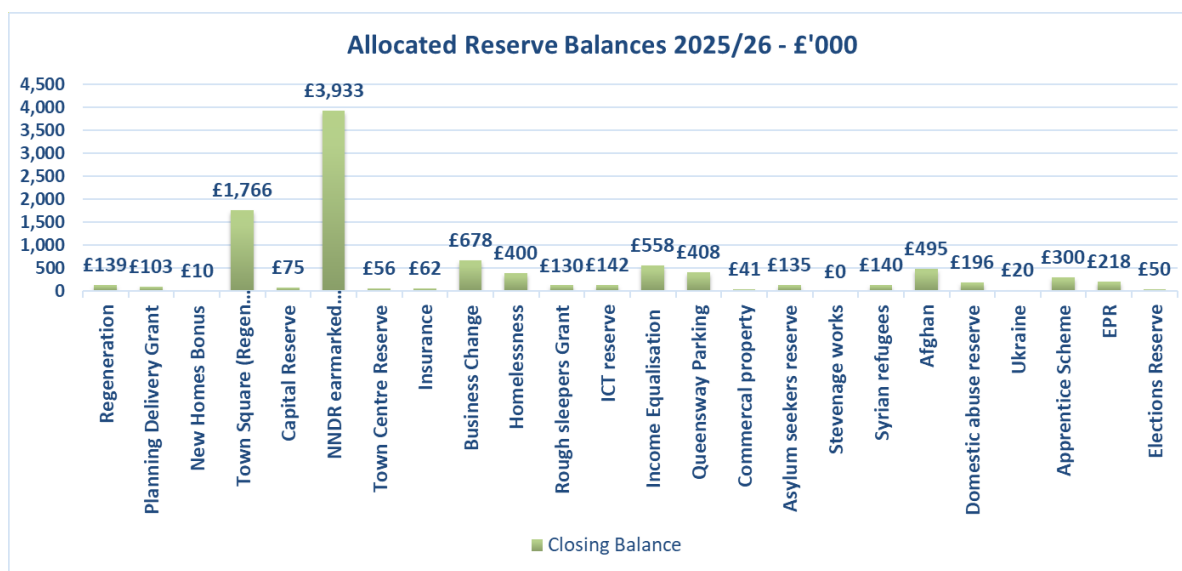
4.3.1 **Allocated Reserves** - these balances are 'ring fenced' and have been set aside for specific purposes. The estimated total value of (revenue) allocated reserves as at 31 March 2026 is **£10,053,365** (31 March 2025, £11,030,040). During quarter two, the following movement between reserves have been recommended.

Reserves	Q2 To Be Approved
Town Square (Regeneration SG1)	(34,360)
Business Change	85,530
Stevenage works	19,523
EPR	11,120
Homelessness	(109,080)
Home Office/DLUHC Grants	227,410
Total	200,143

*() represents movement to reserves

- **Town Square (Regeneration SG1)** – the forecast transfer to reserves for the year is based on the latest activity profile for 2025/26.
- **Business Change** – one off redundancy cost following Leisure & Green Spaces service review as part of Localities theme. The review was essential to reorganise a part of two business units (Stevenage Direct Services and Housing & Neighbourhoods), with the objective to realign resources with corporate priorities and deliver the financial saving to help balance the budget including community services and events.
- **Stevenage works** – as detailed in paragraph 4.1.2 (ii) this relates to the remaining external funding required to cover the salary costs for the Stevenage works programme. The 2025/26 budget will be increased to ensure the initiative can continue.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Reserve** – as detailed in paragraph 4.1.2 it is proposed that the EPR reserve be utilised to fund the initial provision of free supply of food waste caddy liners in preparation for the launch of the new weekly food waste collection service.

- **Homelessness** – the forecast transfer of additional Homelessness grant received in year subject to review before the year end.
- **Home Office/Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** – use of various government grants (Asylum Seekers, Syrian, Afghan and Ukraine) on additional grant funded staffing and related general expenses.



4.3.2 General Fund Balance – Following the 2nd quarter review the General Fund balance as at the 31 March 2026 is now forecast to be £6,598,781.

General Fund Balances	Working Budget £'000	Original Budget £'000
Original Net General Fund Budget	10,754	10,754
Approved budget changes	(28)	(28)
Net Working budget approved to Date	10,725	10,725
2nd Quarter Review	1	1
Total Net Expenditure post Q2 review	10,726	10,726
Less core resources at Budget Setting Report	(10,820)	(10,820)
Transfer (to)/from General Fund balances	(93)	(93)
General Fund balance 31/3/25	(6,506)	(6,506)
Transfer (to)/from General Fund balances	(93)	(93)
Projected General Fund balance 31/3/26	(6,599)	(6,599)
Allocated Revenue Reserves (Paragraph 4.3.1)	(10,053)	(10,053)
Total General Fund Revenue balances (estimated 31/3/26)	(16,652)	(16,652)

- 4.3 **Review of Savings** – As part of the 2025/26 budget setting, the Council agreed savings of £1.245 Million. The table below represents the RAG rated delivery of those schemes.

Target	RAG		% of Target
1,245,450	Delivering	1,142,450	92%
	Partially Achieving	63,000	5%
	Not Achieving	40,000	3%
1,245,450		1,245,450	

- 4.3.1 Based on the second Quarter expenditure position, the Council is on track to deliver the majority of its planned savings. However, a small number of schemes are unlikely to meet their savings targets:

Postage Franking and Bank Charges – while the savings from postage and franking are expected to be fully achieved (£42,950), the saving target of £20,050 for bank charges is not currently on track. The investigation into the reasons for this shortfall is ongoing, and the findings will be reported in the next quarter.

Indoor Market – the saving linked to the relocation of the indoor market to Park Place was estimated for a full year. This is a timing issue with the opening now planned for November 2025 and will be realised in 2026/27.

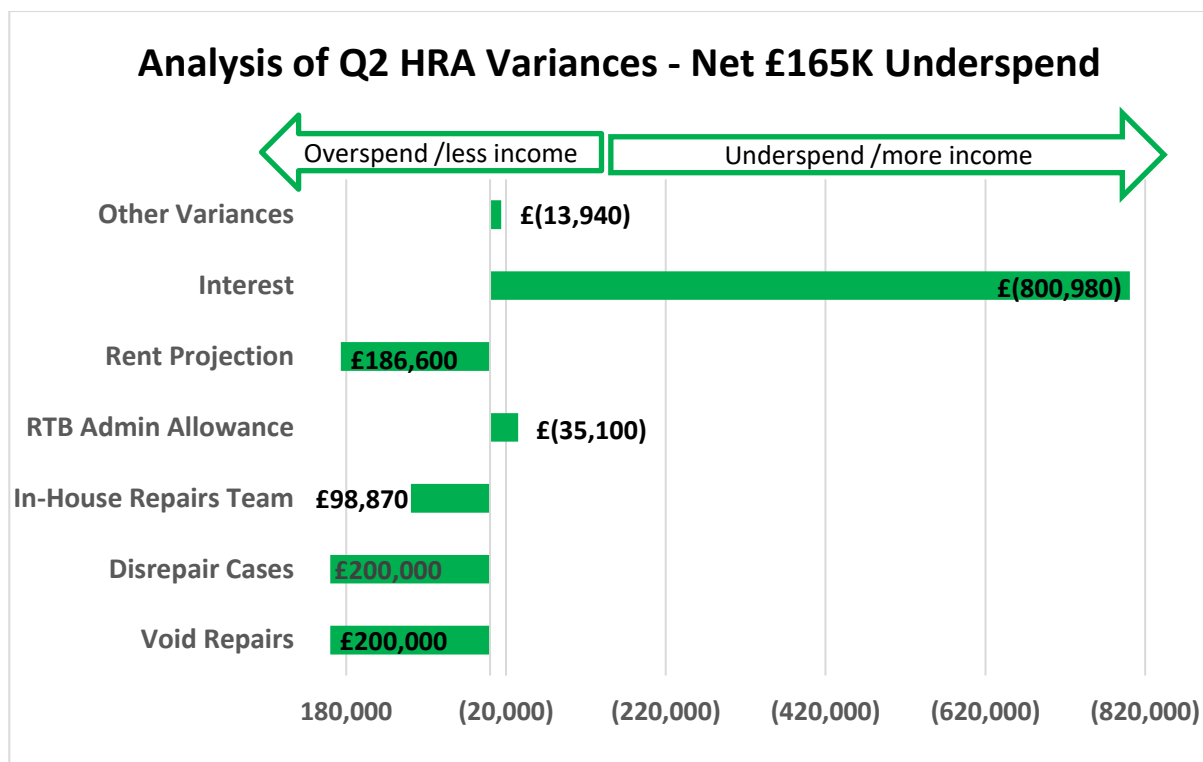
4.4 Housing Revenue Account

- 4.4.1 Since the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net budget deficit of £668K was approved at Council in January 2025, Members have further approved net changes of £84K shown in the following table.

HRA Working Budget	£'000
Original Budget 2025/26	668
24/25 Q4 Carry Forwards	120
1st Quarter Net Projected Underspend	(36)
Total Working Budget	752

4.5 Housing Revenue Account - Budget Review

- 4.5.1 Following the second quarter review of revenue budgets officers have identified and projected the following budget movements.



4.5.2 Void Repairs £200K Overspend. As reported in the 1st quarter monitoring report, the original budget for void work was substantially reduced from the 2024/25 outturn of £3.4Million to a target of £1.75Million in 2025/26. This was based on both cost control through a retendering process and an anticipated lower number of void properties for the year. The procurement has been more complex than anticipated and new contracts have commenced slightly later than expected. This combined with a higher number of projected void properties for the year, has led to increased costs of £250K being added to the budget in the 1st quarter and a further £200K projected in the 2nd quarter. This will bring the total revenue void cost to £2.2 Million for 2025/26, which is still substantially lower than last year's outturn of £3.4 Million. However, this is a demand led service, and costs depend on both the number and condition of the properties becoming void. Therefore, this will continue to be monitored closely over the second half of the year.

4.5.3 Disrepair Cases £200K Overspend. This is another service area with variable demand and an original budget of £300K to meet these costs. Looking at current caseloads and the level of legal and compensation costs seen to date, it is now estimated that a further £200K will be needed in this year. Going forward, these additional costs have been mitigated by improved case management and increased investment in preventing disrepair issues. However, the timing and costs relating to the residual cases will continue to be monitored closely during the year, as these are resolved.

4.5.4 In-House Repairs Team £99K Overspend. Taking into account the latest projections for the trading account, there is a £99K increase in the deficit for the service. This is a 1.5% increase on the current budgeted total charges of £6.6Million in the HRA and relates to the number and type of jobs expected to

be completed in the year and changes in cost like the increased pay award. Like the Void Repairs service mentioned in 4.5.2, this is also a demand led area, and these figures may be revised in future monitoring to reflect actual activity over the rest of the year.

4.5.5 Right to Buy (RTB) admin cost allowance (£35K) Additional Income. The RTB regulations allow the Council to deduct £1,300 per sale to cover the administration process of the scheme. At the 1st quarter it was reported that there had been a large number of applications made before the Government's reduction in discount applicable came into force and that there were likely to be more sales in 2025/26. The number of estimated sales was increased from 50 to 75. However, after analysing the latest position, this number has been increased again to 102 projected sales for this year. This has increased the expected admin allowance by a further £35K in 2025/26. However, this is still expected to be a temporary change, as the lower discount is likely to reduce future sales under the scheme.

4.5.6 Rent £187K Reduced Income. The latest projection for rental income in the HRA shows a £187K reduction from the original budget. The main reason for the reduction is the increased number of RTB sales in the first half of the year (as set out above). However, this has been partially mitigated by improved void loss performance that is projected to be £100K lower than the initial estimate of £680K. The £187K loss of income represents a 0.37% variance against the £50.9Million annual budget.

4.5.7 Interest (£801K) Underspend. Due to the timing of taking new loans in the HRA there is an expected net saving of £801K in 2025/26. Loan interest has been reduced from £10.1Million to £8.6Million, a saving of £1.5Million. However, this has been offset by a reduction of interest earned on balances from £1.4Million to £700K, as cash balances are used to finance capital expenditure through internal borrowing. In the medium term it is planned to convert the current internal borrowing to external loans, but the timing of this decision will be made to minimise interest costs for the HRA. The overall debt position will continue to be monitored closely during the remaining half of this year and will be adjusted to provide the most cost-efficient funding of the service.

4.5.8 Net Other Variances (£14K) Underspend. There were other net positive variances in the HRA totalling a £14K that have not been listed separately in the report.

4.6 Housing Revenue Account Balances

4.6.1 Following the second quarter review, the HRA balance is now forecast to be £10.2Million and is above minimum required balances.

Housing Revenue Account Outturn Position	£'000
Working Budget – Council 22nd January 2025	752
2nd Quarter Net Projected Underspend	(165)
Projected net Deficit post 2nd Quarter review	588
HRA balance brought forward 01/04/25	
	(10,926)
Deficit in year	588
Projected HRA balance 31/03/2026	(10,338)
Remaining Cabinet Delegated Limit	700

4.7 Capital Monitoring

4.7.1. The latest approved 2025/26 capital strategy for each fund before the proposed changes below was:

- General Fund £48 Million
- Housing Revenue Account £43 Million

4.7.2. The table sets out the current projected position for the Capital programme 2025/26 and any proposed rephasing of budgets at 2nd Quarter into future years.

£000	2025/26				2026/27		2027/28	
	Actual Spend Q2	Approved Capital Strategy	Q2 Revised Strategy	Variance	Re-phased	Q2 Revised Strategy	Re-phased	Revised Strategy
Total GF Schemes	9,387	47,618	41,433	(6,185)	6,431	42,571	-	18,153
Total HRA Schemes	7,998	42,947	39,387	(3,561)	3,561	69,850	-	41,030
Total Capital Programme	17,385	90,565	80,820	(9,746)	9,992	112,421	-	59,183
<i>Re-phase detail:</i>								
Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)				(1,040)	998		-	
Housing Development				(4,100)	4,100		-	
Estates				150	-			
Digital and Transformation				(37)	38			
Regeneration				(996)	1,140			
Leisure				(39)	155			
Deferred works reserve				(123)	-			
Total GF Re-phasing				(6,185)	6,431		-	
New Build (Housing Development)				(3,561)	3,561		-	
Total HRA Re-phasing				(3,561)	3,561		-	

Re-phasing

4.8. Re-phasing (re-profiling) of budgets are changes regarding the forecast timing of expenditure from the approved programme, between financial years, with no reported increase or decrease in budget requirement.

4.8.1. Forecasting spend during the year involves making assumptions about future events that may be out of the control of service managers e.g. weather, thus re-phasing is a normal part of capital monitoring.

4.8.2. General Fund – re-phasing £6.4Million - the main items are explained below:

- SDS – re-phasing of £998k for operational vehicles and new round receptacles to match expected deliver in 2026/27.
- Housing Development £4.1Million –
 - The Oval - £2.6Million, the budget has now rephased into 2026/27, to align with the principal contractors latest cashflow.
 - Kenilworth – Malvern Close - £1.5Million re-phased into 2026/27 as progress on site has been limited whilst the Department for Transport process a Stopping Up Order to enable works to take place. All objections have now been resolved and works expected to start on site in Q3.
- Regeneration £1.1Million – public sector hub budget re-phased into 2026/27.

4.8.3. HRA – re-phasing £3.6Million - the main items are explained below:

- Housing Development (HRA) –
 - The Oval (HRA) – £1.9Million, the budget has now rephased into 2026/27, to align with the principal contractors latest cashflow.
 - Redcar Drive - £1.7Million – rephase following the finalisations of the land sale and the commitments to purchase the 12 new affordable units at the site once construction is completed. (Cartref).
- Housing investment in existing stock – the HRA capital programme will be revised in 3rd Quarter to reflect the new HRA business plan which will be presented to cabinet for approval in November 2025.

4.9. Virements and Grant funded growth to note.

4.9.1. Members are asked to note the following:

4.9.2. General Fund –

- Increase of £144k in the budget for the repurposing of Boston House for the indoor market – this relates to structural works on site, funded from landlord contributions (KE251)

- Addition of £73k budget to invest in new Play zone development at King George V Playing Fields funded from S106 contributions (KC256).

4.10. Virements to approve

- 4.10.1. Golf course driving range health and safety works £60k (KC903) – budget is requested to be vired from the deferred works reserve to fund this work to ensure the safety of adjacent properties subject to encroachment by golf balls. Pending legal action has meant that this now urgent.
- 4.10.2. Income generating investment - £10k is requested to be funded from the deferred works reserve to employ a specialist to provide drawings and secure planning permission so that an operator can be engaged who will fund the capital investment for the development and operation of Padel Courts (2-4) transform the dilapidated tennis courts at King George V into income generating Padel courts for the council (£10k annually).
- 4.10.3. Phase 1 of the stage LED replacement programme and the complete change of auditorium house lights to LED at SALC is now expected to cost £215k which is more than the current £159k budget. Approval is request for the transfer of £52,659 from the deferred works reserve to enable this project to be delivered. The small remaining difference being cover by existing leisure budgets.
- 4.10.4. The window for claiming grant funding available through the depot charging grant closes in November 2025. If the application is successful, the grant would contribute 75% of the cost of adding 40 electric charging points into Cavendish depot for both vehicle and plant charging capacity. The remaining £75k council contribution, required in 2025/26 will lead to potential annual revenue savings of circa. £78k. Approval is requested to vire £75k into a new budget code for this project from the deferred works reserve and to gross up the budget by the £225k grant contribution. If the application is not successful, the virement will not proceed.
- 4.10.5. Deferred works reserve – if all of the virements are approved, this will reduce this reserve to nil. Approval is requested that this budget is uplifted by £150k funded from RCCO to fund future urgent unplanned works in 2025/26 as set out in 4.1.2.

4.11. Capital Financing

- 4.11.1. The table below sets out the change proposed to the approved Capital Financing, because of changes to the expenditure phasing discussed above. Additional capital receipts from right to buy sales have enabled a reduction in borrowing and reliance on revenue contributions for the HRA. Funding will be revised to reflect the new HRA business plan, once approved.

£000	2024/25			2025/26		2026/27	
	Approved Capital Strategy	Q2 Revised Strategy	Variance	Re-phased	Revised Strategy	Re-phased	Revised Strategy
Total Capital Financing	90,565	80,820	(9,746)	9,992	112,421	-	59,183
Changes detail:							
Capital Receipts			(2,238)	2,265		-	
Grants and Contributions			(2,356)	2,625		-	
Short Term Borrowing			(1,438)	1,500		-	
Other			(153)	41			
Total GF Financing changes			(6,185)	6,431		-	
Capital Receipts			1,205	3,779		-	
Grant			(282)	282			
Borrowing			(3,139)	(500)			
RCCO			(1,357)	-			
Other			12	-			
Total HRA Financing changes			(3,561)	3,561		-	
Total Capital Financing			(9,746)	9,992		-	

4.12. Capital Receipts Forecast

4.12.1. The table below summaries the current capital receipts forecasts for the General Fund. These include capital receipts already ringfenced for future capital works or for the repayment of short-term internal borrowing.

Table 5: Capital Receipts	Previous Forecast £000	Revised Forecast/Actual £000	Variance £000
Capital Receipts (GF)			
Year 2025/26 Forecast	2,434	2,184	(250)
Year 2026/27 Forecast	9,243	9,493	250
Year 2027/28 Forecast	19,276	19,276	-
Total Capital Receipts (GF)	30,953	30,953	0
2025/26 HRA Right to Buy Forecast	-	18,000	18,000
2026/27 Other Capital Receipts Forecast	-	500	500
Total Capital Receipts (HRA)	-	18,500	18,500

4.12.2. Until sold, the value of land sales can fluctuate from the forecast as can be seen. Significant receipts from right to buy are expected in 2025/26 as a result of demand linked to changes in purchasing conditions. It is expected that sales will fall to less than 10 properties per annum from 2026/27.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included above. The impact of these changes for future years will be incorporated into the budget setting process.

5.1.2 Maintenance costs within the HRA remain volatile and this continues to be an area of financial risk. The commencement of new contracts has taken place but due to the demand led nature of large parts of the service could lead to a much larger variance over the remaining quarters of the year. The current forecast has been made on the expected contract prices and assumed volumes of work, but this will continue to be monitored closely in future reports.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The objective of this report is to outline the projected General Fund net expenditure, HRA and Capital Strategy for 2025/26 and the impact on the General Fund and HRA balances. While there are no legal consequences at this stage Members are reminded of their duty to set a balanced budget.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 This report summarises external and internal factors that impact on approved budgets and recommends changes to those budgets in year. Budget changes identified for future years that could adversely impact on groups covered by statutory equality duties will be incorporated into the budget setting process which includes Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA). None of the budget changes reported will change any existing equalities and diversity policies.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 A risk-based assessment of balances is undertaken and reported to Council as part of the General Fund Budget setting process. Both the General Fund and HRA balances are projected to be above minimum levels.

5.5 Policy Implications

5.5.1 The budget framework represents a development of a policy led budgeting approach across Council services and the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5.6 Climate Change Implications

5.6.1 The Budget and Policy setting process prioritised growth for climate change. The process should have due regard for climate change implications based on the Council's Climate Change Strategy. There are no direct climate change implications from the budget changes in this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

BD1 – Final Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting and Rent Report 2025/26 (Council 22 January 2025)

BD2 – General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2025/26 and Final Capital Strategy 2024/25-2028/29 (Council 26 February 2025)

BD3 – 1st Quarter Monitoring Report General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital 2025/26 (Cabinet 17th September 2025)

Appendices

A General Fund Capital Strategy Q2 (2025/26)

B HRA Capital Strategy Q2 (2025/26)

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Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	General Fund - Schemes									
	Stevenage Direct Services	995,265	5,174,560	4,134,763	(1,039,798)	4,166,000	5,164,461	998,461	0	0
	Housing Development	115,553	8,211,538	4,111,538	(4,100,000)	11,867,281	15,967,281	4,100,000	0	0
	Finance and Estates	184,626	2,662,222	2,812,222	150,000	0	0	0	0	0
	Digital & Transformation	61,774	312,996	275,177	(37,819)	0	37,819	37,819	0	0
	Regeneration	7,643,922	29,028,635	28,032,452	(996,183)	20,008,875	21,149,059	1,140,184	18,153,440	763,208
	Communities and Neighbourhoods	256,583	1,211,496	1,172,491	(39,005)	0	155,000	155,000	0	0
	Planning and Regulatory	129,491	819,842	819,842	0	97,500	97,500	0	0	0
	Deferred Works Reserve	0	196,732	74,073	(122,659)	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Schemes	9,387,214	47,618,022	41,432,558	(6,185,464)	36,139,656	42,571,120	6,431,464	18,153,440	763,208
	General Fund -Resources									
BG902	Capital Receipts		8,206,683	7,109,085	(1,097,598)	12,941,468	14,066,245	1,124,777	11,015,769	0
	SG1 Receipts		823,000	823,000	0			0	0	0
	Locality Review receipts				0	0	0	0	0	0
BG905	Ringfenced receipts		1,433,616	293,432	(1,140,184)	0	1,140,184	1,140,184	0	0
BG904	Towns Fund		19,202,820	19,202,820	0	3,940,129	3,940,129	0	0	0
BG904	Other Grants and other contributions		4,749,345	2,316,012	(2,433,333)	5,042,000	7,642,000	2,600,000	0	0
	S106		25,000	102,000	77,000	552,856	577,856	25,000		
BG904	Contractors Deposits		54,644	54,644	0	0	0	0	0	0
	LEP (now in capital funding)				0			0		
BG862	S106's				0			0	0	0
BG936	Priorities – Strategic CIL				0	4,824,422	4,824,422	0	1,137,671	763,208
BG937	Local – Neighbourhood CIL		109,375	109,375	0	97,500	97,500	0	0	0
BG903	Capital Reserve (Housing Receipts)		533,180	379,034	(154,146)	0	0	0	0	0
-	RCCO		803,113	803,113	0	118,000	118,000	0	0	0
VAR	Revenue Reserves		249,595	208,092	(41,503)	0	41,503	41,503	0	0
BG916	Capital Reserve (Revenue Savings)		75,281	75,281	0	0	0	0	0	0
-	Prudential Borrowing Approved		612,000	654,018	42,018	4,206,250	4,206,250	0	6,000,000	
-	Short Term borrowing and funded from private sale		10,740,371	9,302,653	(1,437,718)	4,417,031	5,917,031	1,500,000	0	0
-	Funding Gap		0	0		0	0	0	0	0
	Total Resources (General Fund)		47,618,022	41,432,558	(6,185,464)	36,139,656	42,571,119	6,431,464	18,153,440	763,208

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Stevenage Direct Services									
	Parks & Open Spaces									
KC218	Hertford Road Play Area (S106 Funded)	0	25,000	0	(25,000)	0	25,000	25,000	0	
KC256	Valley School Playzone (s106)		0	102,000	102,000			0		
KE494	Green Space Access Infrastructure	0	52,024	52,024	0	0	0	0	0	
KE542	Flat block waste management infrastructure	1,731	18,730	18,730	0	0	0	0	0	
KE543	Shrub bed programme	96,664	46,779	46,779	0	0	0	0	0	
KE911	Play Area Improvement Programme	1,712	96,602	96,602	0	0	0	0	0	
KE916	Peartree skate park	16,610	90,000	96,663	6,663	0	0	0	0	
KG002	Garages (GIP)	108,347	29,870	29,870	0	0	0	0	0	
KG039	Garages (GIP) 10 year plan (£250k/annum)	0	250,000	250,000	0	250,000	250,000	0	0	0
KG040	Garages asbestos roof capital works	0	584,000	584,000	0	3,916,000	3,916,000	0	0	
	Vehicles, Plant, Equipment									
KE497	Trade Waste Containers	0			0	0	0	0	0	
Various	Vehicle/Plant replacement Programme - see Appendix 'A1 Vehicles'	769,678	3,029,799	2,082,095	(947,704)	0	947,704	947,704	0	0
KE951	Domestic Recycling Collection Vehicles (x3)	571,283	1,241,900	1,241,900	0	0	0	0	0	
KE934	Receptacles for new rounds etc	0	160,000	0	(160,000)	0	160,000	160,000	0	
KE935	Westin Road ABS Pump	0	5,500	5,500	0	0	0	0	0	
KE937	Trailer vehicle solar panels	0	16,300	16,300	0	0	0	0	0	
KE598	Food collection vehicles (x5) and associated costs	198,395	628,395	628,395	0	0	0	0	0	
KE603	Operational Vehicles	0	962,704	175,000	(787,704)	0	787,704	787,704	0	
KE942	Replace Water Bowers - TRK 16 and TRK25	0	15,000	15,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KE925	Repair closed church wall St Nicholas church	600	25,757	0	(25,757)	0	25,757	25,757	0	
KE926	roof residual waste bay Cavendish Transfer Station	(76)	150,000	0	(150,000)	0	0	0	0	
KE609	Fuel pumps at Cavendish Road fuel station.	0	30,000	30,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KE610	Replacement work Cavendish Road fuel station - manhole covers	0	17,000	17,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KE952	Flat block recycling (RCCO - grant funded)		719,000	719,000	0		0	0	0	
KE930	Digital system streets and grounds services	0	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total Stevenage Direct Services	995,265	5,174,560	4,134,763	(1,039,798)	4,166,000	5,164,461	998,461	0	0
	Housing Development Scheme (Joint GF/HRA)									
KG035	Kenilworth - Community Centre	0	1,211,538	1,211,538	0	0	0	0	0	
KG032	Building Conversion New Homes	0								
KG034	Kenilworth - Retail	30	0	0	0					
KG042	The Oval (Redevelopment)	0	4,000,000	1,400,000	(2,600,000)	5,000,000	7,600,000	2,600,000	0	
KG036	Kenilworth - private sale (Malvern Close & Blocks A3&A6)	115,523	3,000,000	1,500,000	(1,500,000)	4,417,031	5,917,031	1,500,000	0	
Various	Housing Development Schemes (Joint GF/HRA)	115,553	8,211,538	4,111,538	(4,100,000)	9,417,031	13,517,031	4,100,000	0	0
KG038	Marshgate Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC)	0	0	0	0	2,450,250	2,450,250	0	0	
	Total Housing Development (including grants to Registered Providers)	115,553	8,211,538	4,111,538	(4,100,000)	11,867,281	15,967,281	4,100,000	0	0

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Finance & Estates									
	Estates									
KE527	Depots: Planned Preventative Works (reroof) - construct roof over refuse	4,754	5,000	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KE529	Community Centres Urgent and H&S Works	1,069	3,970	3,970	0	0	0	0	0	
KE536	Multi Storey Car Park - Installation of emergency lighting	105,712	205,299	205,299	0	0	0	0	0	
KE554	Bedwell Neighbourhood centre canopy repairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
KE555	8-10 The glebe roof replacement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
KE558	MSCP resurface worn stairwell floor	283	78,141	78,141	0	0	0	0	0	
KE927	Thermal Image Cameras	0	23,011	23,011	0	0	0	0	0	
KE928	Health and Safety Works – Cavendish Depot	5,707	345,000	699,886	354,886	0	0	0	0	
KR167	Cavendish Road penstock valve - stops runoff going to sewage	0	49,886	0	(49,886)	0	0	0	0	
KR175	cavendish - IT server room works	0	65,000	0	(65,000)	0	0	0	0	
KR178	Cavendish - generator	0	90,000	0	(90,000)	0	0	0	0	
KR150	Vacant Premises	10,490								
KR151	Daneshill: Urgent and H&S Works	2,179	48,951	48,951	0	0	0	0	0	
KR152	BTC 2019/20 Backlog H&S Works	2,363	27,930	27,930	0	0	0	0	0	
KR153	BTC Urgent and H&S Works	1,070	65,780	65,780	0	0	0	0	0	
KR154	BTC Planned Preventative Works	11,424	175,855	175,855	0	0	0	0	0	
KR155	EPC Surveys	482	77,759	77,759	0	0	0	0	0	
KR156	EPC remedials	0	209,710	209,710	0	0	0	0	0	
KR157	Builging condition surveys	23								
KE314	TC Cross Canopies (Steve Godfrey)	1,790								
KR165	Cavendish Road reception access enhancement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
KR170	BTC Essential works - Replace / upgrade doors, Lighting and control	0	195,000	195,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KR179	Daneshill House boilers	0	197,000	197,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KR180	Fry Road Nursery	0	80,000	80,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KR181	All buildings across corporate estate	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KE921	Improvement works to Hampson Park depot	0								
	Estates Cont.					0				
KR171	Burwell Road shops - Reroofing,	0	58,947	58,947	0		0	0	0	
KR172	MSCP fire door replacement	141	33,133	33,133	0	0	0	0	0	
KR173	Commercial - shop units roof works	2,030	122,179	122,179	0	0	0	0	0	
KR174	Commercial properties - General repairs	9,137	100,000	100,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KR176	King George V Pavilion - Works to existing Fascia boards	20,254	20,000	20,000	0	0	0	0	0	
KR916	Commercial Properties Refurbishment (MRC Programme)	5,720	359,671	359,671	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total Estates	184,626	2,662,222	2,812,222	150,000	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Finance & Estates	184,626	2,662,222	2,812,222	150,000	0	0	0	0	0

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology									
	IT General									
KS268	Infrastructure Investment	43,714	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS318	Core ICT Equipment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS320	Telephony Hardware Refresh 2425	0	75,638	37,819	(37,819)	0	37,819	37,819	0	0
KS321	VDI hosting Hardware Refresh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS322	Hardware Replacment Program	0	75,225	175,225	100,000	0	0	0	0	0
KS323	Hardware Replacment Program (HRA Element)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KS324	SBC Idox Re-Tender, and Dell Memory (RAM) for Virtual desktop	0	131,860	31,860	(100,000)	0	0	0	0	0
	Total IT General	43,714	282,723	244,904	(37,819)	0	37,819	37,819	0	0
	Connected to Our Customer (CTOC)									
KS274	New CRM Technology	18,060	30,273	30,273	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total CTOC	18,060	30,273	30,273	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Corporate Projects, Customer Services & Technology	61,774	312,996	275,177	(37,819)	0	37,819	37,819	0	0
	Regeneration									
KE506	Public Sector Hub	7,335	810,434	50,000	(760,434)	0	760,434	760,434	0	0
	Lease buy outs	0	379,750	0	(379,750)	0	379,750	379,750	0	0
KE947	SG1 Joint Venture	3,952,863	7,535,632	7,535,632	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE541	Railway MSCP	(40,980)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE566	Stevenage Sports & Leisure Club (not TF Funded element)	0	0	0	0	16,068,746	16,068,746	(0)	18,153,440	763,208
KE251	Parkplace - works ahead of Indoor Market relocation (Boston House)	0	1,100,000	1,244,000	144,000	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Towns Fund	3,724,704	21,842,168	19,202,820	(2,639,348)	3,940,129	3,940,129	124,874	0	0
	Total Regeneration	7,643,922	29,028,635	28,032,452	(996,184)	20,008,875	21,149,059	1,140,184	18,153,440	763,208

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Community & Neighbourhoods									
KC232	SALC and the Swim Centre Urgent and H&S Works includes roof	31,502	17,021	53,181	36,160	0	0	0	0	0
KC242	SLL Leisure management - end of contract capital provision	10,555	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC237	Fire stopping works at SALC	0	77,819	177,819	100,000	0	120,000	120,000	0	0
KC250	Fire stopping at SALC	0	220,000	0	(220,000)	0	0	0	0	0
KC238	Lift replacement at SALC	38,604	38,285	177,000	138,715	0	0	0	0	0
KC252	Lift procurement at SALC	1,850	158,200	0	(158,200)	0	0	0	0	0
KC240	Replacement Camera programme	163	15,052	15,052	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC052	Shephalbury Park	3,950	10,600	10,600	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC236	Ridlins Athletics	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE917	Ridlins Athletics Facility (boilers)	10,330	10,000	80,000	70,000	0	0	0	0	0
KC243	Leisure roof works	0	27,000	0	(27,000)	0	0	0	0	0
KC245	Toilets at TVP	0	31,887	31,887	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC246	Aqua Park - Rubber crumb surface replacement	0	35,000	0	(35,000)	0	35,000	35,000	0	0
KC247	Lighting of clock tower - permanent install	60,000	65,000	60,000	(5,000)	0	0	0	0	0
KC253	Sailing Centre	2,900	5,052	5,052	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE118	Lighting Desk SALC - Equipmt & Tools	800	158,680	215,000	56,320	0	0	0	0	0
KE606	Operational Plant	95,929	105,000	105,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE604	CCTV Upgrade	0	159,900	159,900	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE611	New pumps/aerators to FVP lakes	0	12,000	12,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC903	Golf course works			60,000	60,000	0	0	0	0	0
	Padel Courts			10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0
KC210	Riddlins Track Works	0	65,000	0	(65,000)	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Community & Neighbourhoods	256,583	1,211,496	1,172,491	(39,005)		155,000	155,000	0	0

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26				2026/27			2027/28	2028/29
		Actual Costs Q2	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Approved Budget	Q2 Working Budget	Variance Q2 v Approved	Q2 Working Budget	Q2 Working Budget
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Planning & Regulatory									
KC244	Community Climate Change Fund	3,889	109,375	109,375	0	97,500	97,500	0	0	0
KC916	Street Scene UKSPF	6,368	68,645	68,645	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC917	St Georges MSCP - conversion of store room and boiler room to office space - Argyle way ramp	12,700	37,171	37,171	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE504	Station Ramp	495								
KE119	Phase 4 ENPR - Forum (Off Street Car Parks)	70,538	70,000	70,000	0					
KE120	Park Place Remedials	818	54,644	54,644	0		0	0		
KE201	Hard standings	279	16,444	16,444	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE217	Parking Restrictions	7,663	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
KE531	Workplace Travel Plan	12,617	8,563	8,563	0	0	0	0	0	0
KC918	MSCP Lift Reinstatement	4,849	200,000	200,000	0	0	0	0		
KC919	Car Parks Resurfacing	4,475	140,000	140,000	0	0	0	0		
KC920	Car Parks - Lighting Phased Replacement (2 years)	4,800	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0		
KC918	MSCP Painting (westgate and st george's)	0	40,000	40,000	0	0	0	0		
KC918	MSCP Fire Alarm Upgrade (st george's)	0	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	0		
	Total Planning & Regulatory	129,491	819,842	819,842	0	97,500	97,500	0	0	0
PR911	Deferred Works Reserve	0	196,732	74,073	(122,659)		0	0	0	0

HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals costs Q2	Q1 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Variance Q2 v Q1	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	SUMMARY							
	Capital Programme Excl New Build (Housing Investment)	4,921,357	22,665,090	22,665,090		19,993,134	21,519,212	21,543,326
	New Build (Housing Development)	3,043,598	19,966,097	16,405,476	(3,560,621)	49,657,813	18,770,580	8,400,000
	Digital & Transformation	32,634	316,037	316,037		199,000	740,000	764,000
	TOTAL HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME	7,997,588	42,947,224	39,386,603	(3,560,621)	69,849,947	41,029,792	30,707,326
	HRA USE OF RESOURCES							
BH930	MRR (Self Financing Depreciation)		13,126,041	13,138,170	12,129	13,532,319	13,938,289	14,356,438
BH902	Other Capital Receipts		-	-		500,000	-	-
BH906	Section 20 Contribution (leaseholders income)		2,957,878	2,957,878		3,261,738	1,173,177	805,409
BH901	(RTB) new Build provision		2,146,542	3,153,844	1,007,302	16,455,234	3,982,876	4,114,542
BH903	RTB - Debt Provision Receipts		1,464,120	1,661,487	197,367	1,050,506	1,076,769	1,103,688
	Borrowing Prudential		14,335,365	11,196,331	(3,139,034)	30,459,784	12,280,024	9,327,249
	Direct Revenue Financing (was RCCO)		1,356,523	-	(1,356,523)	3,390,366	4,438,658	-
BH905	Grant		7,560,755	7,278,893	(281,862)	1,200,000	4,140,000	1,000,000
	TOTAL HRA RESOURCES FOR CAPITAL		42,947,224	39,386,603	(3,560,621)	69,849,947	41,029,793	30,707,326
	Major Repair Reserve Bought Forward (BH930)					(899,272)	(899,272)	(899,272)
	Depreciation (increasing MRR)		(13,138,174)	(14,037,442)	(899,268)	(13,532,319)	(13,938,289)	(14,356,438)
	MRR Used (decreasing MRR)		13,126,041	13,138,170	12,129	13,532,319	13,938,289	14,356,438
	Major Repair Reserve Carried Forward		(12,133)	(899,272)	(887,139)	(899,272)	(899,272)	(899,272)
BH901	Total RTB Receipts Bought Forward		(6,974,610)	(6,974,610)		(20,159,279)	(7,558,466)	(7,558,465)
	Total RTB Receipts Received		(5,857,975)	(16,338,513)	(10,480,538)	(3,854,421)	(3,982,876)	(4,114,542)
	Total RTB Receipts Used HRA		3,610,662	3,153,844	(456,818)	16,455,234	3,982,876	4,114,542
	Total RTB Receipts Carried Forward		(9,221,923)	(20,159,279)	(10,937,356)	(7,558,466)	(7,558,465)	(7,558,465)

HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals costs Q2	Q1 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Variance Q2 v Q1	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD</u>							
	<u>Planned Investment including Decent Homes</u>							
Various	Decent Homes - Internal/External Works	1,170,265	8,430,690	8,430,690		10,685,510	11,826,610	12,814,090
KH299	Insulation Measures		51,720	51,720		58,260	58,260	63,120
Various	Decent Homes - Flat Blocks	2,099,056	6,806,700	6,806,700		288,780	291,300	315,620
KH205	Communal Heating	(2,220)	59,440	59,440		115,510	116,520	126,250
KH321	High Rises - Improvement Works	233,776	3,310,270	3,310,270				
KH332	New Schemes to be created					2,021,490	2,039,070	2,209,330
	<u>Health & Safety</u>							
KH085	Fire Safety	226,251						
KH112	Asbestos Management	133,264	250,000	250,000		346,540	349,550	378,740
KH114	Subsidence	71,026	124,130	124,130		138,620	139,820	151,500
KH144	Contingent Major Repairs	210,852	577,550	577,550		577,570	582,590	631,240
KH327	Building safety		870,000	870,000		1,155,140	1,165,180	599,670
	<u>Estate & Communal Area</u>							
KH223	Asset Review - Challenging Assets	70,123	464,400	464,400		479,261	494,597	510,424
KH224	ASSET REVIEW NON RED SHELTER	1,243						
Various	<u>Other HRA Schemes</u>	707,721						
	TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME EXCL. NEW BUILD	4,921,357	22,665,090	22,665,090		19,993,134	21,519,212	21,543,326

HOUSING CAPITAL STRATEGY

Cost Centre	Scheme	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2025/26	2026/27	2027/2028	2028/2029
		Actuals costs Q2	Q1 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Variance Q2 v Q1	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy	Q2 Capital Strategy
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	<u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD</u>							
	New Build Programme - eligible for 1-4-1	1,770,828	12,769,538	9,208,917	(3,560,621)	27,212,813	12,783,580	8,400,000
	New Build Programme - ineligible	1,272,769	7,196,559	7,196,559		22,445,000	5,987,000	
KH233	Open Market Acquisitions (Social Rent) grant funded	587,850					891,790	
KH244	Twin Foxes							
KH245	March Hare in Burwell Road (15 Units)	454,096	1,732,959	1,732,959		750,000	(1,800,000)	
KH247	Kenilworth Close (105 units) (Ineligible 141)	(93,860)	171,497	171,497				
	Kenilworth Close 1 for 1 Expenditure (61.8%)							
KH303	Dunn Close (27 units, 21 main block SA)	112,548	456,177	456,177				
KH280	Symonds Green	(29,610)						
KH382	North Road		120	120				
KH333	Brent Court Social Rent	1,366,630	7,052,893	7,052,893		22,445,000	5,987,000	
	Schemes Under Development	645,943	10,552,451	6,991,830	(3,560,621)	26,462,813	12,800,000	8,400,000
	TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME NEW BUILD	3,043,598	19,966,097	16,405,476	(3,560,621)	49,657,813	18,770,580	8,400,000
	<u>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</u>							
	<u>IT General (IT)</u>							
KH268	Infrastructure Investment	8,694	147,564	147,564		199,000	740,000	764,000
KH336	Core ICT Equipment Equipmt & Tools		20,000	20,000				
	Total General IT	8,694	167,564	167,564		199,000	740,000	764,000
	<u>Connected To Our Customers (CTOC)</u>							
KH288	New CRM Technology (Digital Platform)	23,940	29,803	29,803				
	Total CTOC	23,940	29,803	29,803				
	<u>Housing All Under One Roof programme (HAUOR)</u>							
KH283	Housing Improvements - Northgate online		118,670	118,670				
	Total HAUOR		118,670	118,670				
	TOTAL ICT INCLUDING DIGITAL AGENDA	32,634	316,037	316,037		199,000	740,000	764,000

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Appendix C (November 2025 Update)

Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement 2025/26

From 2013/14, the council has not had a fully funded capital programme, and although there has not been a need to borrow in full externally, due to the use of investment balances, it is necessary to make adequate provision for the repayment of debt in the form of Minimum Revenue Provision.

The **preferred method for existing underlying borrowing is Option 3 – the Asset Life Method** (out of 4 allowable options – the council can use a mixture of options), whereby the MRP will be spread over the useful life of the asset which range. Useful life is dependent on the type of asset and was reviewed in 2019/20. Following that review asset lives now ranges from 7 years (ICT equipment) to 50 years (Investment properties, regeneration sites and car parks for example).

In applying the new asset lives historic MRP had been overpaid and in accordance with current MHCLG MRP Guidance can be reclaimed in future years. The council has a policy to ring fence costs and income associated with regeneration assets and as such has shown these MRP changes separately, see table below. The overpayment of £1,057,660.39 results in no MRP needing to be charged to the accounts for the regeneration assets until 2025/26, when a partial charge will be required, utilising the remainder of the overpayment balance.

voluntary MRP made		Use of overpayment	
	Regeneration		Regeneration
2012/13	£46,929.65	2020/21	£193,703.12
2013/14	£140,788.95	2021/22	£193,703.12
2014/15	£163,165.30	2022/23	£193,703.12
2015/16	£141,355.30	2023/24	£193,703.12
2016/17	£141,355.30	2024/25	£193,703.12
2017/18	£141,355.30	2025/26	£89,144.79
2018/19	£141,355.30		
2019/20	£141,355.30		
cumulative total	£1,057,660.39	cumulative total	£1,057,660.39

Capital expenditure financed by borrowing in 2024/25 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2025/26, or in the financial year following the one which the asset first becomes available for use.

The Council will apply the asset life method for any expenditure capitalised under a Capitalisation Direction.

Leases - the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standard 16 has introduced a single lessee accounting model and requires a lessee to recognise assets and liabilities for all leases with a term of more than 12 months unless the underlying asset is low value.

Regarding MRP in respect of assets acquired either under leases where a right-of-use asset is on the balance sheet or where on-balance sheet PFI contracts are in place, the prudent charge to revenue is measured as being equal to the element of the rent/charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

Investment property - MRP is chargeable in respect of investment properties where acquisition results in an increase to the CFR.

Capital Loans

Where the Council has issued capital loans that are categorised as **non-commercial**, and have not been subject to a recognised credit loss in the current or any previous financial year, the provision of MRP will not apply on the following basis:

- (a) the loan is treated as capital expenditure in accordance with regulation 25(1)(b),
- (b) the loan is not a commercial loan, and
- (c) the local council has not recognised, in accordance with proper practices(c), any expected or actual credit loss in respect of that loan.

For capital loans which are classed as **commercial** then the Authority will provide MRP over a maximum of the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

A commercial loan is defined in regulation 27(5) as a loan from the council to another entity for a purpose which, if the council were to undertake itself, would be primarily for financial return; or, where the loan is itself, capital expenditure undertaken primarily for financial return.

Capital receipts received from the non-commercial and commercial loan repayments in the financial year will be used to reduce the debt liability i.e. the capital receipts will be used in lieu of MRP to reduce the CFR.

For capital loans to third parties granted before 7 May 2024 - Where those loans have been subject to an actual or expected credit loss in the current or any previous financial year then MRP will be provided over the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

For capital loans to third parties granted on or after 7 May 2024 - Where those loans are subject to an expected or actual credit loss, then the MRP charge will be at least the amount of the recognised credit loss for the financial year, after adjusting for any previous MRP or capital receipts applied to the loan.

The Council has determined that MRP is not required for borrowing or credit arrangements used to finance capital expenditure on housing assets and accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as it has determined, through its duty to charge depreciation and hold a Major Repairs Reserve, that prudent provision has been made.

Capital Receipts - for capital expenditure on loans to third parties where the principal element of the loan has been repaid in annual instalments, the capital receipts arising from the principal loan repayments will be used to reduce the CFR instead of MRP.

Where no principal repayment is made in a given year, MRP will be charged using the Asset Life Method.

Share Capital - where an Council incurs expenditure that is capitalised on or after April 2008, which is financed by borrowing for the acquisition of share capital, Regulation 25(1)(d) Acquisition of share capital sets out the maximum period for an council to provide MRP of 20 years.



**AUDIT COMMITTEE/ CABINET
/ COUNCIL**

Portfolio Area: Resources and Performance

Date: 4 November 2025 /
12 November 2025 /
17 December 2025



MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

NON-KEY DECISION

Author – Rhona Bellis
Lead Officer – Atif Iqbal
Contact Officer – Atif Iqbal

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on the Treasury Management activities in 2025/26 and review effectiveness of the 2025/26 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy including the 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Audit Committee

That subject to any comments by the Audit Committee to the Cabinet, the 2025/26 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review, revised Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Prudential indicators reports is recommended to Council for approval.

2.2 Cabinet

That subject to any comments made by the Cabinet, in addition to those made by the Audit Committee, the 2025/26 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review, revised Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Prudential indicators report is recommended to Council for approval.

2.3 Council

That subject to any comments from the Audit Committee and the Cabinet, 2025/26 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review, revised Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Prudential indicators report be approved by Council.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1.1 The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low-risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

3.1.2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans, (subject to affordability). These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

“The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

3.1.3 This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021). The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

- Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
- Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
- Receipt by the full Council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report, (stewardship report), covering activities during the previous year.

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- Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
- Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council, the delegated body is Audit committee.

3.1.4 In December 2021, CIPFA revised the Code to require, all local authorities to report on:

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services.
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed.
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

These elements are covered in the annual Capital Strategy reported to Council in February each year.

3.1.5 CIPFA is currently consulting local authorities in respect of potential changes to the Codes. At this stage, the focus seems to be primarily on the non-treasury investment aspects of local authority activity. Officers will provide an update on any material developments/changes in due course.

3.1.6 This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2025/26 financial year.
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy.
- The Council's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators.
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2025/26.
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2025/26.
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2025/26.

3.2 Economics and interest rates

3.2.1 Economics update.

3.2.2 The first half of 2025/26 saw:

- A 0.3% pick up in GDP for the period April to June 2025. More recently, the economy flatlined in July.
- CPI inflation has ebbed and flowed but finished September at 3.8%, whilst core inflation eased to 3.6%.
- The Bank of England cut interest rates from 4.50% to 4.25% in May, and then to 4% in August.
- The 10-year gilt yield fluctuated between 4.4% and 4.8%, ending the half year at 4.70%.

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3.2.3 Looking ahead on the economy, ongoing speculation about further tax rises in the Autumn Budget on 26 November will remain a drag on GDP growth for a while yet. GDP growth for 2025 is forecast by Capital Economics to be 1.3%.

3.2.4 Yields on Gilts directly impact the councils cost to borrow from PWLB.

- The yield on the 10-year gilt rose from 4.46% to 4.60% in early July. In an era of high debt, high interest rates and low GDP growth, the markets are now more sensitive to fiscal risks than before the pandemic. During August, long-dated gilts underwent a particularly pronounced sell-off, climbing 22 basis points and reaching a 27-year high of 5.6% by the end of the month. While yields have since eased back, the market sell-off was driven by investor concerns over growing supply-demand imbalances, stemming from unease over the lack of fiscal consolidation and reduced demand from traditional long-dated bond purchasers like pension funds. For 10-year gilts, by late September, sticky inflation, resilient activity data and a hawkish Bank of England have kept yields elevated over 4.70%.

3.2.5 As the council invests excess cash mainly with banks, the impact of changes in the BOE base rate directly impacts the interest earned on those investments over time.

- In August, a further rate cut was implemented by the BOE. However, a 5-4 split vote for a rate cut to 4% laid bare the different views within the Monetary Policy Committee, with the accompanying commentary noting the decision was “finely balanced” and reiterating that future rate cuts would be undertaken “gradually and carefully”. Ultimately, Governor Bailey was the casting vote for a rate cut but with the CPI measure of inflation expected to reach at least 4% later this year, the MPC will be wary of making any further rate cuts until inflation begins its slow downwards trajectory back towards 2%. The Bank of England does not anticipate CPI getting to 2% until early 2027.

3.2.6 Interest Rate Forecasts

3.2.7 The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate* (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

3.2.8 The latest forecast (MUFG 10 October) sets out a view that short, medium, and long-dated interest rates will reduce gradually over the next year or two, as the Bank of England continues to prioritise controlling inflation.

Chart 1

Interest Rate Forecasts								
Bank Rate	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27
MUFG CM	4.00%	3.75%	3.75%	3.50%	3.50%	3.50%	3.50%	3.25%
Cap Econ	4.00%	3.75%	3.50%	3.25%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
5Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	4.70%	4.50%	4.40%	4.30%	4.30%	4.30%	4.20%	4.20%
Cap Econ	5.00%	4.80%	4.70%	4.60%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.60%
10Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.20%	5.00%	4.90%	4.80%	4.80%	4.80%	4.70%	4.70%
Cap Econ	5.60%	5.40%	5.30%	5.20%	5.10%	5.10%	5.20%	5.30%
25Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.90%	5.70%	5.70%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.40%	5.40%
Cap Econ	6.20%	6.00%	5.90%	5.70%	5.50%	5.60%	5.60%	5.70%
50Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.60%	5.40%	5.40%	5.30%	5.30%	5.30%	5.20%	5.20%
Cap Econ	5.80%	5.60%	5.50%	5.30%	5.20%	5.20%	5.30%	5.40%

* Certainty Rate reduction HRA – 0.6% is not included above

4 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

4.1.1 The Treasury Management Strategy was approved by Council on 26 February 2025.

4.1.2 In line with the changes to the MRP regulations and Guidance, Members are asked to authorise the revision to the Council’s MRP policy for 2025/26 as it relates to capital loans, as follows -

Capital Loans

Where the Council has issued capital loans that are categorised as **non-commercial**, and have not been subject to a recognised credit loss in the current or any previous financial year, the provision of MRP will not apply on the following basis:

- (a) the loan is treated as capital expenditure in accordance with regulation 25(1)(b),
- (b) the loan is not a commercial loan, and
- (c) the local council has not recognised, in accordance with proper practices(c), any expected or actual credit loss in respect of that loan.

For capital loans which are classed as **commercial** then the Authority will provide MRP over a maximum of the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

A commercial loan is defined in regulation 27(5) as a loan from the council to another entity for a purpose which, if the council were to undertake itself, would be primarily for financial return; or, where the loan is itself, capital expenditure undertaken primarily for financial return.

Capital receipts received from the non-commercial and commercial loan repayments in the financial year will be used to reduce the debt liability i.e. the capital receipts will be used in lieu of MRP to reduce the CFR.

For capital loans to third parties granted before 7 May 2024 - Where those loans have been subject to an actual or expected credit loss in the current or any previous financial year then MRP will be provided over the useful life of the assets purchased by the third party.

For capital loans to third parties granted on or after 7 May 2024 - Where those loans are subject to an expected or actual credit loss, then the MRP charge will be at least

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the amount of the recognised credit loss for the financial year, after adjusting for any previous MRP or capital receipts applied to the loan”.

4.1.3 There are no other policy changes to the TMSS; the remaining details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

4.2 The Council’s Capital Position (Prudential Indicators).

4.2.1 This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council’s capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed.
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

4.2.2 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure and changes to Financing of the Capital Programme.

4.2.3 The table below shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and financing and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision). This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Table 1 Capital Expenditure and Financing			
	Original Capital Strategy (Council February 2025)	Revised Capital Strategy Q2	Movement¹
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Expenditure:			
General Fund Capital Expenditure	51,821	41,433	(10,388)
HRA Capital Expenditure	51,399	39,387	(12,012)
Total Capital Expenditure	103,220	80,820	(22,400)
Financed by:			
Capital Receipts	(16,648)	(13,042)	3,607
Capital Grants /Contributions	(39,464)	(32,022)	7,442
Capital Reserves	(569)	(454)	115
Revenue contributions & Reserves	(617)	(1,011)	(394)

¹ This movement differs from that reported in the quarterly Capital Monitoring reports as that report uses the latest budget rather than the original as a comparator.

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Table 1 Capital Expenditure and Financing			
	Original Capital Strategy (Council February 2025)	Revised Capital Strategy Q2	Movement¹
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Major Repairs Reserve	(13,138)	(13,138)	0
Total Financing	(70,436)	(59,666)	10,770
Borrowing requirement	32,784	21,154	11,630

4.2.4 The General Fund net reduction of £10.3Million includes:

- Re-phasing of £8.8Million of 2024/25 budgets into 2025/26 across all services.
- Re-phasing of £ (17.5) Million capital budgets in from 2025/26 into future years.
- Removal of budgets no longer required and addition of fully grant funded schemes – £ (1.6) Million (net).

Details are included in the quarterly monitoring reports referred to below.

4.2.5 The HRA net reduction of £12Million is due to re-phasing of the Housing Development and investment budgets.

4.3 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational

4.3.1 The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement

We are on target to be within 3.4% of the original forecast CFR.

Prudential Indicator - the Operational Boundary for external debt.

We are on target to be within the original limit for external borrowing.

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Table 2 £000	2025/26 Original Estimate Council February 2025	2025/26 Revised Estimate Mid-Year
Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement		
CFR – non housing	70,561	61,750
CFR – housing	286,179	283,039
Total CFR	356,740	344,789
Net movement in CFR		(11,951)
Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt		
Borrowing	340,805	335,855
Other long-term liabilities	15,935	15,935
Total debt (year-end position)	356,740	351,790
Net movement in OB		(4,950)

4.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

- 4.4.1 The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. **Gross external borrowing** should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2025/26 and next two financial years.
- 4.4.2 A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Table 3 Authorised limits	Operational Boundary £'000	Authorised Limit £'000	Actual External Debt 30/09/2025 £'000
General Fund	66,751	68,750	24,842
HRA	285,039	294,039	275,250
Total Debt	351,790	362,789	300,092
CFR (projected year-end position)			344,789
Gross debt less than CFR			Yes

- 4.4.3 A temporary breach of the operational boundary is permissible for short term cash flow purposes however a breach of the authorised limit would require a report to Council. There have been no breaches of either limit in the period for 2025/26.

4.5 Borrowing

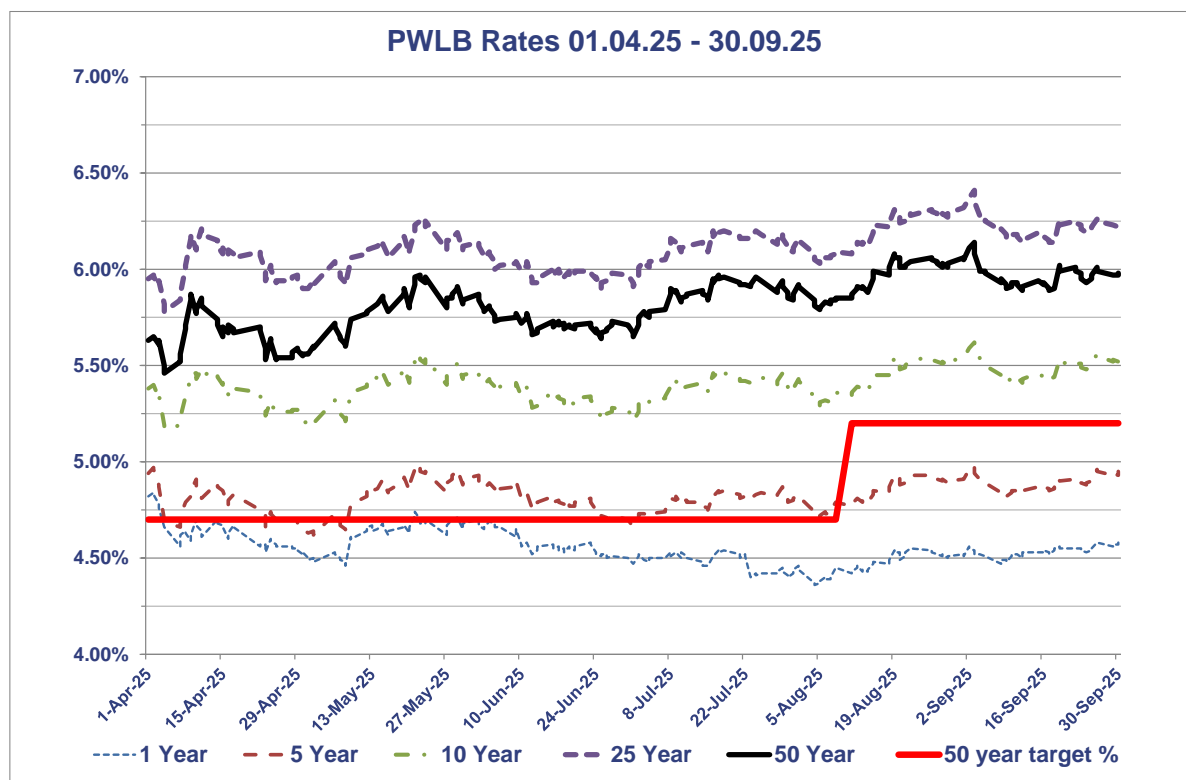
- 4.5.1 The Council's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2025/26 is £345Million. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital

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purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing), or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. Table 3 shows the Council has borrowings of £300Million and is forecast to utilise £45Million of cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing (Forecast CFR less total forecast debt). This is a prudent and cost-effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring in the event that any upside risk to gilt yields prevails.

- 4.5.2 Capital programme is being kept under regular review due to the effects of inflationary pressures, shortages of materials and labour. The Council borrowing strategy will, therefore, also be regularly reviewed and then revised, if necessary, in order to achieve optimum value and risk exposure in the long-term.
- 4.5.3 No additional external borrowing has been taken out as at 30 September 2025.
- 4.5.4 It is anticipated that borrowing will be undertaken during the financial year in line with financing in table 1 above.
- 4.5.5 Borrowing rates from PWLB are based on Gilt yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields and Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields.
- 4.5.6 Gilt yields and PWLB certainty rates have remained relatively volatile throughout the six months under review, but the general trend has been for medium and longer dated parts of the curve to shift higher whilst the 5-year part of the curve finished September close to where it began in April.
- 4.5.7 At this juncture, MUFG Corporate Markets (Council's Treasury Advisors) still forecasts rates to fall back over the next two to three years as inflation dampens, although there is upside risk to all forecasts at present. The CPI measure of inflation is expected to fall below 2% in early 2027 but hit a peak of 4% or higher later in 2025.
- 4.5.8 The Bank of England announced in September that it would be favouring the short and medium part of the curve for the foreseeable future when issuing gilts. Market reaction to national and international events is likely to be the decisive factor in future gilt market attractiveness to investors and their willingness to buy UK sovereign debt.
- 4.5.9 The Chart below shows the volatility of the PWLB borrowing rates from 2 April 2025 to 30 September 2025.

Chart 2



4.6 Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

4.6.1 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the half year ended 30 September 2025 the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2025/26. The Chief Finance Officer reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

4.6.2 All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

4.7 Annual Investment Strategy

4.7.1 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2025/26, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 26 February 2025. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

4.7.2 The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, but also

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to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit quality financial institutions, using the MUFG Corporate Markets suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

- 4.7.3 There were no breaches to this policy in the year to 30 September 2025 with the investment activity conforming to the approved strategy. The Council had no liquidity difficulties, and no funds have been placed with the Debt Management Office (DMO), demonstrating that counterparty limits and availability for placing funds approved in the TM Strategy were working effectively. It is possible that surplus funds that may be borrowed during 2025/26 will be placed in the DMO temporarily, if PWLB borrowing rates are advantageous and cash balances due to timing of taking out new loans would breach other counterparty limits.

Creditworthiness

- 4.7.4 The UK's sovereign rating has proven robust through the first half of 2024/25. The Government is expected to outline in detail its fiscal proposals in the Budget scheduled for 26 November 2025.

Investment Counterparty criteria

- 4.7.5 The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function. It is noted that sentiment in the current economic climate can easily shift, so it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.
- 4.7.6 Countries included are those where relevant banks are active in Sterling markets.
- 4.7.7 The Specified and Non-Specified Investment Criteria have been reviewed and updated in the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 which was agreed at Full Council in February 2025, and no further amendments are proposed at this stage.

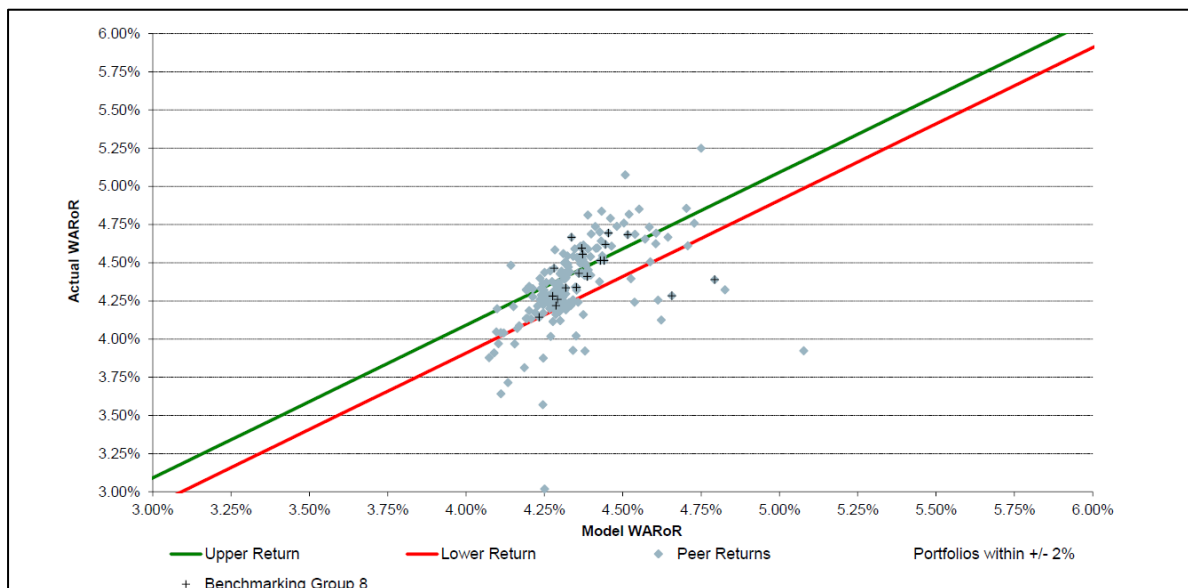
4.8 Investment performance year to date as of 30 September 2025

- 4.8.1 The Council's current investment portfolio consists of "conventional" cash investments: deposits with banks and building societies, Money Market Funds, and loans to other Local Authorities.
- 4.8.2 The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the first half of the financial year was £55Million, earning an average interest rate of 4.59%. Interest earned to 30 September 2025 was £1.265Million. Projected investment balances at 31 March 2026 are currently £35Million and forecast external interest receivable from investments is currently £2.2Million against a working budget of £2Million.
- 4.8.3 The council's treasury advisors (MUFG), provide regular benchmarking analysis of the performance of the council's investments against a group of 20 other local authorities. The September 2025 report shows performance of the

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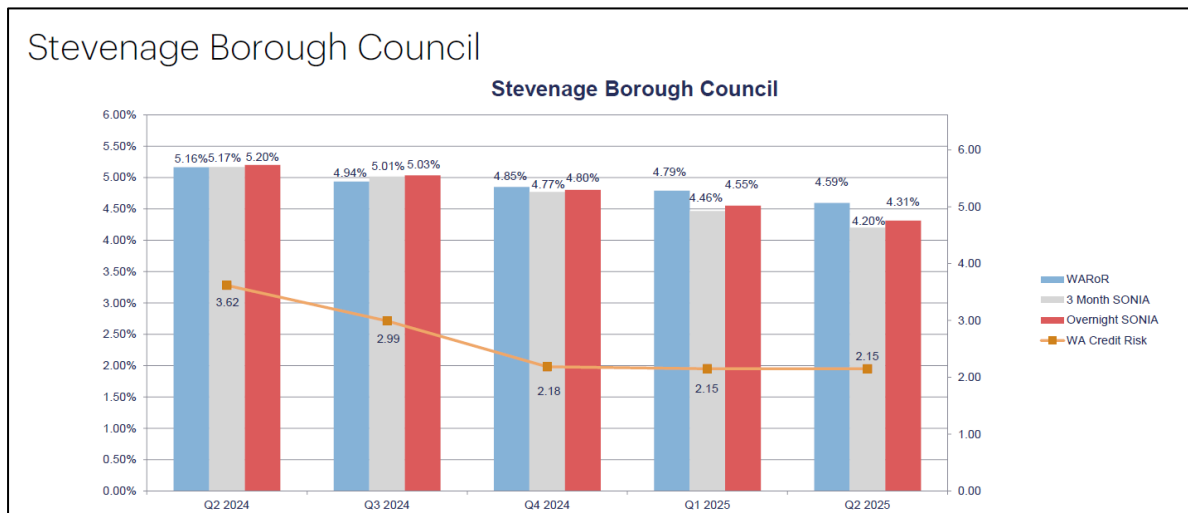
portfolio held at 30 September 2025 being in the upper return range against model returns (4.59% return against a target of 4.28%-4.46%)².

Chart 3 Benchmarking Group 8 September 2025



4.8.4 Performance against Sonia³, shows an improvement over the period from Q2 2024 partly as a result of an old poorly performing investment maturing and being reinvested at higher interest rates.

Chart 4 Performance against Sonia



4.8.5 The Council's balances are made up of cash reserves e.g. HRA and General Fund balances, restricted use receipts e.g. right to buy one for one receipts and balances held for provisions such as business rate appeals and debt repayment.

² WARoR = Weighted average rate of return on investments

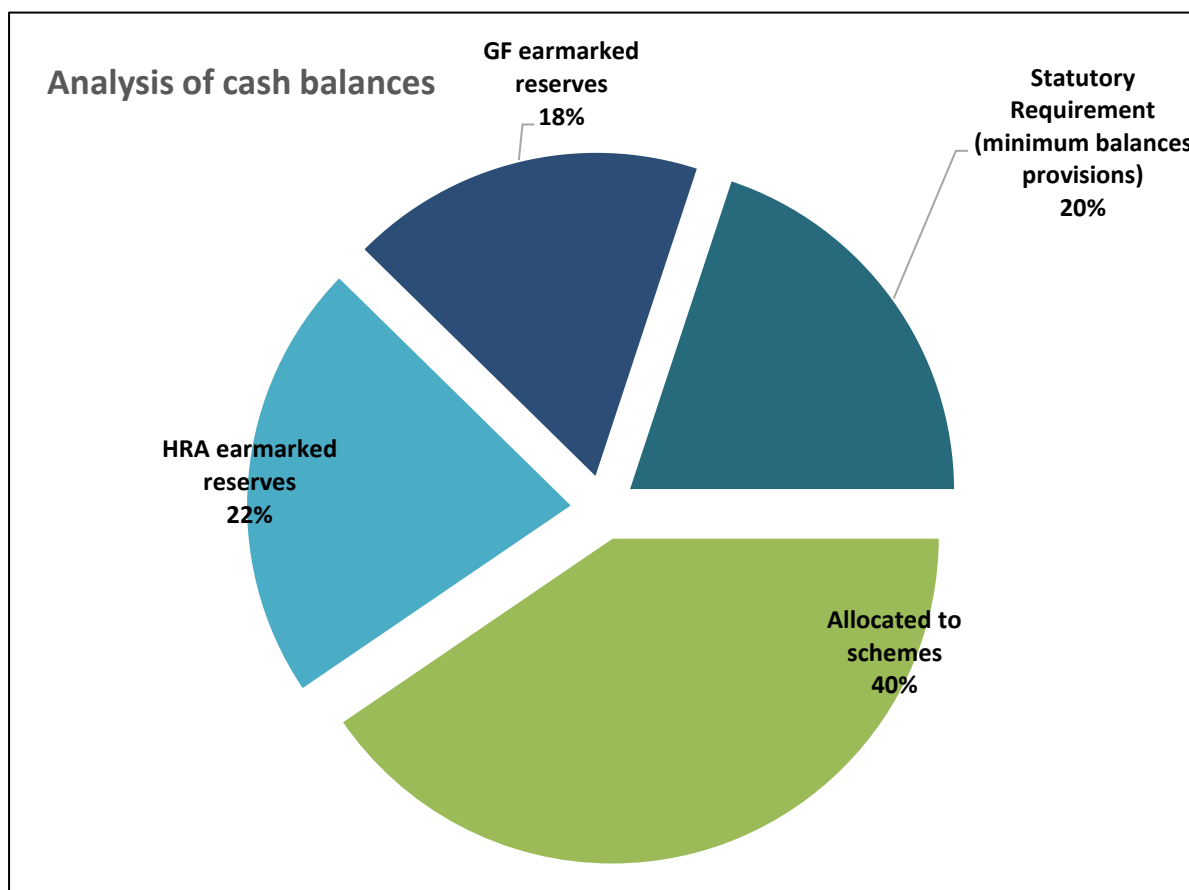
³ Sonia is a benchmarking index administered by the BOE

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4.8.6 In considering the Council’s level of cash balances, Members should note that the General Fund MTFs and Capital Strategy have a planned use of resources over a minimum of five years and the HRA Business Plan (HRA BP) a planned use of resources over a thirty year period, which means, while not committed in the current year; they are required in future years.

4.8.7 The following chart shows the planned use of cash balances held as at 30 September 2025.

Chart 5



4.8.8 The restrictive use of a proportion of the cash balances set out above, plus the planned use of resources in line with the Council’s capital and revenue strategies mean that the investment balance of £57Million as at 30 September 2025 is not available for new expenditure.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is of a financial nature and reviews the treasury management function for 2025/26 to date. Any consequential financial impacts identified in the Capital strategy and Revenue budget monitoring reports have been incorporated into this report.

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5.1.2 During the financial year Officers operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Council's Treasury management practices.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 Approval of the Prudential Code Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy are intended to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legislation and best practice.

5.3 Risk Implications

5.3.1 The current policy of minimising external borrowing only remains financially viable while cash balances are high and the differentials between investment income and borrowing rates remain. As these conditions change the Council may need to take borrowing at higher rates which would increase revenue costs.

5.3.2 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is based on limits for counterparties to reduce risk of investing with only a small number of institutions.

5.3.3 The thresholds and time limits set for investments in the Strategy are based on the relative ratings of investment vehicles and counter parties. These are designed to take into account the relative risk of investments and also to preclude certain grades of investments and counterparties to prevent loss of income to the Council.

5.3.4 There is a risk to the HRA BP's ability to fund the approved thirty-year spending plans if interest rates rise above budgeted rates. Mitigation is included in the revision to the BP since 2023 (2025 revision now underway), including requiring higher levels of reserves to be maintained in the medium term to cover interest rate risks.

5.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.4.1 This report is technical in nature and there are no implications associated with equalities and diversity within this report. In addition to remaining within agreed counterparty rules, the council retains the discretion not to invest in countries that meet the minimum rating but where there are concerns over human rights issues. Counterparty rules will also be overlaid by any other ethical considerations from time to time as appropriate.

5.4.2 The Treasury Management Policy does not have the potential to discriminate against people on grounds of age; disability; gender; ethnicity; sexual orientation; religion/belief; or by way of financial exclusion. As such a detailed Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

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5.5 Climate Change Implications

5.5.1 The council's investment portfolio is made up of short to medium term investments held to fund the council's activities. Ensuring these are secure, appropriately liquid and provide a return, aligns with the Councils ambition to attempt to be carbon neutral by 2030.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- BD1 Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2025/26 (Council 26 February 2025)
- BD2 Quarter 1 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 – General Fund and HRA (Cabinet 17 September 2025)
- BD3 Quarter 2 Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 – General Fund and HRA (Cabinet 12 November 2025)

APPENDICES

- Appendix A Investment Portfolio
- Appendix B Approved Countries for Investments as of 30 September 2025
- Appendix C Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

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Institution	Instrument Type	Start	Maturity	Yield	Principal
Basildon Borough council	Fixed Term Deposit	06-Jan-25	05-Jan-26	5.50%	5,000,000
Lloyds Bank	Fixed Term Deposit	25-Mar-25	23-Dec-25	4.51%	2,000,000
Landesbank	Fixed Term Deposit	07-Apr-25	27-Mar-26	4.25%	3,000,000
Landesbank (Helaba)	Fixed Term Deposit	28-Apr-25	28-Oct-25	4.25%	3,000,000
National Bank of Canada	Fixed Term Deposit	14-Jul-25	14-Oct-25	4.15%	5,000,000
ANZ Bank	Fixed Term Deposit	21-Jul-25	21-Jan-26	4.30%	3,000,000
ANZ Bank (Australia and New Zeland Bank)	Fixed Term Deposit	06-Aug-25	06-Feb-26	4.23%	3,000,000
ANZ Bank	Fixed Term Deposit	13-Aug-25	13-Nov-25	4.20%	1,000,000
Landesbank Hessen Thuringen Girozentrale-Frankfurt	Fixed Term Deposit	14-Aug-25	13-Aug-26	4.12%	2,000,000
Surrey County Council	Fixed Term Deposit	15-Sep-25	05-Jan-26	4.10%	5,000,000
Lancashire County Council	Fixed Term Deposit	24-Sep-25	24-Mar-26	4.50%	5,000,000
					37,000,000
MMF Aberdeen	Money Market Fund				10,000,000
MMF CCLA	Money Market Fund				8,300,000
MMF Morgan Stanley	Money Market Fund				500,000
MMF HSBC	Money Market Fund				1,032,000
					19,832,000
Total					56,832,000

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Approved Countries for Investments

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher, (shown - the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's and S&P) and also, (except - at the time of writing - for Hong Kong and Luxembourg), have banks operating in sterling markets which have credit ratings of green or above in the Link creditworthiness service.

Based on lowest available rating (as at 21.10.25)

AAA

- Australia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

AA+

- Canada
- Finland
- U.S.A.

AA

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- Finland

AA-

- France
- **U.K.**

A+

- Belgium

The UK is exempt from the sovereign rating criteria as recommended by MUFG. The UK sovereign rating is currently AA-.

The above list includes the possible countries the Council may invest with. Not all of these countries are used or will be used in treasury management investments

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Meeting: CABINET

Agenda Item:

Portfolio Area: RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE



Date: 12 November 2025

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27

Authors – Clare Fletcher/Carol Bulloch/Alison Hill
Contributor
Lead /Contact Officers – Clare Fletcher

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the local Stevenage Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2026/27.
- 1.2 To update Members on progress in 2025/26 on revising the current scheme to a banded scheme.
- 1.3 To update Members on the timeline for revising the CTS scheme for implementation in 2027/28, subject to consultation and Member approval.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve retaining the current Council Tax Support scheme for 2026/27.
- 2.2 That Cabinet support the implementation of a Banded CTS scheme for 2027/28.
- 2.3 That a policy Overview and Scrutiny meeting is held in line with the review timetable to continue to consider a revised discount scheme as a result of the ongoing reduction in the number of Housing Benefit caseload due to the transitioning to Universal Credit.
- 2.4 That the Cabinet re-approve the directive contained in the Social Security

Administration Act 1992 to disregard, in full, awards of War Widows, War Disablement and Armed Forces Compensation when determining entitlement for housing benefit and/or council tax support.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Government made provision within the Local Government Finance Bill to replace the former national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from 1 April 2013 with localised schemes for Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTS) devised by individual local authorities (LA's). The schemes are valid for one year and must be approved by Council before the 11 March immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect.
- 3.2 The Government requires that major preceptors (County and Police) are consulted each year, and if there is any change to the scheme a full consultation open to all taxpayers in the district is required. There is no specific timescale prescribed but the period must allow for meaningful consultation.
- 3.3 Additionally, consideration must be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed. The financial impact of any decision on Council Tax Support also needs to be included when setting the budget and Council tax levels.
- 3.4 Since the introduction of CTS in April 2013 a number of changes to the scheme have been explored, but the scheme has remained unchanged. The history of the Council Tax support scheme is detailed in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The cost of the CTS scheme is included in the council tax base, in the same way as other discounts which reduces the collectable debit and reduces the amount collectable.
- 3.6 Since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), Councils have reviewed their respective schemes to consider a banded council tax support scheme to take account of the impact of UC monthly re-assessments which can change a claimants level of support in a way housing benefit doesn't.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Current Scheme

The CTS scheme for 2025/26 can be summarised as follows:

- That the CTS scheme for all working age claimants will be based on 91.5% of their Council tax liability.

- Elderly CTS claimants are protected in law from any restriction to the liability used in CTS calculations. Their awards will always be based on 100% of the council tax charge.
- All local discretions currently in place continue e.g. war pension disregards.
- Other aspects of the Council Tax Support scheme mirror the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme.

4.2 The current CTS scheme aims to protect the most vulnerable customers by the use of applicable amounts and income disregards. However, the challenges and opportunities introduced by Universal Credit (UC) prompt a review of the structure of the scheme (which other Hertfordshire Districts have explored) as set out in section 4.3.

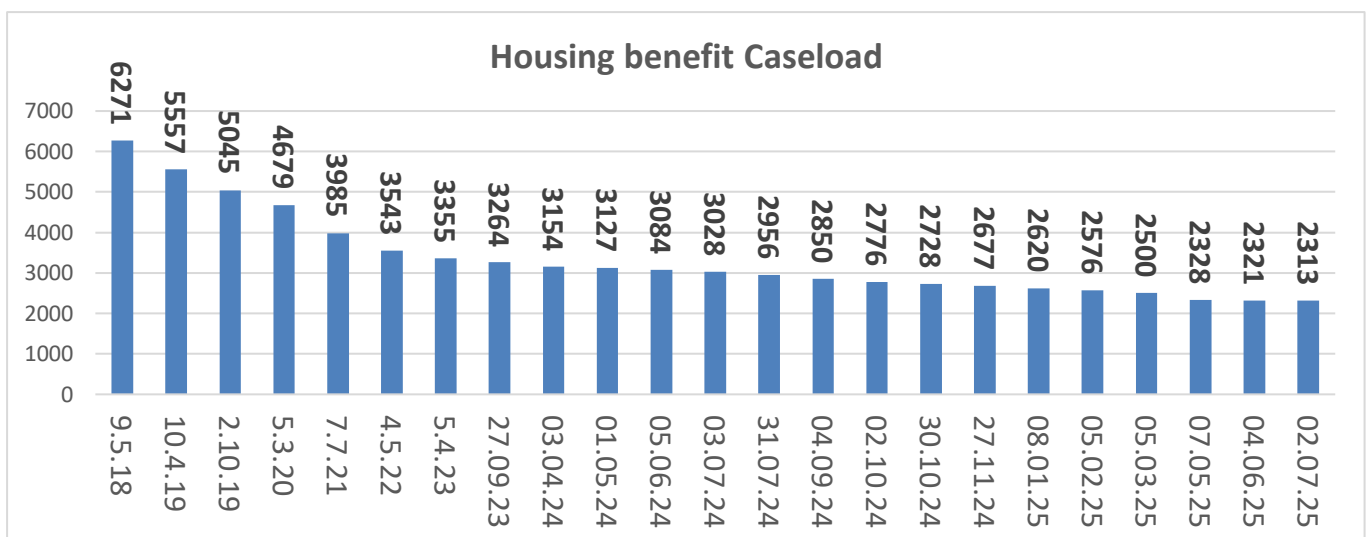
4.3 The impact, challenges, and opportunities of Universal Credit (UC)

4.3.1 Universal credit full service roll out started in October 2018 and has taken considerable time to move from housing benefit to UC. However, there are certain groups of HB claimant that will not, in the foreseeable future migrate to UC, as they are deemed too complex by the government.

4.3.2 The cases that have migrated are HB recipients who were

- receiving Tax Credits or other legacy benefits such as ESA.
- income from employment.
- New applications

The chart below shows that in 2018 the caseload was 6,271, but by July 2025 the case load has reduced to 2,313 a reduction of 63%.



4.3.3 Ultimately the Council will be left with the HB cases for supported and temporary accommodation for working age people, which are steadily increasing which are more complex cases, in addition to those of a pensionable age receiving housing benefit.

- 4.3.4 Customers claiming UC who apply for CTS do not require the Council to carry out means testing on their circumstances. They need only provide their UC entitlement letters, (details of which can be confirmed through LA's access to the DWP systems). These claims are already means tested and have differential applicable amounts applied by the DWP and the only income element that is needed for an award of CTS is earnings. Consideration has to be taken of any deductions being made for overpayments or recovery of advances, but essentially this means that if most claimants are already assessed there is an opportunity for a simplified assessment and processing system that could be incorporated into a new discount/banded scheme.
- 4.3.5 The reduction in new claims for HB might seem to reduce the shared service workload, however as the current CTS scheme for pensioners and non-UC claimants requires the same preparation and processing to award a CTS claim as a HB one, no substantial savings have been realised with only a small number of posts removed over the last few years. Currently claims or changes in circumstances are prepared and input and both awards (HB & CTS) are processed simultaneously. Claims not requiring an HB assessment simply produce one output (CTS award) rather than two.
- 4.3.6 The Council has taken steps to simplify the claims process wherever possible for CTS claims as residents are often confused about their possible entitlement to CTS and the process of claiming CTS. Often the Council only gets to engage with customers when their Council tax account is in arrears, and additional recovery action has to be taken. The Council is using all levers available to engage with residents quicker. The service continues to promote the scheme through various media to ensure that those entitled take up the support.
- 4.3.7 The challenge with those on Universal Credit is that it is reassessed monthly, (unlike HB), and those customers who are working (nationally this is estimated at more than 40%) are likely to experience more variations in their UC entitlement each month. This is attributed to salary and wages frequencies affecting the 'monthly' assessments. Each time there is a change in the UC award, their entitlement to CTS has to be reassessed. Every time the CTS is reassessed, it produces a new Council Tax Bill. These constant changes in bills and amounts due are not only confusing to the customer trying to budget, but it also resets any recovery action being taken for non-payment on the previous assessment and making collection of arrears very difficult.
- 4.3.8 A Banded Scheme could mean for many that income changes within a range or band would not result in a change in entitlement, within the scope of the set range. This would then mean that fewer recalculations would be necessary for recipients of CTS giving more certainty for the claimant about the amount they would have to pay, reducing the incidences where re-billing would be necessary. This will ensure that instalment plans applicable to accounts would not need to be changed as often which would assist in the recovery of the charge.
- 4.3.9 The benefits of a Banded Scheme are, in summary:

- Improving customer experience, by reducing the number of bills / changes for customers, who would be able to ‘move within a band’ without the need to reissue their bill. This allows greater flexibility and change of circumstances without impacting the payment someone / household needs to make, as we know some household incomes varies frequently.
 - Allowing changes to claimant’s income without necessarily increasing the amount of council tax they need to pay within a set banding giving certainty to the bill payer.
 - Improving collection rates, by reducing the number of separate bills people receive. With a less billing there is greater focus on collection and targeting/supporting those who potentially could be eligible for council tax support and evidence from other Councils that arrears are reduced.
 - Reducing the ‘back office’ administration and processing of paper / digital bills, the resident changes still need to be processed by staff but without the additional work to bill and ensure payment
- 4.3.9 The Council will undertake a communication campaign to ensure that there is good awareness of any new potential scheme and the public consultation prior to its approval, showing the potential impacts for residents, for example showing how people in different circumstances may be impacted.

4.4 The Review of a Banded Scheme

- 4.4.1 In 2024/25 the Council approved exploring the options around a banded scheme and how this would work. During 2025, analysis and modelling has been undertaken to assess the options and designing the potential banded scheme and looking at when to consult residents with the proposed the change, aligning the timing with East Herts Council to provide the best opportunity for both Council’s residents.
- 4.4.2 A significant amount of analysis was required to determine the impact of the scheme on claimants and also different types of people claiming. External consultants were engaged to support the process throughout the summer, but combinations of different scheme parameters continued to identify a number of swings in gainers and losers in addition to cost variations. Further work was sought from the Shared Services software provider on variations to the scheme and looking at the data below it is clear that varying scheme parameters can have a significant impact on how many losers and gainers. Model one below mirrored the current maximum liability and benefit rules.

	Scheme Attributes	Losers	gainers	Estimated Cost	Increase v current	SBC share
	Current Scheme not banded (as at 1 September)			£6,717,847		
Model 1	91.5% Banded-(no non-dep deduction. Capital Limit of £16k with no tariff income, only Personal and child element of UC counted, One £50 premium/disregard if either the claimant or partner are disabled, £20 earnings disregard)	90	461	£6,756,299	£38,452	£4,153

	Scheme Attributes	Losers	gainers	Estimated Cost	Increase v current	SBC share
Model 2	as above with 100% scheme	79	2,903	£7,109,409	£391,562	£42,294
Model 3	North Herts Scheme- (100% banded, £50 premium for each Household member, £50.00 earnings disregard, Capital Limit of £16K with no tariff income, no non-dep deductions, only the Housing Costs element of UC not counted).	1,744	1,238	£5,977,793	(£740,054)	(£79,936)

4.4.3 Looking at more detail at model one, the table below summarises the output from the 91.5% CTS banded scheme on working age claimants.

Working age claimants	Number	Cost £'000	£10-£25	£25-£50	£50-£100	£100-£250	£250-£500	£500-£750	£750-£1000
Passported claims	388	£525.96	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
Single	1,287	£1,599.96	3	3	3	6	31	13	0
Couple	139	£225.91	0	0	0	1	1	6	0
Single, 1 Child	371	£524.64	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Couple, 1 Child	76	£134.09	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Single, 2+ Child	568	£802.18	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Couple, 2+ Child	157	£284.43	0	0	0	0	3	0	1
Total	2,986	£4,097.17	3	3	5	9	38	19	1

Working age claimants	Number	Cost £'000	£1000-£1500	£1500-£2000	£2000-£2500	Total Losers	Losers >£250
Passported claims	388	£583.67	4	3	0	10	7
Single	1,287	£1,703.97	2	0	0	61	46
Couple	139	£242.50	1	1	0	10	9
Single, 1 Child	371	£556.66	0	0	0	0	0
Couple, 1 Child	76	£130.37	0	0	0	1	1
Single, 2+ Child	568	£830.31	0	0	1	4	3
Couple, 2+ Child	157	£239.95	0	0	0	4	4
Total	2,986	£4,287.43	7	4	1	90	70

4.4.4 There were 90 claimants that would loss benefit compared to their current entitlement with 70 claimants losing more than £250 per annum versus the data held regarding their existing CTS award. However, the majority of those were cases where full CTS would be paid once their UC records had been updated. Unfortunately, there were some awards where there has been a change notice from UC (for example, a migration notice from ESA to UC) and the CTS is suspended while the revised UC notice is received and uploaded, causing a perverse result. When the data is refreshed for the new

scheme variances will be similarly investigated to determine whether the loss is real or as a result of UC notice.

- 4.4.5 Some of those losing in the £250 to £750 bracket were similar to cases above. Plus, claimants on UC often with an earned income component that is treated with the different disregards and premiums on the new scheme causing a loss to CTS, though this could easily be changed if the income level altered. Lastly there were some instances where claimants who were responsible for a child who was approaching the age where it looked like the child element of UC may stop.
- 4.4.6 The information will need to be refreshed for the 2027/28 scheme (if approved) because the case load will change, (in line with the timetable set out in this report). The aim of the banded scheme is not to disadvantage claimants and the impact will be reviewed in the next reiteration of the scheme.
- 4.4.7 While the intention was to introduce a banded scheme for 2026/27 the process has taken longer than anticipated, the revised timeline for this is included below, (using the learning on scheme modelling from 2025/26).
- 4.4.8 The Shared Service are currently scoping out the work to potentially propose a different scheme for 2027/28 based on banding to mitigate the issues outlined above. This requires significant analysis to determine the implications for the current caseload to ensure there are no unintended consequences implement a scheme, but also that the scheme is affordable.
- 4.4.9 The high level timetable for consideration is set out below: -

Milestones	Timeline *
Stage 1: Modelling	
Initial Modelling completed - modelling of scheme changes complete (Overall cost, winners and losers, EQIA evidence)	Summer 2025
26-27 Modelling Update and Testing – test the model with latest 2026 data and review changes impacts	March - April 2026
Stage 2: Decision to Consult	
SBC Cabinet Decision – to consult on the move to a banded scheme	July 2026
Stage 3: Consultation	
Consultation – public consultation and review of feedback / remodelled	August - September 2026
Stage 4: Decision to Implement	
Overview & Scrutiny (sitting as a Policy Committee)	September / October 2026
SBC Cabinet (& EHC Executive) Decision / Overview & Scrutiny – final decision on introduction of banded scheme	October 2026
Council Approval / Tax Base Setting	January 2027

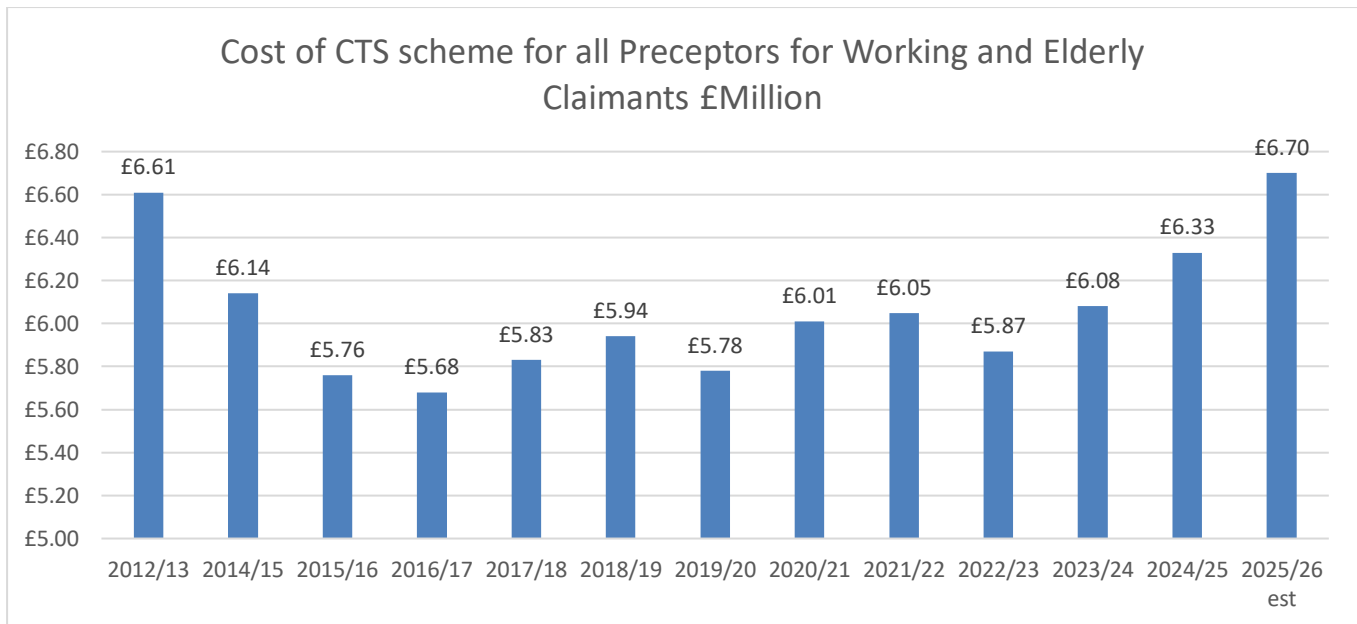
Stage 5: Implementation	
Implementation	January – March 2027
Scheme Introduction	From 1 April 2027
*all dates are approximate and dependent on the Civic calendar	

4.4.10 Moving to a banded scheme incurs additional costs. In 2025/26 the Council asked other preceptors to pay a proportion of the total cost pro-rata to their share of council tax, however the banded scheme has not progressed sufficiently for 2026/27. The original budget agreed in the General Fund for 2025/26 was £33K as set out below. Officers are currently assessing the additional cost if any required for 2026/27 to complete the work required for a banded scheme and this will be included in the 2026/27 budget if the approach is approved by Members. The final decision to proceed could be taken in the context of when the outcome of LGR unitary option and timetable is known.

Cost Type	£
Consultancy & Report	£8,500
Software Modelling	£2,500
Advertising	£750
Postage and mailing costs	£5,000
Analysis of results	£15,000
contingency	£1,500
Total	£33,250

4.5 Cost Of the CTS Scheme

4.5.1 The cost of the CTS scheme has fluctuated as the caseload has reduced since inception in 2013/14, however, although the caseload has been reducing in recent years the level of council tax increases has been higher due the increases for adult social care and the Police and Crime Commissioner, (PCC), Stevenage Borough Council pays circa 11% of the total cost.



4.6 Other Hertfordshire Schemes

4.6.1 The table below summarises other Hertfordshire CTS schemes.

	Banded Scheme	Current scheme for maximum entitlement
Broxbourne	Y	75% Liability, only up to Band E restriction
Dacorum	Y	75% plus restrict to band D so it can be 75% of band D
Hertsmere	Both	80% plus restrict to band D so it can be 80% of band D
North Herts	Y	100% if income is below maximum bands. Bands are 100%, 75%, 45%, 25% and 0% Limited disregards and only up 3 children in the assessment formula
St Albans	Both	100%
East Herts	N	91.5% - same scheme as Stevenage
Three Rivers	Y	100%
Watford	Y	100%
Welwyn Hatfield	N	75%

Note: where the original default scheme was retained under council tax benefit St Albans and Hertsmere have 2 schemes

4.6.2 Consideration will need to be given regarding whether to progress with a banded scheme in 2027/28 if LGR for Hertfordshire is implemented in 2028/29 as the scheme for the new unitary will need to be in place for that year. Work could continue on the scheme and a decision could be taken once the outcome of the unitary options and timetable are known.

4.7 Overview and Scrutiny Consultation

- 4.7.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be consulted as part of the process for reviewing the 2026/27 CTS scheme, this will include the modelling of the scheme and the impact before any consultation with the public and their views will be included in any recommendation to the Cabinet.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The impact of changes to the scheme are shared based on the precept shares which are summarised below, with SBC bearing/gaining 10.8% of any additional/reduction in cost.

Preceptor	Share of Precept
SBC	10.80%
PCC	11.62%
HCC	77.58%

- 5.1.2 The purpose of the modelling carried out to date is to mirror as far as possible the existing CTS scheme and not to increase/decrease the cost of CTS.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 There is a legal requirement to consult on any changes to the CTS scheme with both preceptors and council tax payers.
- 5.2.2 Any scheme must be approved by Council by the 11 March of the preceding year.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

- 5.3 There are no direct implications for LGR at present. Any proposals for a future move to the banded scheme will be considered in the context of LGR and the impact of / on any future authority and it's residents. Appendix C shows a summary of the councils with banded schemes in the context of the LGR potential options. Its is clear that there a number of different schemes and it will be for the new unitary to decide the design of the scheme, however a consideration will be the impact of the new weighted average council tax level for the incoming authority. It may be that work progresses on redesigning the new SBC banded scheme and a decision is taken one the outcome of the unitary proposal is known.

Risk Implications

- 5.4 As detailed in the report

Policy Implications

- 5.5 As detailed in the report

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A - The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

Appendix B Glossary

Appendix C Banded schemes in context of LGR potential options CTS schemes

Appendix A The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

1. The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

- 1.1 Before April 2013, local authorities (LA) administered Council Tax Benefit on behalf of the Government. This national scheme was specified in legislation and LA's were reimbursed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) through a subsidy claim submitted annually and subject to audit.
- 1.4 The level of subsidy reimbursement varied dependant on whether benefit had been awarded, backdated or overpaid, but the point to note is that entitlement and subsidy were based on assessing entitlement on 100% of somebodies Council tax liability, net of discounts (like a single person discount).
- 1.5 The scheme was means tested and whilst the scheme differentiated between different client groups (providing extra support for disabled groups for example) there was little differential between Elderly and Working Age clients.
- 1.6 Clients fell into one of two groups, "passported" and "standard claims." A passported claim was one in which the DWP had already carried out a means test and then notified the Council that the customers income was at or below the minimum income level for their household composition. They would be automatically entitled to 100% of their Council Tax to be paid by Council Tax Benefit. A deduction would however be made from this entitlement where there were non-dependants living in the home.
- 1.7 The second group were called 'standard claims'. These customers had their means testing done by the Council and awarded Council Tax benefit in accordance with the national scheme criteria. These customers had income above the minimum requirements and would be required to pay something towards their Council tax liability. A deduction would also be made from this entitlement where there were non-dependants living in the home.
- 1.6 In very simple terms entitlement was determined by comparing eligible incomes against relevant applicable amounts. When income equalled or fell below applicable amounts, the maximum entitlement is achieved. If income exceeded applicable amounts, entitlement was reduced by 20% of

the excess. The applicable amounts were determined by the DWP in respect of Housing Benefit claims.

1.7 In more complex terms, every income and capital source had to be assessed in accordance with its type and then determined if it was included in the assessment. Child benefit, maintenance paid to a child, PiP and DLA, war pensions etc were fully disregarded, whilst earned income was calculated after tax & NI, and 50% of pension contributions, averaged over the relevant period. Payments to certain childcare providers were disregarded, whilst capital (excluding the property occupied) included savings, shares etc and if the total exceeded £16k, the customer was excluded from entitlement.

1.8 In very general terms the full expenditure on the scheme was reimbursed by the DWP.

2 The impact of changes from 1st April 2013

2.1 The national scheme for Council Tax Benefit ceased, and Councils had to devise their own Council Tax Reduction Schemes for working age claimants. The Government continues to specify the scheme for Elderly customers through prescribed regulations.

2.2 Instead of the scheme being funded through a subsidy claim based on actual expenditure, the Government moved the funding into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement, fixing it at only 90% of the subsidy paid in a previous year. RSG was the amount of grant that Government gave to Councils to support their wider service delivery and made up one part of the income of the Council in addition to Council Tax receipts, fees and charges and an element of Business rate collection. However, the move away from RSG makes this funding element less obvious.

2.3 Each Council had to consider how to fund 100% of the cost of the Elderly 'national' scheme and provide a Working age scheme, whilst receiving 10% less funding.

2.4 Elderly (Pensioner) claimants are protected from changes through the provision of a statutory scheme.

2.5 Schemes must support work incentives.

2.6 The DCLG Policy Statement of Intent did not give a recommended approach to be taken, but indicated the scheme should not contain features which create dis-incentives to find employment. The current Stevenage scheme complies with this statement.

2.7 Local authorities must ensure that appropriate consideration has been given to support for other vulnerable groups, including those which may require protection under other statutory provisions including the Child

Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Persons Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010, amongst others.

2.8 The DCLG issued Policy Statements that addressed a range of issues including the following:

- Vulnerable People and Key Local Authority Duties.
- Taking work incentives into account.
- Information Sharing and Powers to Tackle Fraud.

2.9 The Local Government Finance Bill stated that a Billing Authority must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The current scheme has sought to address these requirements.

3 Stevenage's Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTS)

3.1 The Council initially devised a scheme which replicated the previous national scheme but limited the Council Tax liability that was used to assess entitlement to 90% for working age customers. The Government offered a one-off transitional grant to Councils who would restrict the reduction to 91.5%, and accordingly the Council amended the proposal and took the one-off transitional grant. The Council has maintained this position for the first 10 years of the scheme.

3.2 From 2014/15 the 90% grant that was included in the RSG was no longer individually identifiable. Therefore, calculating the total cost of the scheme i.e. the cost of the CTS scheme versus the CTS grant given by Government is now impossible.

Appendix B glossary

GLOSSARY

IS	Income support
JSA (IB)	Job seekers allowance (Income based)
UC	Universal Credit
PC	Pension credit
GC	Guaranteed credit
SC	Savings credit
ESA (IR)	Employment support allowance (Income related)

Appendix C – Banded schemes in context of LGR potential options

Council	Current scheme for maximum entitlement	If 2 unitaries	If 3 unitaries	If 4 unitaries
Broxbourne	75% Liability, only up to Band E restriction	With Stevenage	With Stevenage	N/A
Dacorum	75% plus restrict to band D so it can be 75% of band D	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hertsmere	80% plus restrict to band D so it can be 80% of band D	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Herts	100% if income is below maximum bands. Bands are 100%, 75%, 45%, 25% and 0%	With Stevenage	With Stevenage	With Stevenage
St Albans	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
East Herts	91.5% - same scheme as Stevenage	With Stevenage	With Stevenage	N/A
Three Rivers	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Watford	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Welwyn Hatfield	75%	With Stevenage	N/A	With Stevenage

Part 1



Agenda item:

Meeting CABINET
Portfolio Area RESOURCES and PERFORMANCE
Date 12 November 2025



BALANCING THE BUDGET 2026/27

KEY DECISION

Authors Clare Fletcher
Contributor Senior Leadership Team
Lead Officers Clare Fletcher
Contact Officer Clare Fletcher

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the Balancing the Budget priority and the 2026/27 onwards options that meet the required General Fund requirement.
- 1.2 To update Members on the General Fund core resource projections and note the impact of Fair Funding from 2026/27 onwards.
- 1.3 To propose a range of General Fund (GF) budget options (in addition to those identified in the September 2025 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)) to be incorporated in the 2026/27 Revenue Budget Process.
- 1.4 To identify the savings options that potentially could meet the budget need for the years 2027/2-2029/30 to ensure a three year pipeline of savings to meet the need in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 1.5 To update Members on the General Fund balances as a result of the Balancing the Budget options and growth and service pressures for 2026/27 onwards.

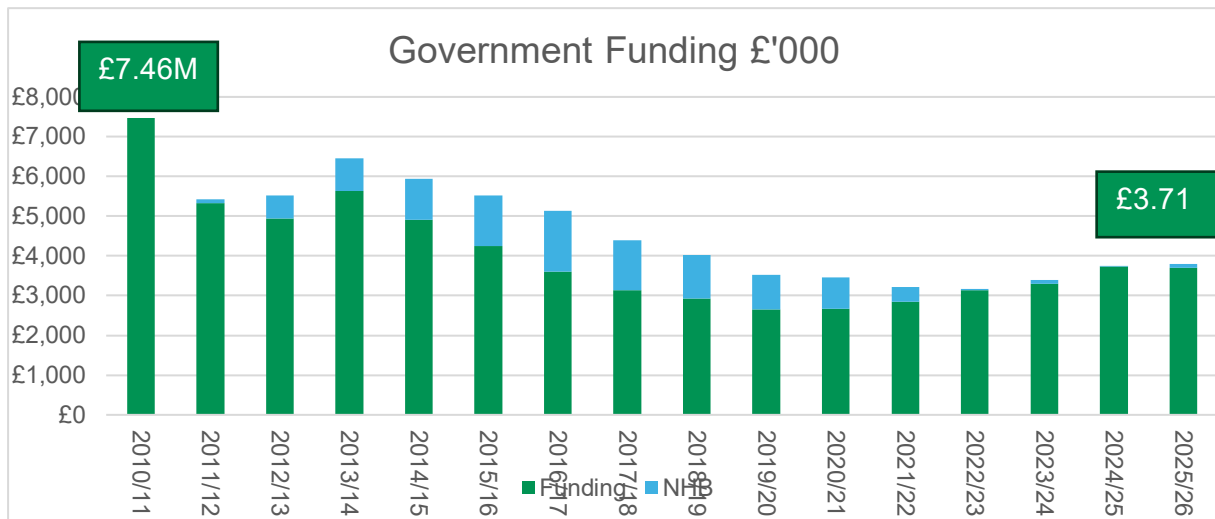
- 1.6 To update Members on the potential to use 2026/27 in year projected surpluses to fund capital or other one off spend.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

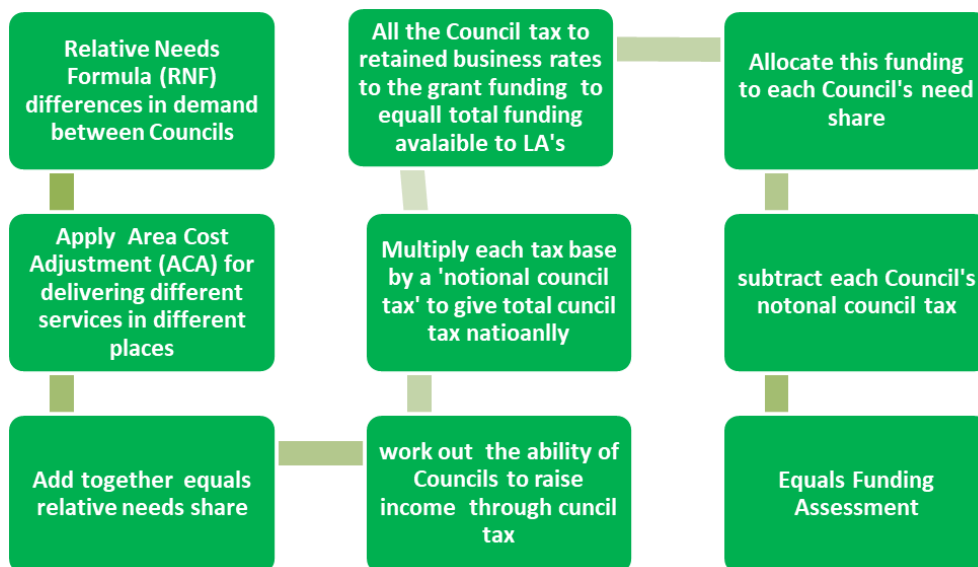
- 2.1 The Balancing the Budget options as set out in the report and Appendix A, totalling £84,640 (saving) for the General Fund 2026/27 (and £21,600 for the HRA) be approved and incorporated into the Council's budget setting processes.
- 2.2 Members note the future savings target can be met from Fees and Charges as set out in paragraph 4.6.5 (subject to Government Funding, Local Government Reorganisation and unidentified growth).
- 2.3 The revised GF MTFS financial summary, as shown in section 4.9 to this report be noted.
- 2.4 Members delegate the completion of the Business rates for 2026/27 (NDR 1) to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Resources and Transformation Portfolio holder (paragraph 4.3.4 refers).
- 2.5 That the Council's recognised unions be consulted regarding the proposed budget package.
- 2.6 That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted, and their views considered as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. This report follows on from the General Fund Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved at the September 2025 Cabinet. This set out the Council's assumptions about inflation, pressures and the annual funding gap and options to ensure the General Fund remains financially resilient.
- 3.2. The MTFS identified that Stevenage's Government funding has halved since 2010/11 (after adjusting for subsequent changes for council tax support etc) and before consideration of the impact of a 10% population growth and 15 years of compound inflationary pressures. In response the Council has needed to deliver £16.5Million of savings through its priority, 'Balancing the Budget'



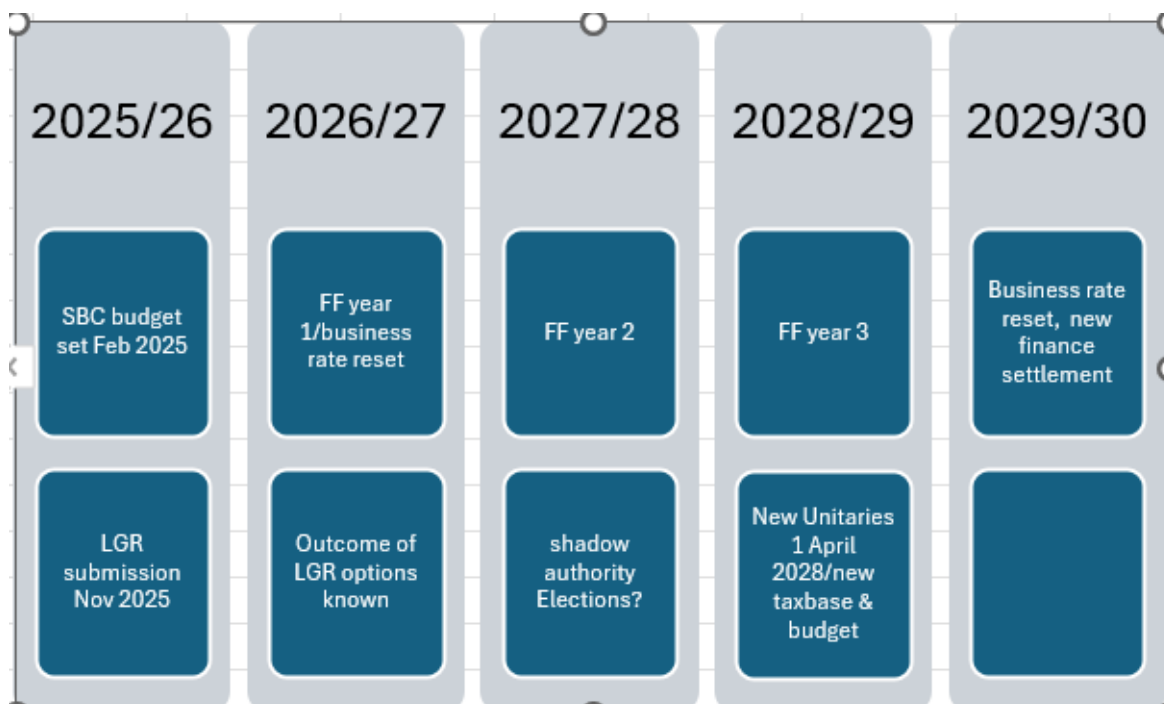
3.3. The Government has consulted on a review of how Councils are funded as reported in the MTFS. The Fair Funding review plans to change how money is allocated to Councils in England, which has not been updated since 2013. These reforms aim to account for current needs and costs faced by communities across the country, including adjusting for the costs of remoteness faced by rural communities, and the ability of individual local authorities to raise Council Tax, while at the same time resetting business rates income. The mechanism used is a series of formulae used to calculate funding allocations. The aim is to make the system fairer and more current, so Councils get funding that better reflects their local needs based on a number of factors. So, from 2026/27, this revised system for allocating funding between Councils (summarised in the table below), will take account of those revisited factors of Councils' spending needs and their relative abilities to raise revenues themselves via council tax.



3.4. An illustration of the possible impact of Fair Funding for Stevenage was set out in the September MTFS, however the Government's response to the consultation is yet to be published and the Autumn budget is not due until 26 November alongside any policy statement on funding. Finally, the provisional settlement where the individual funding will be known for Councils is not expected until 17 December 2025. To complicate matters further there are a

number of fair funding models which give differing grant allocations, skewing certainty over funding projections, e.g. whether social care grants are included in the overall funding envelope and the level of notional council tax assumed in the calculation. The current SBC projections are summarised in paragraph 4.4.2 and remain unchanged from the September MTFS. There have been indications from MHCLG that funding criteria may have changed since the consultation.

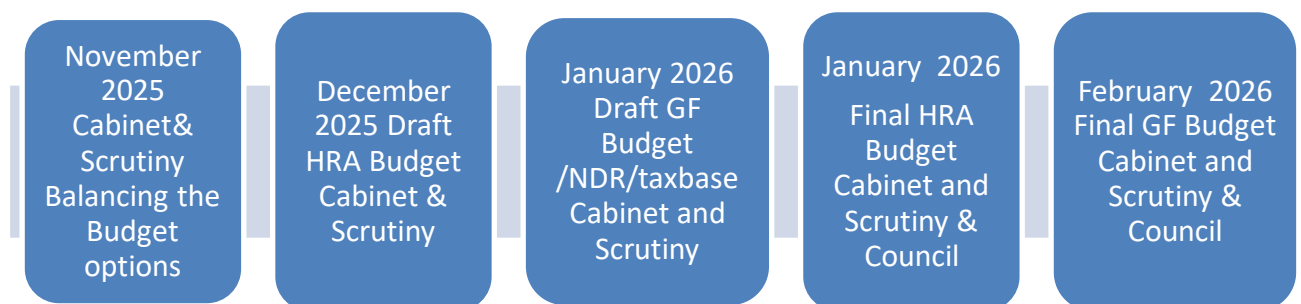
- 3.5 The Council’s strategy for setting a financially resilient budget (‘Balancing the Budget’), saw a number of efficiencies and proposed fee increases included in the September MTFS totalling £1.134Million, this report will summarise any changes to those numbers and identify further options identified through efficiencies, Business Change and Commercial and Insourcing activity.
- 3.6 The Senior Leadership Team consider a three year view of savings is required to balance the budget to ensure that there is sufficient value of options that can be delivered within the timescales required. The revised target has reduced in future years subject to Fair Funding outcomes being realised, however as stated in the September MTFS the three year savings period is within the Local Government Reform period.



- 3.7 The successful identification and removal of savings as summarised in paragraph 3.3 has meant the Council has continued to fund both statutory and discretionary services which are in the main delivered directly by the Council. More information about what the Council delivers can be found in the Council’s Corporate Plan at the following link, [Corporate Plan Link](#).
- 3.8 The MTFS assumes a small allowance for growth of £75K per year and this report also recommends a number of growth bids proposed for consideration and approval to be included in the General Fund for 2026/27.
- 3.9 The budget setting timetable dictates that 2026/27 pressures and savings are approved by Members at this stage ahead of the budget setting process. It is the CFO’s view that unidentified budget targets should not be included in the

2026/27 budget. This is important as it allows Members to compare the relative priority of all options for approval.

3.10 The budget setting timetable is as set out below.



4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1. The requirement to make budget savings

4.1.1. The inflationary pressures before any service or operation demand led costs is significant for the General Fund and has increased since the September 2025 MTFS to reflect a higher level of CPI inflation expected in 2026/27 with September CPI at 3.8%. A summary of inflation now projected in the MTFS is detailed below.

Inflation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Pay	£801,291	£766,277	£608,435	£622,881	£637,682
NI increase (less grant)	£226,279				
Contracts	£372,825	£390,920	£334,943	£373,148	£323,237
Utilities & fuel	£117,676	£152,424	£145,904	£159,393	£168,879
charged to HRA/other LA's	(£207,975)	(£164,130)	(£132,046)	(£158,813)	(£138,211)
Total	£ 1,310,095	£ 1,145,492	£ 957,236	£ 996,609	£ 991,587
September MTFS	£ 1,289,095	£ 1,117,082	£ 925,254	£ 927,010	£ 955,819
Increase	£ 21,000	£ 28,410	£ 31,982	£ 69,599	£ 35,768

4.1.2. The 2026/27 inflation projections includes an assumption of 2.75% pay award an increase of 0.25% would increase pay inflation by further £65K in 2026/27.

4.1.3. The General Fund also has projected additional costs of £680K by 2028/29 which are summarised in the table below.

Additional MTFS Costs	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Rationale
Housing subsidy administration	£10,000	£20,000	£30,000	Subsidy payments are based on caseload which is reducing although the workload has not reduced at the same rate due to the increased real time information and changes of circumstances. The MTFS is assuming a £10K reduction in cost per year.

Additional MTFS Costs	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Rationale
Elections Budgets	£0	£50,000	£50,000	The Elections budgets have not increased for a number of years, monies were transferred to an elections reserve to adequately resource the 2025/26 bi-election and 2026/27 District elections
External support for the new Forster Country park	£20,000	£0	£0	The 1st quarterly monitoring report to September 2025 Cabinet identified £15K required for 2025/26 and a further £20K is recommended for 2026/27.
Car parking income	£31,720	£51,720	£150,000	The MTFS previously assumed a loss of £300K in 2024/25, £200K 2025/26 onwards, however 202425 parking income and the current projections in the 1st quarter monitoring to this committee show an improvement. The projection has been downturned from 2027/28 when current compounding income on Swingate ceases (full year impact 2028/29).
Cost of Local Government Reorganisation	£150,000	£150,000		The CFO recommends setting aside a budget for additional officer capacity or external advice to ensure the Council has the right advice and capacity for LGR
Queensway LLP reserve	£250,000	£350,000	£450,000	The Council set up the LLP to act as a catalyst for regeneration in the town centre as set out in the 4th Quarter Monitoring report to the July 2024 Cabinet and subsequent October 2025 Cabinet report. In order to ensure that funding to invest in the asset and/or support the LLP over the 37 year lease, the CFO recommended increased contributions be set aside in the 2025 and 2025/26 MTFS. This is to ensure the financial resilience of the asset and town centre.
Total Revised Pressures	£461,720	£621,720	£680,000	

4.1.4 The September MTFS recommended the inclusion of additional costs for two of the Council's priorities as a result of the improvement in projected funding and these are summarised below.

Additional MTFS Approved Spend	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Rationale
Apprentice scheme	£150,000	£150,000	£23,000	Addition of funding for the scheme versus the assumed use of unbudgeted year end underspends based on the projected increased funding from 2026/27 onwards.
Oval Redevelopment General Fund Assets	£0	£137,000	£275,000	Addition of funding for the General Fund assets (retail and community) based on the projected increased funding from 2026/27 onwards.

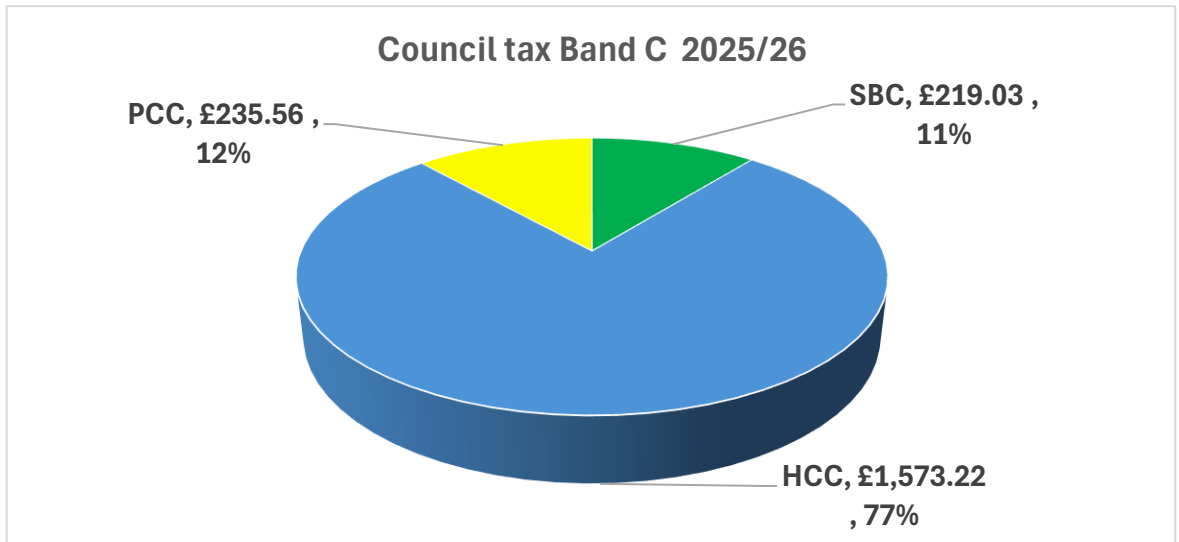
4.2. Council Tax

4.2.1 Council Tax increases are capped by Government (before referendum on the increase). Under the Fair Funding Review 2.0 (see also paragraph 3.3), the government has assumed a 5% council tax increase per year for the next three years, which includes the maximum allowable 2.99% general increase and a 2% adult social care precept for unitary and upper tier Councils. This is the assumption the government uses to calculate total funding available to Councils. The September MTFS included a 2.99% increase for 2026/27 onwards. The impact of a 2.99% increase is summarised per council tax band in the table below.

Council tax band	2025/26 SBC	2.99% incr.	2026/27 per year	Incr. per week
A	£164.27	£4.91	£169.18	£0.09
B	£191.65	£5.73	£197.38	£0.11
C	£219.03	£6.55	£225.58	£0.13
D	£246.41	£7.37	£253.78	£0.14
E	£301.17	£9.00	£310.17	£0.17
F	£355.93	£10.64	£366.57	£0.20
G	£410.68	£12.28	£422.96	£0.24
H	£492.82	£14.74	£507.56	£0.28

4.2.2 The increase shown above is based on the full SBC charge for a property band, but those in working aged claimants in receipt of council tax support (CTS) and on the maximum benefit will pay just 8.5% of their liability. There are also discounts such as Single Person Discount (SPD) which reduces the liability by 25%. More information about CTS scheme can be found on Stevenage Borough Councils website. Link: [Council Tax Support Scheme](#)

4.2.3 Members should note that SBC only retains a relatively small part of the overall council tax raised for the year (the smallest element of the three preceptors). To illustrate this, taking a Band C property, (the biggest proportion of properties in Stevenage are in band C), the relative shares of council tax for a band C property are shown below.



- 4.2.4 The 2nd quarter monitoring report to this Cabinet identifies an increase in the tax base for 2025/26, based on more properties and less discounts than the original estimate to date tax base giving a potential surplus to be returned to SBC of £87,732 in 2026/27.
- 4.2.5 The taxbase for 2026/27 will be presented to the December 2025 Cabinet meeting based on projected new properties and an assessment of the level of council tax support (CTS) based on the current scheme (no change and other discounts).

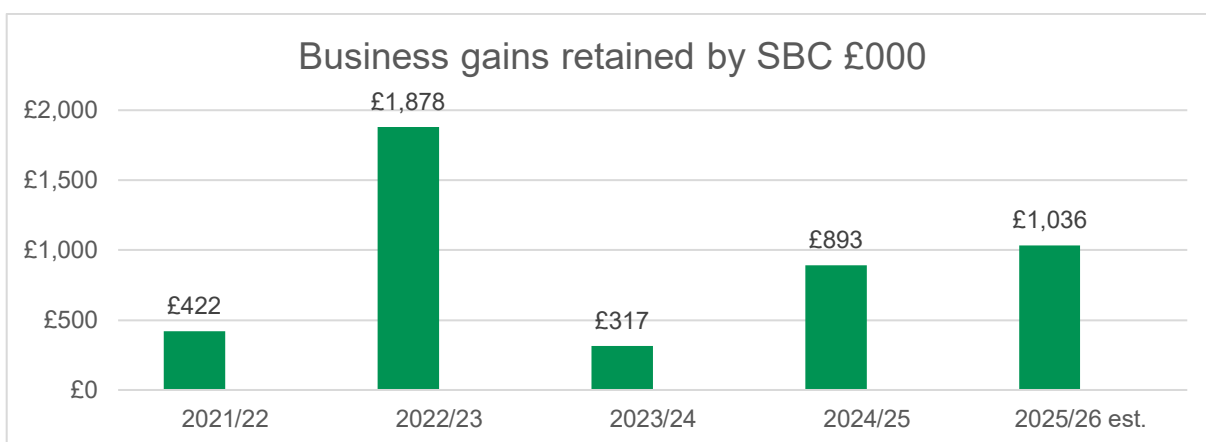
4.3. Business Rates (NDR) Income

- 4.3.1. The MTFS only includes the base line funding or the government's needs assessment under the current funding formula, (Based on 2013/14 data), plus an additional £200K of business rate surpluses for the year. The remaining gains being used for financial resilience of the General Fund or one off priorities such as the holding costs for the joint venture with Mace on the Swingate site. This is because in year gains are not guaranteed and have fluctuated each year (see paragraph 4.3.3). The 2nd Quarter Monitoring report identifies that the projected 2025/26 gains of £1.239Million are currently projected to reduce by £28K.
- 4.3.2. However, from 2026/27 the government will be resetting the amount of business rates Councils keep, together with the level of government grants based on the revised needs assessment set out in paragraph 3.3. The mechanism to do this is to increase the tariff payable to the government on the 40% share of Business rates retained. The illustration below shows the process for calculating 2025/26 NNDR gains.





4.3.3. Because there has not been a funding reset since 2013/14 Stevenage alongside many other Councils has made annual gains, however these have significantly fluctuated and Members have approved business rate gains be transferred to the NDR reserve to improve the resilience of the General Fund, beyond the £200K retained in the General Fund. The business rate gains retained by SBC are summarised below.



4.3.4. The completion of the NDR1 form issued by the government determines the level of business rates collectable, level of reliefs to be given in 2026/27 together with the current business rate yield in January. The timing of the release of the government form and the submission deadline (and 2026/27 changes including new multipliers) means the completion of the NDR1 (due by 31 January 2026) is recommended to be delegated to the CFO after consultation with the Resources & Performance Portfolio Holder.

4.3.5. Business rate increases are based on the September CPI for the coming year but the CFO doesn't anticipate there will be any business rate gains for 2026/27 as the government will reset the level of business rates retained and 'recycle' those gains into the Fair Funding system using in probability the NNDR form for 2025/26. As a result of the proposed changes, the September 2025 MTFS included a loss of business rates of £160K, Councils are responsible for the first 7.5% of losses before the 'safety net' or funding top up is given by the government.

4.4. Projected Finance Settlement 2026/27

4.4.1 The projected funding assumptions 2026/27 and beyond remain unchanged from that set out in the September MTFS ([link here](#)) which includes a lower level of fair funding together (an allowance for the consultation changes such as the introduction of a ceiling on increases/longer transition period due to the

level of gainers and losers) plus an adjustment for business rates losses after the reset (for the first two years).

4.4.2 As stated in section three of the report the outcome of the consultation will not be known until circa October/November 2025 with the provisional funding settlement just before parliament rises on the 18 December 2025, therefore the CFO considered it prudent to revise down the funding assumptions until clarification is given later in the year. The provisional settlement will be multi-year (three years) and will mean the future years position will be clearer in terms of budget decisions.

Funding projections £'000		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total 2026/27- 2028/29
Business Rates	(£4,090)					
Under indexing	(£529)					
Total Business Rates	(£4,619)					
Revenue Support Grant	(£149)					
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	(£97)					
Recovery Grant	(£284)	£0	£0	£0		
NIC's (in net cost of services in 2025/26)	(£201)	£0	£0	£0		
Fair Funding		(£5,674)	(£5,997)	(£6,385)		
Loss of Business rates before safety net		£160	£160	£0		
Allowance for ceiling on funding gains after consultation		£500	£500	£500		
Total	(£5,349)	(£5,014)	(£5,337)	(£5,885)	(£16,236)	
MTFS Assumptions			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total 2026/27- 2028/29
Total			(£4,308)	(£4,389)	(£4,472)	(£13,169)
Increase 2026/27-2028/29						(£3,067)

4.4.3 The finance settlement is likely to roll in other grants such as temporary accommodation and Discretionary Housing payments (DHP) but these have not been factored into the numbers above until further clarification is given by the Government and they are currently assumed in the Net Cost of Services. Since the publication of the MTFS the government has confirmed that the proposal for DHP is to retain the existing allocations for 2026/27 and 2027/28 with the grant going to upper tier Councils from 2028/29 in line with the LGR timetable.

4.4.4 The MTFS also made no assumption about 'Extended Producer Pays' funding an initiative which the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) the amount is only guaranteed for 2025/26 (£1.078Million). A report to the July 2025 Cabinet set out how the money could be spent including improving flat block recycling. It is likely that further funding will be due in

2026/27, however there is no indication at the moment about the amount to be given and Members will be updated when further clarification is set out in the Finance Settlement. Councils have been asked to sign up to a declaration that funding will be used for waste and recycling (October 2025) which has been the case for Stevenage.

4.4.5 From April 2026 Councils must collect weekly food waste, the MTFs assumes that the Council will be fully compensated by the government for the increased costs incurred. The Council has been notified of the 2025/26 grant determination (transitional grant) to support the implementation of weekly food waste collections which is insufficient to cover the estimated cost and representation has been made to DEFRA. The 2026/27 allocations will be included in the 2026/27 Finance Settlement (December 2025). An amount of the EPR grant has been held in the earmarked reserve to bridge the gap of any shortfall.

4.4.6 Included in core resources are prior years gains and losses for council tax and business rates to/from the Collection Fund. When the budget for the year is set an estimate is made of business rates (NNDR1), this is revised as part of the following years return and again at the outturn for the year (NNDR3). The business rate adjustments are 'matched' by a transfer to/from the NNDR reserve as no gains are spent until realised and used for one off spend (with the exception of the £200K supporting General Fund services). Variations arose because:

- There was a significant adverse swing in business rates losses for 2023/24 (actual or NNDR 3) due a rating adjustment given by the valuation office which was significantly higher than expected. For note the actual loss was lower as the levy on gains reduced but this is paid to the government in the year it arose, (2023/24)
- There was a reduction in business rate gains for 2024/25 of £359K, however the gains achieved were still £893K.

4.4.7 The projected 2024/25 council tax deficit on the collection fund for SBC, (the approved taxbase less the raised in year and provision for bad debt) was predicted at £196K, however the actual 2024/25 deficit came in at only a £36K loss, which means there is a corresponding credit back to the General Fund in 2026/27. Current estimates are included as part of the 2nd quarter monitoring report.

Collection Fund Core Resource movements	2025/26	2026/27	Total
2023/24 Business rate losses (para. 4.4.6)	£1,056,964	£0	£1,056,964
2024/25 Business rate losses (para 4.4.6)	£175,793	£183,637	£359,430
2024/25 Council Tax (surplus)/deficit (para 4.4.7)	£196,632	(£160,330)	£36,302
Total	£1,429,389	£23,307	£1,452,696

4.4.8 Council tax surplus and deficits tend to be much smaller as they not complicated by NNDR appeals and large revaluations. No assumption has been made in the MTFS for changes to 2025/26 gains and losses for business rates and council tax, this will be reviewed later in the year, but currently could be an additional £60K income in 2026/27.

4.5. The Balancing the Budget Target to Find

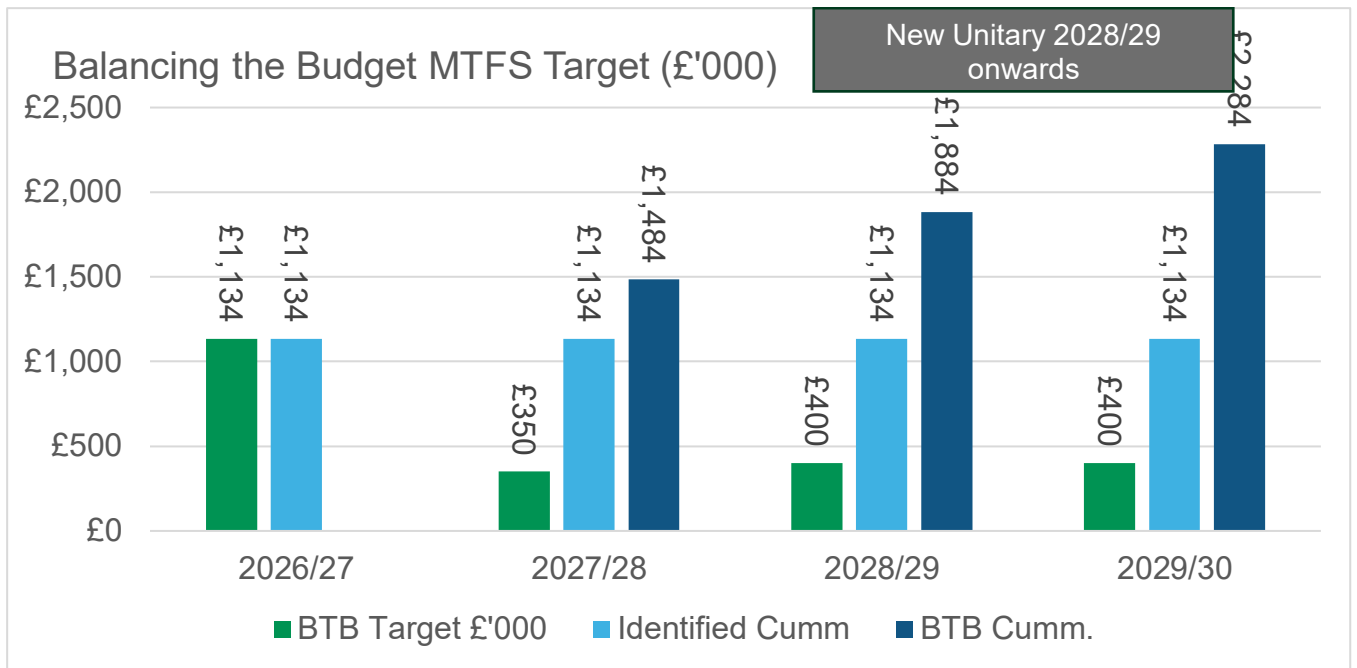
4.5.1 The graphic below summarises the Balancing the Budget (BTB) activity strands that the Council resources through the Business change team, Commercial Team and The Finance Team.



4.5.2 The BTB options are identified through a number of activities which are:

- Efficiency savings identified as part of budget monitoring
- Fees and Charges
- Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing activity
- Business Change activity including using digital solutions
- Star Chamber process
- Consultation with shared service partners

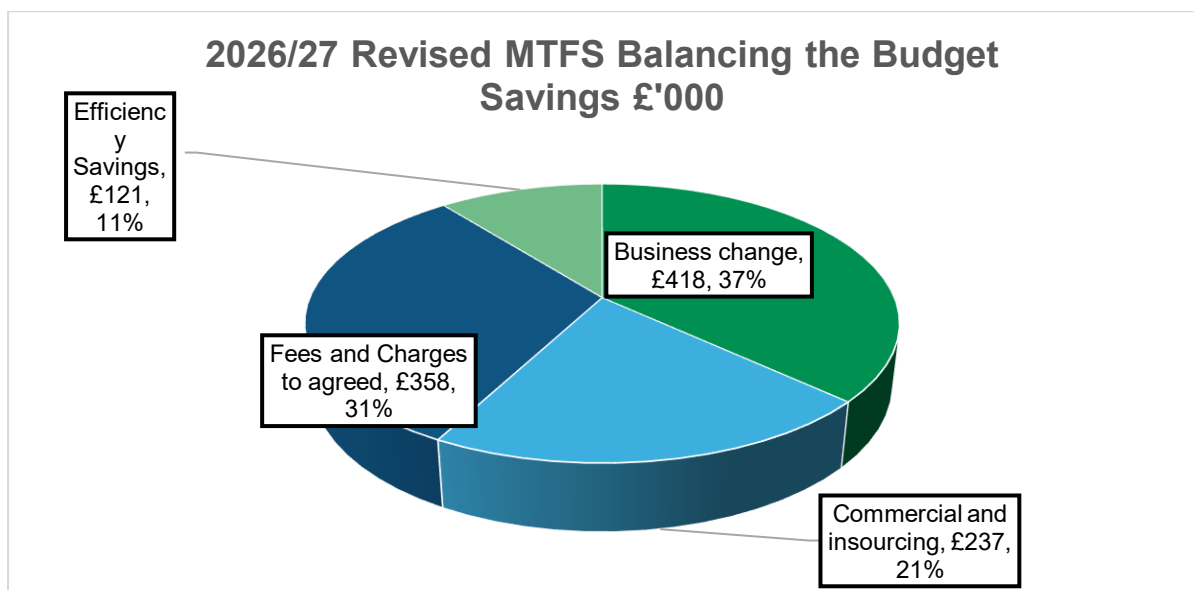
4.5.3 The MTFS (September 2025 Cabinet report) identified a General Fund four-year savings target of £2.284Million. For the following three years beyond 2026/27 there is a further £1.3Million to be found as set out below.



4.5.4 The level of savings for 2026/27 was based on the efficiencies, commercial and insourcing and business change and totalled £1.134Million in the September MTFS report. Since that date there has been a minor change due to:

- Phasing of taxi licence increases over two years (MTFS assumed £44K, October Cabinet £44K 2026/27 and £60K 2027/28)
- Phasing of Localities business restructure (MTFS assumed £156K 2026/27, revised to £147K 2026/27, £190K 2027/28).

4.5.5 This gives a revised total of £1.14Million of MTFS savings for 2026/27 as summarised below. Further information about the composition of the savings can be found in section 4.9 of the MTFS report to the September 2025 Cabinet.



4.6. Additional savings identified 2025/26 Onwards

- 4.6.1 The Senior Leadership Team ran a series of 'star chamber' meetings with Assistant Directors to identify 'Balancing the Budget' options using the BTB activity workstreams and additional General Fund options of £87,700 for 2026/27, £105,970 for 2027/28, rising to £132,370 in 2028/29 and are summarised in Appendix A and Appendix C has further information on advertising on the intranet and website BTB option. There is also a saving to the HRA of £23,640 rising to £50,920 in 2028/29.
- 4.6.2 Members should also note that a report will be published on the Cabinet agenda for December 2025 which proposes to revise the Council's Leisure Contract arrangement to an Agency agreement which will reduce the Council's costs by £110K per annum. This has no effect on the services provided to customers or the leisure providers responsibilities for managing the facilities. This is for note as the report has yet to be approved by the Cabinet and reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny but is included in the MTFs summary.
- 4.6.3 In addition to the savings identified in above and Appendix A, further income has been achieved via the Estates Commercial opportunity approved at the October Cabinet meeting which from 2027/28 will achieve a further £100K per year.
- 4.6.4 The total savings identified for 2026/27 onwards are summarised in the table below.

Balancing the Budget Savings Summary	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
MTFS	£766,606	£839,616	£843,364
Fees & charges (October Cabinet)	£314,000	£314,000	£314,000
Taxi Licences (October Cabinet)	£33,000	£60,000	£60,000
Commercial Option (October Cabinet)	(£22,500)	£100,000	£100,000
Star Chamber	£87,700	£105,970	£132,370
December Cabinet report (for note)	£110,000	£110,000	£110,000
Total	£1,288,806	£1,529,586	£1,559,734

- 4.6.5 The lower level of savings required in future years beyond 2026/27 are reliant on the realisation of the Fair Funding settlement as set out in paragraph 4.4.2 and on inflation levels reducing beyond 2026/27. If this is the case the 2027/28 savings onwards set out in paragraph 4.5.3 can be achieved through fees and charges increases in the main.
- 4.6.6 In prior years and before fair funding there has been a need to find higher levels of savings and also to reduce services, but Members should note the funding three year settlement is during the time period when the new unitaries in Hertfordshire will be formed with the challenges of meeting the upfront costs of the process and the disaggregation of County Council budgets.

4.7. Growth for the General Fund 2026/27

- 4.7.1. The September 2025 MTFs assumed growth of £75K for 2026/27. Summarised in Appendix B are a small number of proposed growth bids which

include a one off bid of £50K for the Council's 80th Anniversary programme in 2026/27 and on-going growth bids of £95,140 and are summarised in Appendix B.

- 4.7.2. Members should note that initially event island had a proportion of Towns Fund revenue monies to fund events, if the programme as outlined in Appendix B is to continue a growth bid is required.
- 4.7.3. The growth bids are in excess of the £75K growth target, however savings identified are higher than in the September MTFs and General Fund balances are significantly above the minimum level required and are therefore recommended.
- 4.7.4. Once the Finance settlement is published there may be further scope to include growth in the 2026/27 General Fund budget, in particular there has been a significant shortfall in capital resources and therefore capital spend has been restricted. Officers are currently compiling capital bids for Members as part of the Revised Capital Strategy to be published in January 2026. AS a minimum part of the 2026/27 in year surplus of £706K could be utilised for this purpose.
- 4.7.5. Members should note that while there are surpluses projected in 2027/28 and 2028/29 (see paragraph 4.8.2) this reduces to £75K in 2029/30 which includes the impact of the borrowing for the Oval redevelopment.

4.8. Level of Balances required for General Fund

- 4.8.1. The September 2025 MTFs assumed that the minimum level of balances required would be £3.57Million, however this will need to be kept under review based on the risks set out in this report.

General Fund balances Minimum Level Assessment	2026/27 £Million
Amount to cover a 1.5% overrun in gross expenditure	£1.02
Amount to cover a 1.5% overrun in gross income	£0.85
Amount to cover pay award above the budgeted amount	£0.80
Amount to cover higher prices with higher than forecast inflation	£0.50
Amount to cover fee and charges losses through price fluctuation	£0.30
Amount to cover risk of higher LGR transition costs	£0.10
Total Estimated General Fund Reserves	£3.57

4.9. Medium Term Financial Strategy General Fund Summary

- 4.9.1. The MTFs modelling has been updated to reflect the contents of this report which are subject to Members approval in the report and are:
 - On-going growth of £95,140 as per paragraph 4.7.1.
 - One off growth of £50,000 as per paragraph 4.7.1.

- Total 2026/27 Balancing the Budget options of £1,288,806 as set out in paragraph 4.6.4.
- The pressures set out in paragraphs 4.1.3-4.1.4

General Fund balances £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Opening Balance	(£6,506)	(£6,599)	(£7,305)	(£7,739)	(£8,193)
In Year	(£93)	(£706)	(£434)	(£454)	(£75)
Closing Balance	(£6,599)	(£7,305)	(£7,739)	(£8,193)	(£8,267)
MTFS (September) closing balance	(£6,550)	(£7,300)	(£7,574)	(£7,902)	(£7,887)
Variance	£49	£5	£164	£290	£381

4.9.2 The level of balances has reduced in the MTFS since the September MTFS report, largely due to the increase in projected inflation.

4.9.3 The most significant impact on future General Fund balance levels will be the finance settlement which will not be known until December as set out in paragraph 4.4.2. There are also anticipated changes to the consultation which are not yet known although some 'dampening' of the anticipated grant funding has been assumed for 2026/27 onwards.

4.10 Approach to Consultation

4.10.1 The Council consulted on the 2025/26 budget via an on-line form on the SBC's website the responses were a small sample of 30 so not statistically sound. The growth for apprentices was supported and the graffiti growth was only narrowly not supported.

2025/26 Budget Feedback	Yes	No
Stevenage Resident	87%	13%
Stevenage business owner	3%	97%
Agree to increase council tax by 3%	63%	37%
Pay more council tax for more services	43%	57%
Support Apprentice growth	70%	30%
Support graffiti growth	47%	53%
Support savings delivered through more digital and on-line	67%	33%
savings delivered from more commercial income	40%	60%

2025/26 Budget Feedback	Yes	No
Only cutting services if no other options available	67%	33%

4.10.2 The consultation asked respondents to comment on future areas to invest in and the following areas were identified in a free form text box, with Council responses in *italics* to the comments.

- Improving the Town Centre and parks and open spaces- *the Council has a regeneration programme for the Town Centre and work has started on the former Swingate site in 2024. The Council is working on both a Green Spaces and Trees & Woodland strategy which will be reported to cabinet in the summer of 2025. This will outline our approach to enhance our parks and open spaces going forward. The Council will also be spending an estimated £830K on parks and open spaces in 2025/26*
- Pavements cleaning generally and landscaping and maintaining the overall appearance of the streets across the town. *–Funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been utilised to undertake an enhanced cleansing routine of Stevenage’s neighbourhood centres and pathways over the last two years. The Council will also be spending £1.5Million in 2025/26 on street cleansing and litter picking.*
- Hedge and verge trimming to keep cycleways clear and accessible. *- The council is currently delivering a 10-year programmed Shrub Bed Improvement programme to remove old, tired, or operationally constrictive shrub beds to help keep pathways and cycleways clear and accessible.*
- Regeneration culture and leisure *-The Council has jointly invested in a JV with their Development Partner Mace to build new homes in the town centre and has consulted the public on a new leisure centre.*
- Solar panels to reduce energy costs. Improved bus service so residents are less reliant on cars.- *The Council has installed solar panels on refuse freighters and new buildings such as the bus interchange.*
- Council housing- *The Council is investing £51Million into existing and new homes in 2025/26*
- Town centre events - make the space more welcoming out of hours and provide a safer environment to encourage more evening venues- *The council has invested in ‘Events Island’ in the Town Centre and has a programme of events throughout the year.*
- more investment in digital logging/ online services *-The Council has a digital team and Transformation Plan to improve the on-line offer.*

4.10.3 The consultation also asked respondents what areas the council should make savings in the future:

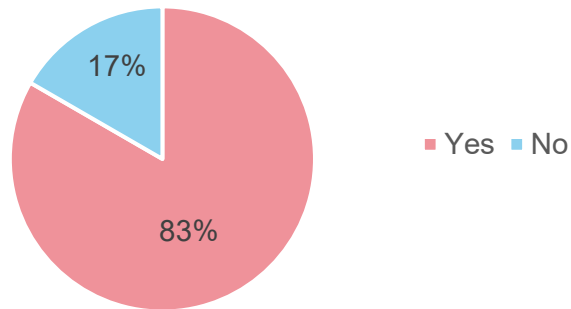
- High street- *The Council is working with businesses in the Indoor Market to transfer their services into the empty shopping units along*

the new Park Place development in the town centre. This will bring greater attention to local businesses in the council's high street. This builds on the new 'Event Island' space in the town centre, which has a busy event schedule throughout the coming year.

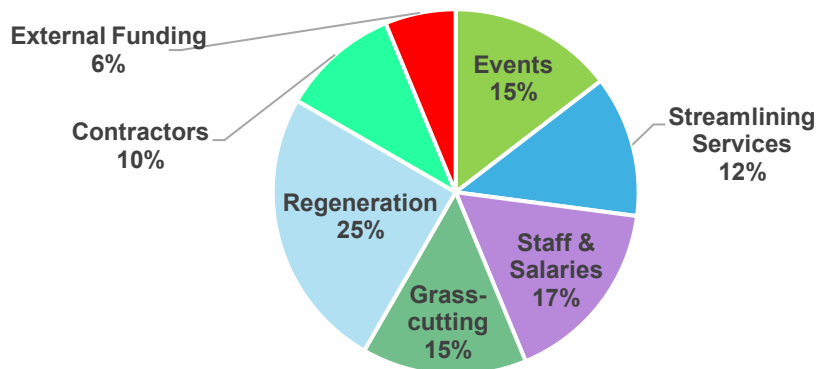
- *Repairs -Members approved a further £2Million spend on council home repairs in 2025/26.*
- *Council should use the staff they currently have to tackle the graffiti problem in the town and invest in more artwork in underpasses to prevent it- The Council successfully tested an enhanced Graffiti response, utilising funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund over the last year. This growth request establishes that level of response within core budgets going forward rather than relying on time limited external funding. The Council has a programme of artwork installations in underpasses and buildings as part of the Councils Towns Fund works.*
- *Black bin collection once a month- In setting the frequency of residual waste collections, Council's need to consider a range of factors including the size of the bin, the number of occupants and storage facilities, for example, the Council wants to increase recycling rates and reduce residual waste volumes going forwards, and will be looking to improve recycling facilities in a number of locations, including flat blocks.*
- *Stop investing in car infrastructure – The Council has invested in the tevenage cycle ways through the new Arts & Heritage trail as part of its ambitious Regeneration programme of the town centre. This reemphasises the council's commitment and investment into alternative travel options in the town.*
- *Outdated and incompatible ICT systems The Council along with East Herts Authority have jointly invested in the shared ICT service in 2024/25 & 2025/26 to ensure that both Councils have fit for purpose software.*
- *Staffing and pensions -staff pay is governed by the collective pay agreements as agreed with the unions.*

4.10.4 Development of the Councils 2024/25 Corporate Plan included a period of public and stakeholder engagement and consultation to include ascertaining if:

- *Agree that Balancing the Budget should be a priority so that the Council can remain financially resilient and continue to deliver key services as set out in the Corporate Plan?*
- *If no, is the alternative is to reduce services and provide less?*
- *If yes, what should the Council stop doing to generate £1.23Million savings?*
- *83% of respondents to the consultation agreed that Balancing the Budget should be a priority:*



4.10.5 All survey respondents were asked for financial savings suggestions. The responses can be categorised into seven themes:



- The Transforming Our Town programme will attract new businesses to the area which would increase business rate revenue and car parking income (25%). – *The Council has opened a new Multi Storey car park and is working with partners to bring new business into the town, also improving the business rates collected and retained by the Council.*
- Reduce Staff and Councillor salaries (17%). – *The Council’s Member allowances are reviewed and agreed by an Independent Remuneration Panel and staff pay is governed by the collective pay agreements as agreed with the unions.*
- The Council should consider selective grass-cutting allowing green spaces to grow wilder (within safe reasons) and reduce maintenance costs for grass cutting etc. (15%) – *The Council has already implemented this as a measure with an associated cost reduction.*
- Streamlining services (12%) – *The Council has a business change programme which is targeted at streamlining processes and reducing costs.*
- Reduce use of Contractors (10%) – *The Council has a Commercial and Insourcing Strategy which includes reviewing contracts to see if they can be brought back in-house where deemed viable to do so at the point of re-tendering.*
- Reducing or cancelling events such as the November Fireworks Display, or those held on the Event Island and the Stevenage Museum. (15%) – *the Council has been looking at how it manages and delivers future event activity with a view to driving out efficiencies where possible.*

- Seeking external funding to plug the financial gap (6%). *The Council has actively sought external funding and has received circa £80Million of revenue and capital funding over the last few years.*

Resident Survey (2021)

4.10.6 The 2021/22 Residents survey shows that resident's preferences with regards to achieving budget savings are firstly to reduce costs through the provision of more online services. This was ranked the highest (out of five options in 2021 and 2017) with 41%. This first rate ranking has increased from 2017 and supports the Transformation programme as a method to reduce costs and improve efficiency / productivity.

Please tell us your order of preference for each of the following options by ordering them 1 to 5	2021 rank	2017 rank	1st
Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online	1	1	41%
Increase income from fees and chargeable services, to keep the council's element of Council Tax as low as possible	2	3	24%
Spend less by reducing or cutting the services that you tell us are not a priority	3	2	16%
Make money by selling more of our services to residents and customers	4	5	9%
Increase our element of Council Tax (for example from 51p per day to 55p per day)	5	4	10%

4.10.7 The 2021 residents' survey asked residents whether the council tax represented value for money. While strongly disagree has increased (from 7% to 15%), overall 52% up from 46% of residents agree it represents value for money as shown in the chart below.

	Responses	2021	2017	2015	2013	2011
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides good value for money?	Strongly agree	16%	10%	7%	6%	6%
	Tend to agree	36%	36%	39%	39%	40%
	Neither	18%	30%	30%	35%	33%
	Tend to disagree	10%	17%	18%	17%	16%
	Strongly disagree	15%	7%	6%	5%	5%

	Responses	2021	2017	2015	2013	2011
	Don't know (DNRO)	4%				
	Summary: Agree	52%	46%	46%	45%	46%
	Summary: Disagree	26%	24%	24%	22%	21%

4.10.8 The Council has commissioned a new Residents survey in 2025/26 the results of which will be shared with Members in early 2026.

4.10.9 The CFO has responded to the Fair Funding Consultation broadly supporting the proposals and a number of further questions were asked with the response shown below.

Question	Consultation Response
Do you agree with the government's plans to simplify the grant landscape?	SBC agrees as it will reduce the effort of grant chasing and allows LA's to use the funding most appropriately at a local level. There is some concern about combining upper and lower tier grants such as the DHP which is used to support those stay in their accommodation and this grant is being combined with an upper tier grant so concern over its distribution methodology going forward
What measures could the government use to incentivise local authorities to specifically support affordable and sub-market housing?:	<p>Lower borrowing for HRA's who now have significantly higher borrowing costs even with the enhanced rates. When the self financing deal was done SBC's average borrowing rate was 3.42% borrowing and as at August 25 year money is 5.79% (including the preferential rate -0.6%) which is a significant burden for HRA's So for HRA and regeneration projects including residential, lower borrowing rates are required.</p> <p>The Council has benefited from Homes England funding for 2 schemes in Stevenage Brent Court and Oval and more of that would be welcome</p> <p>Writing off of some self financing debt would allow affordable headroom to build, to date SBC has built over 500 homes but could do with less historic debt</p> <p>lower borrowing rates as the increased cost of building safety is reducing the ability to build more homes through borrowing combined with higher interest rates</p>

Question	Consultation Response
<p>Are there any further flexibilities that you think could support local decision-making during the transitional period?</p>	<p>Council's really need early certainty we are all interpreting the data and models produce different answers which means knowing in December is too late for setting a balanced budget for the next year.</p> <p>In addition the 3 year period crosses LGR year 1 timetable and under current funding splitting the Counties funding between different options is difficult and may lead to different outcomes based on current funding assumptions. This because it is difficult to interpret and model and different sector consultants have different funding outcomes and then translating that to different unitary LA's overlays another complexity</p>
<p>Do you agree that the government should work to reduce unnecessary or disproportionate burden created by statutory duties?</p>	<p>The current format of the Statement of Accounts it provides zero transparency to residents and it costs the taxpayer circa £250K per year that's the equivalent of over 3% on council tax. The simplification has been promised and hasn't happened, in addition Councils have to get valuers to value assets like swimming pools and offices that are held for operational use and then the value is disputed by external audit valuers and then the annual audit bill is increased</p>

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. The report deals with Council finances and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. The Council is required to set a balanced budget each year. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to estimate revenue expenditure and income for the forthcoming year from all sources, together with contributions from reserves, in order to determine a net budget requirement to be met by government grant and council tax.

5.3. Policy Implications

5.3.1. The report deals with Council policy and as such all implications are contained in the main body of the report.

5.4. Staffing and Accommodation Implication

5.4.1. There are changes to staffing budgets in the 2026/27 BTB options, but the posts identified in the CSC are filled with temporary arrangements and the Regeneration post is vacant.

5.4.2. There is also growth relating to staffing in parking and procurement as set out in Appendix B.

5.5. Equal Opportunities 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 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 need to:
- Remove discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that its unlawful under this Act
 - Promote equal opportunities between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 5.5.2. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the Budget in February 2026.

5.6. Risk Implications

- 5.6.1. There are risk implications to setting a prudent General Fund budget if the Balancing the Budget options identified in the report are not achieved and crucially if future options are not found to meet the targets outlined in the report.
- 5.6.2. There are a number of risks that have been identified and these are set out in the report and it should be noted that further detail of the financial settlement is required to identify whether increased pressures from tax changes are fully compensated and the individual level of funding for Stevenage Borough Council.

5.7. Climate Change Implications

- 5.7.1. The Council declared a climate change emergency at the June 2019 Council meeting with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. The Transformation programme and the digital on-line agenda will contribute to reducing the Councils carbon footprint.

5.8 Local Government Reorganisation

- 5.8.1 The MTFs and BTB savings target and three year funding settlement are within the timetable for LGR as summarised in para.3.6.
- 5.8.2 Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides the Secretary of State with powers to control financial decisions made by local authorities that are due to be abolished or reorganised under a structural changes order. Under this provision, the Secretary of State may issue a direction that prevents a relevant authority from doing any of the following without written consents:-
- a) dispose of any land if the consideration for the disposal exceeds £100,000;
 - b) enter into any capital contract-

under which the consideration payable by the relevant authority exceeds £1,000,000; or

which includes a term allowing the consideration payable by the relevant authority to be varied;

c) enter into any non-capital contract under which the consideration payable by the relevant authority exceeds £100,000, where-

(i) the period of the contract extends beyond date to be determined ; or

(ii) under the terms of the contract, that period may be extended beyond that date

5.8.3 The direction can specify that the consent must be obtained from the Secretary of State or a designated person of an authority (e.g. a shadow executive). The timing of the direction will be determined by the Secretary of State but will usually be linked to the issuing of the structural change order, the indicative timeframe of which for Hertfordshire is autumn 2026.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (2025/26-2029/30)

APPENDICES

Appendix A Balancing the Budget options

Appendix B Growth Options

Appendix C Advertising BTB option summarised in Appendix A

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Budget 2025/26	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	GF Year 1 (2026/27)	HRA Year 1 (2026/27)	GF Year 2 (202728)	HRA Year 2 (2027/28)
2026/S3	Development Management	Introduction of FastTrack applications (Approved in October fees and Charges report but income not yet calculated)	£0	Customers who use this service will be able to secure a faster planning decision. A typical FastTrack application fee charge will be £194 additional and for FastTrack certificate will be £97 additional. More information can be found in the 2026/27 Fees and Charges report to the October Cabinet Appendix D.	£2,910	£0	£2,910	£0
2026/S4	Development Management	Uplift in pre-application fees across a range of application types. (Approved in October fees and Charges report but income not yet calculated)	£57,110	Customers who use the pre-application service will be affected by fee increases. More information can be found in the 2026/27 Fees and Charges report to the October Cabinet Appendix A concerning the fees and charges	£8,000	£0	£8,000	£0
2026/S5	Regeneration	Partners projects advice budget reduction.	£22,110	The saving relates to consultancy budgets for non-priority projects. Key programmes remain unaffected.	£5,000	£0	£5,000	£0
2026/S6	Regeneration	Delete vacant Regeneration post.	£70,430	Changes within the team staffing structure and completion of projects will minimise the impacts of removing this vacant post.	£46,780	£0	£46,780	£0
2026/S7	ICT	Depending on the outcome of a proof of the concepts over the next nine months, replacing the virtual desktop solution with M365 will result in further savings of £40k in 2028/29.	£1,628,850	While not directly affecting external service users, improved staff productivity and system reliability may enhance the quality and responsiveness of public-facing services	£0	£0	£0	£0
2026/S8	Web Team	Banner adverts from blue chip companies on intranet then (website to generate additional income subject to Member approval)	£0	None, as residents can reject cookies and will not see national advertising. Further information on this option is provided in Appendix C	£4,000	£0	£4,000	£0
2026/S9	Customer Services	A management saving is proposed within the Customer Service Centre through the deletion of one management role. No redundancies are expected, as temporary arrangements are currently in place.	£45,000	No significant impact anticipated, the change will be managed within existing processes	£12,150	£21,600	£16,200	£28,800
2026/S10	Web Team	To maximise the use of Microsoft 365, plan is to move the Intranet platform from the current supplier to M365.	£15,300	None	£0	£0	£9,180	£6,120
2026/S12	Refuse and Recycling	Charging new developments for waste and recycling receptacles (new income stream) Officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of all associated costs involved in the process, from the initial request through to site inspection and final delivery. As a result, a revised pricing model has been developed to ensure full cost recovery.	£0	This will help to recover the costs of new bins provided and replaced for new developments. Although the projected additional income from bin deliveries will not materialise until 2027/28 onwards, approval is sought at this stage to enable officers to begin issuing charging packs to external developers from this financial year (2025/26). Early approval ensures timely implementation of the revised cost recovery model and allows the service to operate transparently and consistently with developers	£0	£0	£8,100	£0
2026/S13	Third party tipping	New charges resulting in additional income/covering cost including Gate fee, Missed appointment and Cancelled appointment	£0	These charges will help to optimise the service by reducing the number / frequency of lost booking income.	£5,800	£0	£5,800	£0
Total Savings			£1,838,800		£84,640	£21,600	£105,970	£34,920

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL
BALANCING THE BUDGET 2026-27 GROWTH PROPOSALS

APPENDIX B

Ref No	Name of Service	Description of Growth Proposal	Budget 2025/26	Impact of Growth Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	GF Year 1 (2026/27)	HRA Year 1 (2026/27)	GF Year 2 (2027/28)	HRA Year 2 (2027/28)
2026/G1	Engineering & Parking	Additional Parking Management Officer Post	£436,930	Staff - creation of an additional post to provide additional resources within the Engineering and Parking Section in order to manage the increase in parking restrictions / permit zones being rolled out across the town. 2028/29 costs are reduced by £10K income for parking permits	£46,000	£0	£46,000	£0
2026/G2	Town Centre	The proposal requests funding of £47,400 per year to continue delivering free, inclusive events and maintain key infrastructure at Event Island.	£0	Continued funding will enhance public access to free, inclusive events and strengthen community partnerships through grants and shared delivery. It supports key corporate aims around town centre vibrancy, cultural engagement, and social inclusion.	£47,400	£0	£47,400	£0
2026/G3	Procurement	Staffing restructure required to deliver Procurement Act 2023, which has recently come into force (net growth after other budgets re-alignments)	£65,000	The service has 3 staff which support a shared service across East Herts, Hertsmere and SBC. The additional staff resource is supported by the Senior Leadership Team and will ensure that new regulations as a result of the new Procurement Act 2023 are delivered effectively. The remainder of the posts costs have been identified from changes in the finance team.	£1,740	£7,260	£1,740	£7,260
2026/G5	Leisure	80th Celebration of Stevenage (one-off)	£0	Stevenage is celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2026. Like previous anniversary celebrations, there will be a range of events and activities across service areas led by the portfolio holder. The £50,000 one-off growth budget will enhance this programme.	£50,000	£0	£0	£0
Total Growth			£501,930		£145,140	£7,260	£95,140	£7,260

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APPENDIX C

ADVERTISING ON THE INTRANET AND WEBSITE

Background:

The Council already has advertising and sponsorship on roundabouts, car park signs and boards around the town, through an agreement with CP Media. The Council offers advertising and sponsorship opportunities across its current assets in line with a policy <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/business/advertising-and-sponsorship-on-council-assets/corporate-advertising-and-sponsorship-framework>

This policy is designed to protect the Council and gives the Council the right to refuse advertising from brands with which it does not wish to be affiliated.

Officers have investigated the idea of advertising on the Council's intranet and website by partnering with a supplier that specialises in advertising on public sector intranets and websites, and this was discussed with members of the Commercial and Investment Working Group in October 2025.

The model is based on adding lines of code onto the Council's platforms, technology which is provided free of charge. The code then creates banners, which can be added to the top of the intranet and website and on side panels if requested. The advertising is based on cookie tracking.

There are three different types of advertising available:

- 1) **Own advertising** –The Council can place its own adverts on the intranet and website, for example for events, commercial services etc. There is no cost to the Council.
- 2) **Local advertising** – The Council can sell advertising to local businesses, at no additional cost. This can easily be packaged up with the events sponsorship that the Council offer.
- 3) **National advertising** - The Council can pick from a pool of blue-chip companies and progress with their preferred categories. It is possible to remove advertising on sensitive pages. It should be noted that if visitors to the website do not accept cookies, they do not see the external advertising. For this type of advertising, a percentage of the revenue is taken by the supplier.

Proposal:

It is proposed that in the first instance advertising can be trialled on the intranet, where it can be used as a safe space to test and gain feedback. If successful, it is recommended that advertising on the website is piloted. Intranet advertising alone is estimated to deliver a minimum level of income of £4,200 in year one, building to £8,400 per in year 2, if advertising on the website is then approved.

Risks	Mitigation
Inappropriate companies wish to advertise	As per advertising policy, the Council can refuse
Visitors to the website are not happy with being faced with external advertising	By not accepting cookies on the website, visitors can stay advertising-free
Income is lower than projected	Option to stop the advertising at any time

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the intranet advertising is piloted. Intranet advertising will then be reviewed at the Commercial and Investment Working Group in July 2026 and then, subject to Member agreement, website advertising will be implemented.

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Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 12th November 2025



MANAGEMENT OF ESTATES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS POLICY 2025-2027

AUTHORS: KERRY CLIFFORD/AMANDA ROGERS

LEAD OFFICER: KERRY CLIFFORD

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a draft Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 related to the on-going management of Housing Services and to ensure that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) delivers well maintained, safe and attractive places that residents can enjoy and take pride in.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the adoption of the draft Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 (Appendix A), subject to consultation with tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.2 That the relevant Strategic Director, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor updates and changes to this policy.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council retains its own housing stock of social rented and affordable housing, for those that need it, and is considered a Registered Provider and landlord of Social Housing. It currently owns and manages approximately 7890 general needs and sheltered housing dwellings. In addition to this it owns and manages an additional 1440 leasehold and shared ownership.
- 3.2 A Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 provides guidance to both residents and the Council on their respective obligations and sets out a fair, consistent and responsible approach.
- 3.3 Estate management reflects the wider role that the Council has in areas where there are clusters of Council owned properties. In these areas, the Council is more than just a landlord but is also responsible for neighbourhood sustainability and some aspects of the environmental quality in the local area.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council is committed to providing a cost effective, efficient Estate and Neighbourhood Service whilst meeting all its legal and contractual, obligations. The aims of the Policy are to;
- Improve standards whilst delivering value for money in the upkeep of clean, green and safe estates,
 - Have estates that the Council and our residents are proud of,
 - Ensure we have clear standards, that residents know what to expect from the estate management service, including obligations for both the Council and residents,
 - Ensure our services deliver value for money and we are clear on what we are charging for,
 - Maintain a regular, visible presence on estates,
 - Ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements,
 - Encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/estate.
- 4.2 In April 2024, The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) published a new Neighbourhood and Community Standard that sets out three clear objectives relating to the management of shared spaces;
- Safety of shared spaces – registered providers must work co-operatively with tenants, other landlords and relevant organisations to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of shared spaces.
 - Local Cooperation – Registered providers must co-operate with relevant partners to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas they provide social housing.

- Registered providers must work in partnership with appropriate local authority departments, the police and other relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents in the neighbourhoods where they provide social housing.

4.3 In addition to the new Neighbourhood and Community Standard, The Regulator of Social Housing also includes within the tenant perception survey data measures that it collects on an annual basis, three measures linked to the management of estates and neighbourhoods, they are;

TSM Measure	Annual 23/24	No of respondents	Annual 24/25	No of respondents	Direction of travel	
TP10 Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	53.3%	401	64.0%	344	+10.7%	↗
TP11 Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	47.7%	401	63.1%	804	+15.4%	↗
TP12 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling ASB	49.5%	270	57.9%	592	+8.4%	↗

4.4 The Regulator of Social Housing uses Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) as one piece of intelligence in building a picture of how a landlord is performing against the consumer standards (safety, repairs, maintenance, complaints handling, tenant involvement etc).

4.5 TSM results are required to be published by the landlord and to be used as a measure of delivering good outcomes for tenants and to drive improvements, with landlords expected to reflect on their results and take action to increase satisfaction.

4.6 Whilst satisfaction is increasing for SBC across the three measures above, it is important that the Council maintains a sharp focus on improvement to ensure that it meets regulatory compliance, prevents safety and legal issues and supports pride, safety and cohesion across it's housing stock.

4.7 The Council currently has an ASB Policy in place to ensure that it deals effectively with nuisance behaviour, but it is equally important to have clear and consistent guidelines to managing Estates and Neighbourhoods to tackle health and safety issues and to ensure that staff, contractors and residents have clear expectations relating to their roles and responsibilities as well as the standards set for operational delivery.

4.8 The Council is committed to driving improvements across its housing stock and commissioned specialist consultants to undertake a review of Caretaking Services, which includes the cleaning of Council owned flat blocks and the delivery of a proactive service. The Council is currently in the

process of drawing together an action plan to help inform service improvements and during November 2025, SBC will be further consulting with tenants and leaseholders on how they would like the service to be delivered in the future. The Caretaking Review Action Plan will be shared with the Executive Housing Working Group at a future meeting.

- 4.9 A Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 is considered essential to the Council's Maintaining Safe and Decent Homes priority commitment through the delivery of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.10 In addition, tenants and leaseholders will also be asked to review the Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 as part of SBC's commitment to involving tenants and ensuring that they are able to influence how services are delivered now and in the future. This is also a key requirement of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard set by the RSH. Consultation on the Policy and the Caretaking Service Review commences on the 28th October 2025 with 3 pop-up engagement events at Harrow Court, Brent Court and Bedwell Community Centre. There will be a 6-week on-line consultation relating to this Policy that commences on the 24th November 2025 as well as drop in sessions at Independent Living Schemes.
- 4.11 The Executive Housing Working Group has reviewed the proposed Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025-2027 and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet.
- 4.12 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on this Policy and whilst there are some negative impacts, there are valid mitigations in place to protect future tenants. (Appendix B).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 The ability of the Council to manage shared spaces effectively is imperative to the financial viability of the Housing Revenue Account and makes clear resident obligations in as well as those of SBC.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 Failure to have an effective Policy in place puts the Council at risk of not complying with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the Homes Standard as set out by The Regulator of Social Housing.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and can be seen at Appendix B.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Recharge Policy 2025-2027

Appendix B – EQIA Recharge Policy

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Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

2025 - 2027

Date created	June 2025 – DRAFT
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Assistant Director/Strategic Director/Head of Service
Version	1.1
Author	Amanda Rogers Residents & Estate Manager
Business Unit and Team	Housing Management / Housing and Neighbourhoods
Policy Review Date	September 2027
Equality Impact Assessment Date	October 2025

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

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1. Purpose

1.1 Purpose of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

To provide a clear understanding of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods process and to inform staff and residents about the Council's commitments for managing communal areas around all the homes we own and how we deliver services across our estates

To comply with legislation, statutory guidance, and the Council's Equalities Policy.

1.2 The aim of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

The aim of this policy is to:

- To improve standards whilst delivering value for money in the upkeep of clean, green and safe estates,
- Have estates that the Council and our residents are proud of,
- Ensure we have clear standards, that residents know what to expect from the estate management service, including obligations for both the Council and residents,
- Ensure our services deliver value for money and we are clear on what we are charging for,
- Maintain a regular, visible presence on estates,
- Ensure we comply with all Health & Safety requirements,
- Encourage residents to take responsibility for their environment/estate

2. Scope

This document applies to all officers and teams in the Council involved in the management of communal areas and the provision of services on our estates.

This policy also guides tenants and leaseholders living in housing managed by the Council, external organisations and our partners of their responsibilities.

2.1 Role and Responsibilities

The Resident Services Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that decisions are managed appropriately and in accordance with this policy.

The Senior Housing Officers have responsibility for the day-to-day management of decisions including ensuring implementation of this policy.

The Housing Officers are responsible for the operational aspects regarding the management of communal areas and providing services on our estates.

It is the responsibility of all officers and teams across the Council to ensure the policy is being implemented.

Contract management, for grounds maintenance, repairs and caretaking are managed and monitored by service heads for these areas

3. Legal Framework

3.1 Relevant Legislation

The following legislation relates to the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy, and we are committed to applying the terms within this document.

- The Fire Safety (England) Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- The Building Regulations 2000 Approved Document B (Fire Safety)
- Housing Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Building Regulations 2010
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Fire Safety in Specialised Housing – National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance
- Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats – Local Government Association
- Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, specifically the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the Home Standard.

4. Equalities

4.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this policy, the Council will conduct its functions in a way that:

- a. Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- b. Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.

- c. Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.
- d. Equality impact assessment (EqiA) in appendix 2.

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

5. Data Protection

5.1 The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as important to delivery of services.

5.2 The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Councils approach to handling information please see Data Protection Act <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-Council/access-to-information/data-protection-act>

6. Policy

Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

6.1 Keeping Communal Areas in a Safe Condition

Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the Neighbourhood and Community Standard, as set by the Regulator of Social Housing, alongside all relevant legislation. As part of our commitment to keeping neighbourhoods and communal areas safe and clean, we aspire to deliver services to high standards and work in partnership with residents and partners to drive continuous improvements.

Stevenage Borough Council are committed to ensuring that all communal areas in our blocks of flats are well-kept, meet all regulatory requirements and are a safe place for residents, staff and contractors.

Stevenage Borough Council defines communal areas as parts of a block of flats, street, or estate that tenants and or other residents have a right to use in common with other tenants and or other residents and for which we, as the landlord and

freeholder, are responsible. For the purpose of this policy external and internal communal areas will be defined as, but not limited to, the following:

- Entrances and communal landings
- Shared stairways and areas underneath
- Communal lounges in independent living schemes
- Communal cupboards i.e. utility cupboards
- Internal and external drying areas
 - Communal gardens
 - Accessible loft-spaces in communal areas

These areas must not be used for the storage of possessions by residents at any time and we will take a zero-tolerance approach to ensuring communal areas are kept safe and clear. We will be proactive in ensuring communal areas are clear and will take action against residents where necessary. Actions could result enforcement action against a tenancy.

If items are found in communal areas, Stevenage Borough Council will try to identify the owner. If we are unable to identify the owner or the owner refuses to remove the items a tort notice will be served.

A tort notice is a legal document that informs the owner to remove the items within a specific timeframe. If the items are not removed after the notice period, Stevenage Borough Council can remove and dispose of them.

Stevenage Borough Council can recharge the cost of removal and disposal to the owner of the items, or if the owner is not identified, the cost may be shared among the residents of the block in accordance with our Recharge Policy.

Any items left in communal areas should be reported to the Council by emailing resident.services@stevenage.gov.uk. If items are persistently left in the communal areas by the same resident after warnings are given, we will take action for breach of tenancy/ lease agreements, or the resident could face an immediate fine for fly tipping.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/environment/street-care-and-cleaning/fly-tipping>

We will ensure that repairs and cyclical and planned maintenance are conducted in communal areas promptly and with minimal inconvenience to residents.

We will take action against individuals who risk the health and safety of themselves or other people in communal areas.

We expect residents to take responsibility for keeping communal areas clear.

Stevenage Borough Council are committed to ensuring the health and safety of everyone who lives in, works in or visits any of our properties. As a landlord, we have a responsibility to ensure that internal/enclosed communal areas are kept clear and accessible so that residents can exit the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency, as well as allowing emergency services easy and uninhibited access if required. To achieve this, we require our residents to keep internal/enclosed communal areas clear and take a zero-tolerance approach when enforcing this.

Our Tenancy and Leasehold Agreements state that communal areas do not form part of an individual's tenancy and that communal areas may not be used for additional storage. There is an expectation that anyone living in our properties is required to keep communal areas clear. This includes roof spaces and lofts as highlighted in the tenancy agreement terms and conditions.

Fire Safety in Communal Areas

Management of communal areas will ensure that fire safety is never compromised. In enclosed communal areas, all escape routes must be kept completely clear. Stevenage Borough Council enforces a zero-tolerance approach to items left in communal areas based on specific criteria, though some areas may have managed exceptions.

Communal areas will be regularly inspected through safety hazard assessments to identify and remove items such as furniture, buggies, mobility scooters, plant pots, drying facilities, rubbish, bicycles, electric bikes or scooters, mopeds, etc. (this list is not exhaustive).

This zero-tolerance approach is to prevent fire hazards, allow us to carry out essential repairs and maintenance, and help to keep our residents' homes safe and enjoyable places to live.

Repairs and Maintenance of Communal Areas

Stevenage Borough Council will:

- Ensure stairways, lifts, landings, and corridors are safe and well maintained.
- Conduct regular inspections and repairs, including play areas. Repairs reporting through our website <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/Council-housing/repairs/report-a-repair>

The Council is responsible for repairing and maintaining external structures it owns. A comprehensive communal repair programme is in place to address compliance,

component replacement, and major external renewals, alongside day-to-day repairs to prevent stock deterioration.

Stevenage Borough Council will:

- Maintain communal entrance doors.
- Ensure external areas are safe and well maintained.
- Conduct water quality risk assessments for communal water systems.
- Maintain sprinkler system.
- Regularly update annual programmes to improve and enhance properties and estates.

To complement reactive maintenance, Stevenage Borough Council runs an ongoing major works improvement programme not all items listed below are applicable in all cases.

- Fire door replacements.
- Landlord electrical system upgrades.
- Door entry and CCTV system installations.
- Lift replacements.
- Structural improvements to internal and external communal areas.
- Replacement of communal water tanks.

We will continue to collaborate closely with tenants and leaseholders to ensure charges (where applicable) related to fire safety, compliance, communal areas, and environmental improvements are fair and transparent.

External Structures

Residents must obtain written permission from the Council before making any alterations to external structures. This includes, but is not limited to, the types of alterations listed below.

- The only exception to this requirement is where adaptations are explicitly required by the Council and are made to homes or external areas for older or disabled tenants.
- Greenhouses or sheds.
- Garages.

- Driveways or parking spaces.
- TV aerials or satellite dishes.

If unauthorised changes are made, the Council may:

- Investigate the matter.
- Conduct restoration works and charge the resident for the costs, including any damages caused.
- In serious cases, apply for a court order to terminate the tenancy.
- Seek a court order requiring the resident to restore the property to its original state in extreme cases.

6.2 Measuring the Quality of Service

Stevenage Borough Council will measure service performance in line with its performance management framework. We will proactively report resident satisfaction in areas such as repairs, caretaking, cleaning, and grounds maintenance to enable residents to hold us accountable.

6.3 Working as One Organisation

Stevenage Borough Council will work collaboratively across departments and with partners to protect residents, improve outcomes, especially for vulnerable people, maintain assets and enhance neighbourhoods and the borough overall.

Caretaking

Caretaking services are provided according to a pre-determined cleaning schedule, which is based on the frequency historically agreed upon and paid for by each block. For example, a block with a quarterly cleaning schedule will receive four visits per year.

Residents may report concerns if a block becomes unclean between scheduled visits. In such instances, a reactive cleaning service can be arranged; however, this is considered a chargeable service.

Recycling

Residents will be strongly encouraged to participate in recycling household waste. Recycling services operate alongside the Council's waste collection services.

All Stevenage residents can use local 'Reuse and Recycling Centres' to dispose of a wide range of reusable and recyclable items free of charge.

Waste Collection

Stevenage Borough Council provides a comprehensive waste and recycling service, including fortnightly refuse collection and fortnightly recycling collections.

Residents can also use the Council's Recycling Centre for disposal of various household waste items, as well as access bulky item collections and clinical waste collections.

The Council has scheduled a programme of improvements to bin stores and refuse and re-cycling facilities at Council owned flat blocks and will consult with tenants where practicable to ensure they are educated on their responsibilities concerning responsible waste disposal and recycling opportunities.

Key aspects of the waste collection service:

Refuse Collection: Non-recyclable waste is collected weekly from residents' black bins.

Recycling Collection: Recycling containers (red, blue, brown, and black) are collected fortnightly.

Bulk Waste Collection: Large household items can be collected for a fee.

Clinical Waste Collection: A free service for residents needing to dispose of clinical waste.

Commercial Waste: Commercial businesses can utilize the Council's trade waste services for regular and one-off collections.

Recycling Centre: The Recycling Centre on Caxton Way provides a location for residents to dispose of various household waste items.

Additional Bin Capacity: Residents can request additional recycling bins for increased recycling capacity.

Flat Block Collections: Refuse is collected weekly and recycling fortnightly in flat blocks, with collection schedules varying by block.

Bin Placement: Bins should be placed on the property boundary by 7 am on collection day, but not before 7 pm the night before and should be returned to within the property boundary once they have been emptied.

Residents are expected to:

- Dispose of all domestic rubbish in designated bins or containers.

- Use local recycling points and reuse and recycling centres where possible to reduce landfill.
- Arrange and pay for removal of personal bulky refuse that cannot be recycled.

The Council regularly inspects for fly-tipping and relies on residents to report offenders. Identified offenders may face financial penalties, prosecution or tenancy action.

Parking Enforcement

Parking is restricted in some areas to marked bays, vehicles with valid permits, and those with up-to-date road tax.

The Council, working in partnership with East Herts Council and Apcoa, is responsible for the enforcement of parking restrictions in the town.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/parking/parking-fines/parking-enforcement>

The Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) shows the details of the alleged contravention, the date and time when it occurred plus the location where it happened. If you feel it was wrongly issued or that there are special circumstances, you should challenge your PCN online, or using one of the other methods printed on the ticket.

This may result in the PCN being cancelled, or your challenge being turned down, in which case you will be informed about your rights to take the matter further through the formal appeal process.

You should make your challenge promptly, as this will still provide the opportunity for you to pay at the reduced rate if it is turned down.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/parking/parking-fines/challenge-a-pcn>

Our aims are:

- to benefit pedestrians, cyclists, and bus passengers as well as all other drivers by reducing the amount of illegal and inconsiderate parking in the town.
- to improve road safety through enforcement action against drivers of illegally and dangerously parked vehicles.
- to improve the street environment for those who visit, live or work in the town.
- to reduce congestion by controlling the parking of vehicles on street.
- to ensure better availability and turnover of disabled and short-term parking spaces in the town centre, allowing more people to park.

Abandoned Vehicles

Our Resident Services Team will investigate vehicles deemed dangerous, abandoned, or a nuisance, referring cases to parking contractors for removal where appropriate.

It is a criminal offence to abandon a motor vehicle on any land in the open air, or on any other land forming part of the highway.

It is also an offence to have a vehicle on the road without tax, or to have a vehicle on the road which has a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN).

We can begin the abandoned vehicle investigation process if the vehicle is not taxed and one of the following apply:

- It has no current registered keeper.
- It has been stationary for a significant amount of time.
- There is severe damage, it is run down, unroadworthy or burned out.
- It is lacking one or more of its number plates or contains waste.

However, there are also a number of situations where we have no statutory powers to act or enforce.

A vehicle is not necessarily considered to be abandoned if it is:

- Nuisance parking outside your house or on your street.
- Illegally/dangerously/badly parked.
- Recently crashed or broken down.
- Obstructing vehicle access.
- Obstructing utilities.
- Untaxed but being used.
- Uninsured/has no MOT.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/environment/street-care-and-cleaning/abandoned-vehicles>

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Stevenage Borough Council takes a zero-tolerance stance on ASB, including noise, vandalism, graffiti, and harassment. We are committed to early intervention and a victim-focused approach. Residents are responsible for the conduct of household members, visitors, and pets.

In line with our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, we expect residents using communal areas to:

- Show consideration for their neighbours and keep noise disturbance to a minimum, particularly at unsocial hours.
- Use of barbeques and building of campfires are not permitted in communal areas.
- Smoking and/or vaping is not allowed within any internal communal areas or within 10 metres of any doors or windows.
- Residents cannot store or charge any electrical appliance or vehicle (including mobility scooters and e-scooters) within communal areas or within four metres of the building.

As a landlord, we will tackle unacceptable behaviour in communal areas by acting against any breaches of tenancy or leases. In more severe cases, we may inform the emergency services.

Enforcement actions will be taken in line with the Council's ASB Policy and tenancy or leasehold agreements.

We have a designated Anti-Social Behaviour Team that leads on these cases.

The Council also works with partners, including Police and Fire Services, through the Safer Stevenage Partnership to address ASB impacts.

Trees and Gardens

Residents are responsible for maintaining gardens associated with their homes, including grass and hedges, ensuring no nuisance is caused.

Tenancy and lease agreements set out responsibilities for trees. Residents must seek written permission before altering, removing, or planting trees.

Shared garden trees causing damage will be inspected and managed by the Council.

Support services are available for vulnerable tenants under the Vulnerability Policy.

Grass cutting in the communal areas of flat blocks are carried on a four-weekly cycle, as part of a scheduled rotation across the town. During periods of extreme heat or drought, grass cutting may be temporarily suspended due to burn-off, as cutting under such conditions can damage the grass and is not effective.

Pruning of shrubs and other communal planting is undertaken twice annually. This completed once in the summer and once in the winter they are subject to suitable weather conditions.

6.4 Provision of Services on Estates

To protect residents effectively, Stevenage Borough Council coordinates services through dedicated teams and offers the following on estates:

Service Standards & Schedules

Our service standards outline the expected level and quality of service that residents can anticipate from Stevenage Borough Council. They establish clear measurable criteria for the delivery of services such as caretaking, grounds maintenance, repairs and waste and recycling this includes response times, frequency and scope of work.

These standards ensure consistency, accountability, transparency and help to maintain safe, clean and well-managed communal environments. Additionally, they serve as benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating performance, supporting continuous improvement and ensuring that residents receive reliable and responsive services.

Please see below links for schedules and service standards.

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/Council-housing/flat-blocks/caretaking-services>

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/housing-policies-and-strategies/tenants-responsive-repairs-and-maintenance-policy>

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/your-bin-collections>

Recycling on Estates

Large communal recycling bins are provided in bin chambers. Residents should:

- Check bins and remove non-recyclable items.
- Place recyclable items (paper, glass, plastics) directly into bins without bags or sacks.
- Avoid leaving items around bins.

In line with our Recharge Policy, a charge may be issued for any item removed from a communal area where the owner can be identified. Stevenage Borough Council cannot be held responsible for the damage, loss or theft of items left in communal areas.

Parking on Estates

Residents on estates with Traffic Management Orders (TMOs) must meet permit criteria to obtain parking permits.

All vehicles parked on Stevenage Borough Council managed land must have valid road tax. Vehicles with a Statutory Off-Road Notification (SORN) must not be parked in public or communal areas unless prior written permission has been granted by Stevenage Borough Council.

Parking controls ensure:

- Fair access for residents and visitors with permits.
- Prevention of misuse by non-residents or businesses.
- Clear access to service roads, garages, rubbish chutes, and chambers.
- Removal of vehicles that are unused, nuisances, abandoned, or pose public danger.

Permit refusals may occur if the Council has taken legal action against a resident for nuisance or if rent/service charge arrears exist and financial assistance is required (Appendices 1).

Caretaking on Estates

Our Caretaking Team and Building Safety Team perform vital estate services including physical checks, minor repairs, daily cleaning, and reporting.

To ensure that communal areas can be used safely by anyone accessing them, we will ensure that regular repairs and maintenance are carried out as required. This includes a scheduled cleaning service.

The majority of our communal areas are cleaned on a periodic basis. In the case of window cleaning, the Council are only responsible for windows in communal areas.

Grounds Maintenance

Our Street Grounds Team are responsible for maintaining communal open spaces including grass, hedges, flower beds, and naturalised areas. They collaborate with residents and stakeholders to increase biodiversity.

Their service is monitored through service level agreements by our Resident Services Team.

Trees

Trees are regularly inspected for health and safety risks by our Arboriculture and Conservation Team. Those causing damage outside scheduled inspections will be assessed and managed appropriately.

Estate Safety

Lighting, fences, and additional measures enhance security, including:

- Safer road layouts and traffic management on estates.
- Community Liaison Officer services supporting nuisance, ASB, vandalism, and crime reporting.
- CCTV monitoring to deter ASB and manage high risk buildings. This may be mobile or permanent. We will ensure that impact assessments are completed but reserve the rights to enact CCTV wherever it is deemed necessary to ensure the safety of residents.
- Enhanced tenancy management on some blocks (including high rise blocks) that require it.
- Secure doors and windows to improve home security.

6.5 Resident Participation

Stevenage Borough Council places residents at the heart of neighbourhood management and policymaking through active involvement and consultation.

We have consulted residents in developing this policy and will continue to:

- Communicate inclusively and transparently.
- Engage residents and community organisations by listening and responding to their views.
- Ensure services meet the diverse needs of all residents.
- Provide accessible information via newsletters, emails, websites, and estate noticeboards.

The Council will work in partnership with residents, stakeholders, and external organisations to:

- Manage neighbourhoods effectively.
- Deliver environmental improvements that deter crime and ASB.
- Enhance communal and green spaces for wellbeing and biodiversity this is subject to funding.
- Develop Estate Action Plans (EAPs) collaboratively, using available funds.

Organised Estate Inspections

Regular estate 'walkabouts' will be conducted with Councillors, resident groups, and relevant staff to identify and address issues, complementing routine estate inspections.

Walkabouts provide a platform to raise concerns affecting groups of residents for coordinated resolution and will be scheduled and advertised to local residents to increase participation.

We will share feedback on actions progressed from estate walkabouts with local residents to show actions have been completed and to demonstrate the Council's commitments to improving neighbourhoods.

6.6 Collaborating with External Stakeholders

Stevenage Borough Council works closely with other housing providers in the town to share good practices and coordinate services. The Council has agreements in place with other key social housing providers in Stevenage.

The Council focuses on improving neighbourhoods, community safety, and residents' health and wellbeing. It supports projects that help vulnerable people and make the community safer.

Stevenage Borough Council also collaborates with partners like police, health services, and community organisations to provide strategic support for residents while advancing the shared vision and strategic priorities of the borough.

6.7 Contact

All officers from Stevenage Borough Council will report repairs that they identify in communal areas. Tenants and Leaseholders are also responsible for reporting communal area repairs via our website or by calling 01438 242666 and in case of an emergency 01438 314963. These repairs will then be carried out within the timescales set out in our Responsive [Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#).

7. Consultation

This policy has been developed in consultation with key staff within the Council. Government has directed the legal perspective of the policy, but key related stakeholders have also influenced how the Council intends to implement and manage the policy.

The Policy will also be consulted on with residents prior to being adopted.

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Business Unit's Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years (see page 1 for details of Business Unit) or earlier if there is a change in legislation. Where more than 10% of the policy content is changed the Assistant Director and appropriate Portfolio Holder will be required to decide if the policy needs to be formally reconsidered by the Cabinet or appropriate decision-making body.
- 8.2 Where there is a request for the content of the policy to be reviewed in response to a complaint, the relevant Business Unit's Assistant Director will be notified. If the Assistant Director agrees that a review of policy is required, this will be discussed with the appropriate Portfolio Holder. The Head of Service or Service Manager will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

9. References and Resources

- Allocations Scheme
- Tenancy Agreement
- Leaseholder Leases
- Housing Asset Management Strategy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Housing Income Policy
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- Recharge Policy

10. Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council

11. Appendices

None.

12. Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
June 2025	Transferred onto new template	Ryan Jefferies - Senior Housing Officer
June 2025	Resident Services Manager	Amanda Rogers
June 2025	Head of Housing Operations	Simon Kiff
September 2025	Made relevant changes following policy being reviewed.	Ryan Jefferies – Senior Housing Officer
October 2025	Made relevant changes and checked for accuracy	Kerry Clifford, AD Housing & Neighbourhoods

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Estimated time taken to complete: 2 hours*

*Please note that this should be a working document and should be actively reviewed throughout the lifetime of the project/policy/service change



Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

October 2025- October 2027

Date created	October 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Assistant Director/Strategic Director/Head of Service
Version	One
Author	Amanda Rogers
Business Unit and Team	Housing & Neighbourhoods- Resident Services

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 EqlA?

Title:	Management of Estates and Neighbourhood 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?		No
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		No
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		No
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?		No

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: Amanda Rogers

Decision approved by:

Role: Resident Services Manager

Role: Assistant Director

Date: 03/11/2025

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?		Management of Estates and Neighbourhood Policy			
Lead Assessor	Amanda Rogers			Assessment team	Ryan Jeffies Senior Housing Officer
Start date	Oct 2025	End date	Oct 2027		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)	2 years				

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	The Management of Estates and Neighbourhood Policy sets out Council's approach to the effective and equitable management of its housing estates, communal areas, and neighbourhood environments, impacting on tenants, leaseholders, Council staff, contractors and partners.
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>Maintain safe, clean, and attractive estates and communal spaces.</p> <p>Support sustainable and cohesive communities.</p> <p>Promote tenant and resident involvement in local decision-making.</p> <p>Address anti-social behaviour, environmental concerns, and tenancy breaches fairly and consistently.</p> <p>Ensure services are accessible, responsive, and non-discriminatory.</p>

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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	N/A	Promote equal opportunities	<p>The Management of Estates and Neighbourhood Policy is designed to provide a transparent and accountable framework. It has been written to ensure there is no discrimination against any protected characteristics.</p> <p>The aim of the Management of Estates and Neighbourhood Policy is to outline how we provide services to our tenants & leaseholders through the process following legislative requirements.</p>	Encourage good relations	The Policy sets out how tenants & leaseholders are supported through the process, ensuring that their needs are considered.

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Housing Act 1985 & 1996</p> <p>Localism Act 2011</p> <p>Regulatory Framework for social Housing (Neighbourhood and Community Standard)</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

	Housing estates Bill (2024- 2026)
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>Policy Aims and Desired Outcomes</p> <p>Deliver consistent standards in estate and neighbourhood management across all SBC areas.</p> <p>Foster inclusive communities where all residents feel safe and valued.</p> <p>Ensure fair access to services regardless of protected characteristics.</p> <p>Strengthen collaboration between Housing, Community Safety, Environmental Services, and residents.</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:

Age					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N'A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Age Older tenants may have mobility issues affecting participation; younger residents may feel disengaged from estate issues. Provide multiple engagement channels (in-person, digital, and written)				
What opportunities are there to promote	Social media Surveys Consultation		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Feedback from consultation	

equality and inclusion?	Resident Groups		
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Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Physical accessibility issues in communal areas; difficulties accessing information or reporting issues. Ensure accessible paths and communal areas; offer information in accessible formats; promote digital and phone reporting tools.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote different options to report Surveys Social media Resident Groups		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Possible reluctance to report neighbour disputes due to fear of discrimination. Reinforce confidentiality and staff training on inclusive communication.				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communication Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None
-----------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------	------

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No significant differential impact identified. Monitor through ongoing service feedback.				
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	Medium Enhancing safety and community cohesion. Encouraging community empowerment and local participation.	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Expectant or new parents may have additional housing or environmental safety concerns. Prioritise cleanliness, lighting, and safety; provide additional support where needed.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communication Website Estate Audits	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A

Race					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Language barriers or cultural differences could hinder engagement or reporting of issues. Provide translation/interpreting services; ensure cultural sensitivity in communications				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups Estate Audits	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None		

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	None identified directly; possible impact on scheduling of meetings/events. Schedule events flexibly and respect cultural/religious observances.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None

Sex					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Potential disproportionate impact on lone female tenants in relation to safety. Improve lighting and security in communal areas; support reporting mechanisms for anti-social behaviour.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None		

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	Small	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Possible reluctance to report harassment due to fear of stigma. Reinforce equality messages in communications; ensure staff awareness and training.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<p align="center">Socio-economic¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement</p>					
Positive impact	Medium Supporting tenants in lower-income areas through improved estate conditions. Enhancing safety and community cohesion.	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A

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.

	Encouraging community empowerment and local participation				
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Possible reluctance to report harassment due to fear of stigma. Reinforce equality messages in communications; ensure staff awareness and training.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None		

Additional Considerations Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	High	Negative impact	N/A	Unequal impact	N/A
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Supports rights to adequate housing, safety, participation, and non-discrimination under the Human Rights Act 1998 and Article 8 of the ECHR (right to respect for home and family life).				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Social Media Communications Website Resident Groups	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	None		

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?		Residents?	TBC through policy consultation after Cabinet approval of the Policy.
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

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	Yes	
	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?
Accessibility of communication materials				

<p>Provide Easy Read, BSL, and translated versions</p> <p>Engagement with underrepresented groups Develop targeted engagement strategy</p> <p>Consistency of service standards Introduce monitoring framework with resident feedback</p> <p>Estates Management Team Ongoing</p> <p>Equality training for frontline staff Deliver regular equality and diversity training HR / Learning & Development</p>				

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Kerry Clifford, Assistant Director Housing & Neighbourhoods

Date: 3rd November 2025

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

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Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: **##**

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 12th November 2025



RECHARGE POLICY 2025-2027

AUTHORS: KERRY CLIFFORD/SIMON KIFF

LEAD OFFICER: KERRY CLIFFORD,

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a draft Recharge Policy 2025-2027 related to the on-going management of Housing Services and to ensure that SBC has a fair, consistent and responsible approach as to when recharges might apply.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the adoption of the draft Recharge Policy 2025-2027 (Appendix A), subject to consultation with tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.2 That the relevant Strategic Director, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor updates and changes to this policy.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council retains its own housing stock of social rented and affordable housing, for those that need it, and is considered a Registered Provider and Landlord of Social Housing. It currently owns and manages approximately 7890 general needs and sheltered housing dwellings. In addition to this it owns and manages an additional 1440 leasehold and shared ownership
- 3.2 All tenancy, leasehold and licence agreements contain clauses setting out both the landlord's and the resident's obligations or agreements. Resident obligations are covered by clauses dealing with the use of the premises, condition of the property and external areas, rubbish, nuisance and damage, amongst other obligations. It is a residents' responsibility not to cause, or allow to be caused, damage and to make good any damage to the landlord's property, whether caused by neglect, wilful damage or misuse (including accidental damage) by the resident themselves or a person or pet occupying or visiting the property. This includes damage to the individual dwelling, property structure, internal and external communal areas.
- 3.3 The Council recognises that the vast majority of residents understand their responsibilities and will look after their homes and surrounding areas. However, there are a small number who do not or are unable to take responsibility for ensuring they comply with the terms and conditions of their agreements.
- 3.4 The Recharge Policy 2025-2027 provides guidance to both residents and the Council on their respective obligations and sets out a fair, consistent and responsible approach to recovering charges for costs that fall outside of SBC's core responsibilities.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council is committed to providing a cost effective, efficient service whilst meeting all its legal, including contractual, obligations. The Policy sets out the items that existing and former tenants and leaseholders might be charged for and the process of recharging.
- 4.2 The Council currently has a recharge procedure in place, and whilst the Council implements recharges, a formal Policy is needed to ensure a transparent and consistent approach.
- 4.3 By not having a Recharge Policy in place, the Council is at risk of challenge from the Housing Ombudsman, should disputes concerning recharges reach that far and if the Council makes recharges for the recovery of legal costs for enforcement action such as access injunctions that will enable us to perform our legal and statutory obligations.
- 4.4 As outlined in the proposed Policy, a recharge refers to the reasonable costs incurred by SBC when:
- A resident completes unauthorised alterations and fails to carry out necessary reinstatement works,
 - Works are completed to an unacceptable standard,

- Properties and gardens are not kept in good repair or wilful damage, or neglect is caused,
 - Rubbish or personal items are abandoned on SBC property,
 - Access to properties is denied and SBC is unable to fulfil legal obligations or housing management functions
- 4.5 The Council has identified considerable pressure on some service budgets, requiring growth in previous years to support the necessary works to maintain homes at a safe and decent standard, such as void and repair costs. Wherever possible inspections will be completed prior to tenants leaving the properties to identify if any repairs are required and advise tenants if they are rechargeable. This also provides an opportunity for tenants to rectify any rechargeable items before leaving the property and having recharges applied.
- 4.6 The Tenancy Audit regime has also highlighted properties that have been structurally altered without permission, that are in poor condition through neglect or need repairs that have not reported in a timely manner, which when left, costs the Council considerable expense to remedy. The adoption of this Policy enables the Council to minimise the risk to the Council of related costs through recharges and/or to work with residents to rectify the issues and identify any support needs.
- 4.7 The Council has also seen a growth in the number of decants that are required due to neglect to properties, again adding additional cost to the Council as well as rent loss or the cost of non HRA accommodation in addition to removal and storage costs. In these incidents, the Council will always provide additional support where needs are identified to ensure that tenancies can be sustained in the future.
- 4.8 The Council is also experiencing challenges regarding access to some properties for stock condition surveys, tenancy audits and other legal obligations relating to gas and electrical safety checks and damp and mould. In some circumstances this may require the Council to take action through the courts to gain access to a property to carry out our statutory and legal landlord obligations. The Council is at risk of penalty or regulatory action if it does not perform key functions and the ability of the Council to recover costs associated with legal action is a significant deterrent to non-access issues.
- 4.9 The Recharge Policy 2025-2027 is a key Policy within the Housing Services policy framework that will provide a fair and consistent approach to the recharging process and will enable the Council to recoup costs incurred in line with residents not upholding their obligations and responsibilities. This approach is in common with most landlords.
- 4.10 The Council naturally recognises that situations may arise where recharges are inappropriate and Council Officers are expected to use good judgement within the framework of the Policy when applying recharges. For example, a recharge may not be made where the resident is a victim of domestic abuse, and the damage was made by the perpetrator. Consideration will also be given to a resident's vulnerability and support needs. Guidance on when recharges may or may not be applied will be provided to staff alongside the

Policy document, as well as guidance on what types of evidence will be needed to supported a recharge.

- 4.11 The proposed Policy also allows that in the case of financial hardship, the Council may reduce or waive charges or offer flexible payment arrangements to spread the cost over a manageable period to not place residents under financial pressure. Support will also be provided to any residents where financial challenges are identified through referrals to Tenancy Sustainment Officers, Welfare and Debt Advice Officers or Citizens Advice.
- 4.12 A Recharge Policy is also essential to the Council's Balancing the Budget commitment through the delivery of the Corporate Plan and maintaining safe and decent homes and is a key measure to support the financial viability of the HRA.
- 4.13 The Executive Housing Working Group has reviewed the proposed Recharge Policy 2025-2027 and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet.
- 4.14 Tenants and Leaseholders will be consulted on the Policy prior to it being adopted. Consultation will run for a period of 6 weeks and will commence on the 24th November 2025, following Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.15 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on this Policy and whilst there are some negative impacts, there are valid mitigations in place to protect future tenants. (Appendix B).

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and implications are included in the body of the report, if this policy is not adopted there may also be challenges to debt recovery processes.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 The Council may be challenged by the Housing Ombudsman if a Recharge Policy is not in place.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and can be seen at Appendix B.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

This policy will assist SBC to meet regulatory requirements in relation to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Recharge Policy 2025-2027

Appendix B – EQIA Recharge Policy

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Recharge Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

[2025 - 2027]

Date created	September 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Head of Service
Version	Version 2
Author	Simon Kiff Head of Housing Operations
Business Unit and Team	Housing & Neighbourhoods
Policy Review Date	August 2027 (All policies should be reviewed every 2 years or earlier if there is a change in legislation)
Equality Impact Assessment Date	October 2025

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

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all staff and tenants and leaseholders of Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) understand the recharge process and are equipped with the necessary information to support its fair and consistent implementation.
- 1.2 This Policy outlines the principles that guides SBC's approach to recovering operational costs that fall outside of SBC's core responsibilities as a landlord. It ensures that these costs are recovered in a manner that is transparent, reasonable, and equitable to all residents.
- 1.3 The Council recognises that the vast majority of tenants, former tenants, leaseholders and licensees understand and uphold their responsibilities and will look after their home. However, there are a small number of residents who do not value their homes or take responsibility for ensuring they comply with their tenancy/lease/licence agreements relating to property standards. This Policy provides for these instances and enables the Council to recharge residents who do not comply, and this helps to keeps rents and service charges as low as possible.
- 1.4 A recharge, within the context of this Policy, refers to the reasonable costs incurred by SBC when:
- A resident completes unauthorised alterations and fails to carry out necessary reinstatement works,
 - Works are completed to an unacceptable standard,
 - Properties and gardens are not kept in good repair or wilful damage is caused
 - Rubbish or personal items are abandoned on SBC property
 - Access to properties is denied and SBC is unable to fulfil legal obligations or housing management functions
- 1.5 Recharges differ from service charges, which are shared among multiple residents as part of standard tenancy costs under SBC's Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy.
- 1.6 This policy applies equally to both the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund (GF), ensuring that all income due to SBC from recharges is accurately recovered, appropriately accounted for, and supports the financial sustainability of both arms of the Council's operations.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy outlines Stevenage Borough Council's approach to the recovery of recharges to all properties and communal areas owned or managed by SBC, including:
- General needs and independent living housing,
 - Leasehold properties,
 - Temporary accommodation,
 - Garages.
- 2.2 It applies to all residents, regardless of tenure type, and should be read alongside the relevant tenancy, lease, or licence agreement.
- 2.3 Rechargeable works may be identified in:
- Occupied properties,
 - Properties vacated without formal termination,
 - Properties where the tenancy ended correctly, but repairs or clearances are still required.

SBC may seek to recover costs from former tenants, including through legal channels where necessary.

3. Legal Framework

This Policy is underpinned by key legislation and regulatory standards, including but not limited to:

3.1 Regulatory Standards:

Regulator of Social Housing – Consumer Standards:

- Home Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

Economic Standards:

- Governance and Financial Viability Standard
- Value for Money Standard

3.2 Legal Framework:

Housing Law:

- Housing Act 2004
- Landlord and Tenant Acts 1985 & 1987
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

- Housing and Urban Development Act 1993
- Mobile Homes Act 1983

3.3 Equality & Social Justice:

- Equality Act 2010
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Localism Act 2011

3.4 Data Protection:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

3.5 Other Relevant Legislation:

- Bribery Act 2010
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- All applicable Health & Safety and Building Regulations

4. Equalities

Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty, the Council will carry out its functions in a way that:

- a) Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- b) Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't
- c) Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the PSED is set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) which is applicable to all employees of the Council, Councillors and contractors or suppliers who provide services on behalf of the Council.

5. Data Protection

The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as very important to its successful operations and to maintaining confidence between the Council and those with whom it carries out business. The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018).

The Council's principal aim is to ensure that all personal data processing carried out by the Council, or on its behalf, complies with the seven data protection principles and other key legislative requirements. For further information on the Council's approach to handling information please see [the Data Protection Act web page](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk) at www.stevenage.gov.uk

6. Policy

6.1 All tenancy, leasehold and licence agreements contain clauses setting out both the landlord's and the resident's obligations or agreements. Resident obligations are covered by clauses dealing with the use of the premises, condition of the property and external areas, rubbish, nuisance and damage, amongst other obligations. It is a residents' responsibility not to cause, or allow to be caused, damage and to make good any damage to the landlord's property, whether caused by neglect, wilful damage or misuse (including accidental damage) by the resident themselves or a person or pet occupying or visiting the property. This includes damage to the individual dwelling, property structure, internal and external communal areas.

6.2 This Recharge Policy is designed to address the full range of circumstances where recharges may apply.

6.3 Resident Responsibilities

All tenancy, licence, and lease agreements outline resident obligations related to:

- Proper use and maintenance of the property and communal areas.
- Avoiding damage to fixtures, fittings, and structure.
- Keeping the property clean, safe, and free from nuisance.
- Allowing access for the Council to fulfil legal obligations, such as routine repairs and gas servicing, or to perform housing management functions.

Residents are responsible for ensuring damage is not caused by themselves, members of their household, or their visitors. If damage occurs, residents must restore the property or will be recharged for SBC's cost of reinstatement.

6.4 When Recharges May Apply

Recharges will be applied in the following circumstances, including but not limited to:

- **Damage caused by the resident**, household member, pets or visitors (intentional or accidental),
- **Failure to maintain or repair items** the resident is responsible for,
- **Property not returned in lettable condition** upon vacating (e.g., personal items left, rubbish, damage),
- **Clearance of gardens, sheds, outhouses, storage cupboards and garages**

- **Missed appointments** with contractors or maintenance staff without reasonable notice,
- **Misuse of emergency repairs service**, including false emergency reports,
- **Unauthorised alterations** to the property or removal of fixtures,
- **Rubbish/furniture abandoned** in the property, garden, or communal areas,
- **Vehicle abandonment** on SBC land,
- **Legal or enforcement action** needed to gain access to property,
- **Failure to allow access** for inspection or repair after repeated appointments.
- **Replacement** of lost and stolen keys or key fobs and lock changes
- **Removal and storage** of goods at the end of a tenancy

Where possible, SBC will notify the resident in advance of any potential recharge and provide a cost estimate before works proceed. A declaration will be sent to residents for signing, agreeing to cover costs.

Recharges may also be applied to non-tenants who cause damage to SBC property, including unauthorised occupiers, squatters, or individuals identified in anti-social behaviour cases.

6.5 **Recharge Costs and Administration**

All recharges are based on actual costs incurred by SBC, using the National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates or, where needed, bespoke contractor quotes. A 12% administration fee is added to all recharges to cover internal processing. Charges apply from both internal SBC teams and external contractors. SBC is committed to delivering value for money through competitive procurement.

6.6 **Missed Appointments**

If a resident misses an agreed repairs appointment with no reasonable notice, SBC may apply a recharge at the current standard rate. Appointments are:

- Scheduled in consultation with residents
- Confirmed in writing and via SMS reminders

6.7 **Vacated Properties**

If a resident is due to vacate a property, however SBC identifies at a pre-void visit that the property is not in a lettable condition, SBC may:

- Refuse or delay transfers until the property is remedied,

Where a tenancy ends correctly but issues remain, SBC may still apply recharges and pursue recovery, even if no forwarding address is provided.

Items that will be recharged for when the property is vacated include;

- Cleaning, disposal, internal clearance, or repair costs.
- Unauthorised alterations and structural damage
- Clearance of sheds, outhouses, store cupboards and garages
- Removal of flooring, this includes but not exhausted to wooden/laminate floor carpet etc
- Replacing of electric showers installed by the resident back to the original fitting
- Replastering/redecorating if in poor condition due to the resident
- Clearance of gardens
- Replacing of fixtures and fittings that have been damaged or removed

6.8 **Emergency Callouts**

SBC reserves the right to recharge residents who use the out-of-hours emergency repair service for issues that are not genuine emergencies, as defined in the Repairs & Maintenance Policy.

6.9 **Damage**

Where damage has been caused, SBC may require the resident to reinstate the damage within a realistic timeframe as an alternative to a recharge being applied. If the resident is not able to or fails to reinstate the damage within the timeframe, SBC will carry out the works and recharge the resident in line with this Policy. All works carried out must be in line with health and safety legislation and required standards which align with the Lettable Standard.

6.10 **Criminal damage**

Where a recharge is a result of criminal damage by a resident, occupier or visitor to the property and this is proven, the costs of remediation will be treated as a recharge under this Policy.

Where repairs are required because of a break-in or vandalism, the incident must be reported to the Police and a Police crime reference number obtained (not a log number/incident number), otherwise a recharge may apply.

If damage has occurred, residents may be offered the opportunity to repair it themselves within an agreed timescale, if not completed to an acceptable standard or within the timeframe, SBC will carry out the work and apply a recharge.

Resident Repair Responsibilities

6.11 Repairs Residents Are Responsible For:

- Replacing lost keys or gaining access when locked out,

- Installing or repairing shelves, curtain rails, and radiator covers,
- Fitting or replacing draft excluders, padlocks, latches, and house numbers,
- Adjusting door and cupboard hinges and catches,
- Replacing light bulbs, fluorescent tubes, pull cords, and fuses,
- Resetting trip switches,
- Clearing blockages in sinks, toilets, pipes and drains,
- Replacing bath/sink plugs, toilet seats, and basin chains,
- Cleaning shower heads and managing condensation,
- Repairing minor cracks or holes in walls and ceilings,
- Replacing clothes posts, rotary dryers, and dustbins,
- Maintaining floor coverings installed by the resident,
- Decorating the interior of the home.
- Replacing of internal doors that have been damaged or removed
- Maintain and repair installations made by the tenant i.e. non-Council kitchen, bathrooms, spotlights, showers etc.
- Maintain boundary lines including fences and walls (unless reasonable wear and tear)
- Maintaining outdoor areas including shrubs, bushes, and trees
- Maintaining outhouses and sheds unless ownership is specified to SBC

Failure to complete these tasks, where reasonable, may result in a recharge if SBC is required to intervene.

Leaseholder responsibilities are included in each lease and leaseholders are responsible for damage and repairs defined within the lease agreement. This Policy also applies where SBC carries out repairs on their behalf and is entitled to recover any costs.

6.12 Examples of Rechargeable Repairs

Below are common examples where SBC may apply recharges:

- Replacing locks, keys, or door handles due to resident loss or damage,
- Repairing or replacing damage to internal or external doors, frames, or windows,
- Repairing or replacing broken glass (unless caused by a third party),
- Repairing damage to kitchen units, worktops, or bathroom fixtures due to misuse,
- Replacing damaged fencing or gates (where damage is resident-caused),
- Removal of furniture, rubbish, or personal items left in the property after tenancy ends,
- Using out-of-hours services unnecessarily (non-emergencies),
- Damaged furniture, fixtures or fittings due to negligence or failure to report issues,
- Refusing access to Council staff or contractors when legally required.

- Missing an appointment – details of applicable charges are included in the Repairs and Maintenance Policy.

SBC may also recover reasonable legal costs associated with entry enforcement or property abandonment.

6.13 **When Recharges Will Not Apply**

SBC will not apply recharges in the following situations:

- **Domestic abuse:** Where damage is caused by the perpetrator of domestic abuse (and not by the survivor/tenant), where evidence is provided.
- **Violent incidents:** Where damage occurs due to an external violent incident or hate crime,
- **Vandalism:** Where glazing, doors, or fixtures are broken by an unknown third party and a **valid police crime reference number** is provided.

Important:

Residents must:

- Report incidents without delay,
- Provide a crime reference number (not just an incident or log number),
- Cooperate fully with any SBC or police investigation.

6.14 **Vulnerability and Financial Hardship**

SBC is committed to applying the Recharge Policy fairly and with compassion and recognises that some residents may be vulnerable due to age, disability, illness, or personal circumstances, and or experiencing financial hardship or sudden life events.

6.15 **Approach to Vulnerability**

SBC's Vulnerable Residents Policy guides the approach taken. Vulnerable residents may include:

- Individuals under 18,
- Those needing care or support services,
- Individuals with difficulty managing daily tasks or their tenancy.

SBC will maintain up-to-date records on vulnerabilities, where they are known or have been disclosed and will ensure these are considered before applying any recharge.

6.16 **Financial Hardship Support**

In cases where residents are experiencing confirmed financial hardship or vulnerability, SBC is committed to providing support to ensure fair treatment. The following measures may be applied:

- Waive or reduce charges - SBC may waive or reduce recharges based on the resident's financial situation. Clear criteria will be established to determine eligibility for this support.
- Offer flexible payment plans - Residents facing financial difficulties may be offered flexible payment plans to spread the cost of recharges over a manageable period. This includes options such as direct debit arrangements.
- Signpost to support services and financial assistance - SBC will provide information and referrals to relevant support services and financial assistance programs to help residents manage their financial challenges.

If a leaseholder has limited financial means and works are required that are their responsibility, such as ensuring flat door (LH responsibility) is fire safe, the works could be undertaken by SBC if it is a matter of health and safety and the costs will be recharged.

6.17 Priority of Debts

If a resident owes multiple types of debt to SBC, rent and leaseholder service charge arrears/debt will be treated as the priority. Recharges debt will be addressed subsequently in line with debt recovery procedures.

Recharge Procedure

6.18 Notification

Residents will be informed of any potential recharge as soon as it is identified. This will include:

- A description of the issue and how it breaches tenancy or lease terms,
- A cost estimate (if known),
- Options for addressing the issue (e.g., self-repair, payment plans),
- A timeline for resolution.

If a resident does not resolve the issue themselves, SBC will arrange for works to be completed and issue an invoice for the costs incurred. A declaration form will be required to be completed by the resident and if payment cannot be made in full, an income and expenditure form will be completed so a payment arrangement can be made. This arrangement should be completed before any repair is completed; however this will not prevent SBC from carrying out works and recharging.

6.19 Invoicing

Invoices will clearly outline:

The reason for the recharge,
The cost breakdown

The administrative fee (12%) will be added if payment in full is not made.

The due date for payment,

Appeal options.

Charges are based on either The National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates, or external contractor quotes (for specialist or non-standard work).

Where applicable charges will be subject to VAT". It is shown on the fees and charges workings though

6.20 **Payment Options**

- SBC will offer a range of payment methods, including:
- Online payments via SBC's digital portal,
- Direct bank transfer,
- Telephone payments,
- Flexible repayment plans for residents in hardship, via a direct debit

6.21 **Failure to pay**

Failure to pay any recharges incurred during a stay in temporary accommodation or within a secure tenancy may be considered a housing related debt and could be determined as a breach of the occupancy agreement/conditions. This may be detrimental to a homeless application and may exclude the customer from Stevenage Borough Council homes in accordance with our Housing Allocations Policy.

Appeals and Disputes

6.22 **Right to Appeal**

Residents who wish to dispute a recharge may submit a formal appeal within 14 calendar days of receiving the invoice. The appeal must be made in writing (email or letter), including the recharge reference number, and must provide reasons for disputing the charge. Supporting evidence, such as police reference numbers, photos, or medical and support documentation, should be included where possible

6.23 **Review Process**

Appeals will be reviewed by a Head of Service who was not involved in the original decision. A written outcome will be provided within 20 working days. If the resident remains dissatisfied, they may escalate the issue via SBC's formal complaints procedure or refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

7. Consultation

7.1 Who have we consulted with in the development of this Policy?

This Policy has been consulted on with the following teams in the development of the Policy.

Empty Homes Team
Resident Services Team
Temporary Accommodation Team
Repair Services
Income Services
Executive Housing Working Group

The Policy will be consulted on with tenants and leaseholders prior to being implemented.

Benchmarking has also taken place across other housing providers Recharge Policies to ensure this Policy is adhering to best practise.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 SBC will monitor the implementation of this Recharge Policy to ensure:

- Consistency in application,
- Fair treatment of residents,
- Recovery of appropriate costs to protect housing budgets.

The Policy will be reviewed every 2 years or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, regulation, or SBC operations.

9. References and Resources

SBC Tenancy Agreement
SBC Leaseholder Agreement
SBC Licence Agreement
Repairs & Maintenance Policy
ASB (Housing) Policy

10. Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Borough Council

11. Appendices

None

12. Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
03/07/2025	Version 1	Simon Kiff
17/10/2025	Version 2	Kerry Clifford

Estimated time taken to complete: 2 hours*

*Please note that this should be a working document and should be actively reviewed throughout the lifetime of the project/policy/service change



Recharge Policy

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

[Add timeframe e.g. October 2025-2026]

Date created	October 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Head of Service
Version	1
Author	Simon Kiff (head of Housing Operations)
Business Unit and Team	Housing and Neighbourhoods

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:	Recharge 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?		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 - The policy explicitly excludes recharges in cases of domestic abuse or hate crime, which helps protect vulnerable tenants.
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes - Support measures such as payment plans, waiving charges, and vulnerability assessments promote fairness.
Encourage good relations?	Yes - The policy includes consultation with residents and support for those in hardship, helping build trust.

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:

Role: n/a

Role: Assistant Director

Date: n/a

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?		Recharge Policy 2025-2027			
Lead Assessor	Simon Kiff		Assessment team	Equalities Lead – Charlotte Bott	
Start date	20/10/2025	End date			
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		Every 2 years			

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing tenants and leaseholders Former tenants Vulnerable groups (e.g., people with disabilities, older people) Low-income households Staff responsible for recharge charge administration Individuals with limited English or digital access
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	<p>This policy sets out Stevenage Borough Council’s approach to recharging costs to residents. It aims to ensure that the process is implemented in a manner that is transparent, fair, legally compliant, and financially sustainable for the Council. The policy aligns with relevant human rights legislation, supporting the right to adequate housing and a fair standard of living. No adverse equality impacts have been identified at this stage.</p> <p>The current review seeks to ensure that the policy reflects best practice and is consistent with the approaches adopted by comparable local authorities and housing providers. The overarching objective is</p>

	<p>to enable the Council to recover appropriate costs in a fair and transparent way, while protecting public funds and promoting responsible tenancy management.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the policy will also act as a deterrent against damage and neglect, encouraging residents to maintain their properties in accordance with the terms of their tenancy, licence, or lease agreements.</p> <p>The Council intends to consult with residents prior to implementation to ensure the policy is informed by resident feedback and is applied in a fair and equitable manner.</p>
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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	The policy clearly outlines the responsibilities of residents and the Council, reducing scope for bias or arbitrary decisions. Cases of criminal damage related to domestic abuse or hate crime are exempt from recharges, reducing the risk of re-victimisation.	Promote equal opportunities	Residents experiencing vulnerability or financial hardship are supported through flexible payment options and referrals to support services. Each case is assessed individually to ensure fairness.	Encourage good relations	Clear communication and fair enforcement of recharge responsibilities will help build trust between residents and the Council. The planned resident consultation will further promote transparency and shared understanding.

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>Welfare/debt advice service usage</p> <p>Consultation feedback (planned)</p> <p>Benchmarking with other social landlords</p>
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>The EqIA confirms that, while the Recharge Policy is expected to have a broadly neutral or positive impact, it is essential to monitor for any unintended disadvantages, particularly for vulnerable or low-income residents. Provisions such as financial hardship assessments and flexible repayment options will help ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.</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:

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Age					
Positive impact	The policy encourages the responsible upkeep of properties, which may benefit older residents living in shared or communal areas by ensuring a safe and well-maintained environment.	Negative impact	Older residents may be more likely to experience fixed incomes or mobility limitations, which could make them more vulnerable to the financial or practical consequences of a recharge.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you	National research (e.g., from Age UK and Shelter) highlights that older adults may be disproportionately affected by housing-related costs and are more likely to require additional support in understanding policies or accessing financial assistance.				

used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Partnership working with support services or advocacy groups to assist older residents in understanding their responsibilities and accessing help where needed.</p> <p>Ensuring that front-line staff are trained to identify and respond to the specific needs of older residents, including recognising when recharges may cause hardship.</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Whether current communication methods are fully accessible to older residents, including those with sensory impairments or digital exclusion.

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness				
Positive impact	The Recharge Policy supports equitable treatment by including clear provisions to assess financial hardship and vulnerability. This ensures that individuals with disabilities, who may face additional living costs or barriers in maintaining their homes, are treated fairly and not disproportionately penalised. Flexibility in payment arrangements allows	Negative impact	Residents with disabilities may be at increased risk of economic hardship. Many may be reliant on fixed incomes or disability-related benefits, which may not fully cover rising living costs. Additionally, individuals with disabilities often incur higher household utility expenses due to the need for medical equipment, specialised heating	<p>Unequal impact</p> <p>There is potential for unequal impact if the policy is not applied with consideration for disability-related needs. Without proactive identification and support, residents with mental ill health, learning difficulties, or cognitive impairments may struggle to engage with communications or</p>

	<p>a more person-centred approach to managing recharges.</p>		<p>needs, or mobility aids. Applying standard recharges without flexibility may exacerbate financial pressure and negatively impact health and wellbeing.</p>		<p>understand recharge processes, increasing the risk of avoidable charges or enforcement action.</p>
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>					
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Provide accessible communications (e.g., Easy Read, large print, audio, translated materials) for residents with sensory impairments or learning difficulties.</p> <p>Work closely with support workers, social care professionals and carers to ensure residents with disabilities understand their responsibilities and are supported through the recharge process.</p> <p>Promote early identification of disability and vulnerability through tenancy reviews or support assessments to enable tailored interventions.</p> <p>Offer flexible repayment plans tailored to individual financial circumstances and consider waiving charges where there is clear evidence of hardship due to disability-related factors.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	<p>The effectiveness of internal systems in flagging and recording vulnerability and disability data for proactive support</p>		

	<p>Ensure front-line staff are trained to identify disability-related needs and make appropriate referrals for support.</p> <p>Downsizing support is provided for those who are unable to manage their larger homes due to mobility or disability.</p>		
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Gender Reassignment

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.</p>				
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Ensure that all communications and interactions with residents are inclusive, respectful, and sensitive to gender identity.</p> <p>Continue to promote inclusive language and training for staff on LGBTQ+ awareness, including gender identity.</p> <p>Monitor customer complaints and recharge disputes for any trends or feedback related to gender identity, and ensure appropriate escalation or support where needed.</p>		<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>		

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No specific positive or negative impacts have been identified in relation to marital or civil partnership status under this policy				
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	None specifically identified at this stage.	Negative impact	Residents on maternity leave or during pregnancy may face financial pressure due to reduced income or increased living costs. Recharges applied during this period may exacerbate financial strain or increase stress, particularly for single-parent households.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>While there is no current internal data suggesting that residents in this group are disproportionately impacted, national research indicates that pregnant people and new parents—especially single parents—are more vulnerable to financial hardship.</p> <p>DWP statistics also show increased reliance on benefits during and after pregnancy.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Apply financial hardship	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

	<p>assessments consistently, and consider maternity or pregnancy-related circumstances when determining payment arrangements or waiving charges.</p> <p>Signpost to external support services and financial wellbeing resources for new or expectant parents.</p>		
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Race				
Positive impact	The policy is designed to be applied consistently across all ethnic backgrounds, supporting equitable treatment of all residents.	Negative impact	Language or cultural barriers may make it more difficult for some residents to fully understand their tenancy responsibilities or the recharge process, particularly if English is not their first language. This could lead to miscommunication or failure to respond appropriately to recharge notices.	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?	Offer translated materials and interpretation services	What do you still need to find out?	Include in actions (last page)	

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no recorded data or complaints suggesting that religion or belief has influenced the application of recharges. The policy applies uniformly and does not make distinctions based on faith or belief systems.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Continue inclusive engagement		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	There is no evidence from local complaints, service data, or resident feedback to suggest that recharges have a disproportionate effect based on sex.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Ensure inclusive practice is maintained in all policy implementation and communications.		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 local or national evidence suggesting that sexual orientation impacts the way in which recharge policies are applied or experienced.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Maintain inclusive communication and engagement across all customer touchpoints.</p> <p>Ensure staff are trained in LGBTQ+ awareness and anti-discrimination practices.</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<p>Socio-economic¹</p> <p>e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement</p>					
Positive impact	The Recharge Policy includes built-in flexibility for those experiencing financial hardship, including payment plans, income and expenditure assessments, and referral to support services. These measures aim to mitigate potential negative impacts	Negative impact	There is potential for the policy to disproportionately affect residents on low incomes or experiencing financial difficulty, particularly where unexpected recharges cause additional hardship.	Unequal impact	Yes. People in lower socio-economic groups may have less capacity to absorb unexpected financial costs, and may already face a range of compounding challenges (e.g., debt, food or fuel poverty, digital exclusion).
Please evidence the					

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>data and information you used to support this assessment</p>			
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Signpost all potentially affected residents to SBC's Welfare Advice and Debt Team or external partners such as Citizens Advice.</p> <p>Ensure that recharge letters clearly communicate the availability of financial support, repayment plans, and appeal processes.</p> <p>Apply flexibility on a case-by-case basis and maintain oversight through robust vulnerability and hardship assessments.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

<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>The policy promotes accountability and encourages property care, which may improve neighbourhood quality and reduce antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>Negative impact</p>	<p>Without accessible communication and active engagement, some residents (e.g., with language barriers or literacy needs) may misunderstand their obligations and be at</p>	<p>Unequal impact</p>	

			greater risk of incurring charges.		
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Internal data from tenancy management, income recovery, and feedback from frontline staff.</p> <p>Local observations from the Housing and Income Services teams.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>The policy states that the Council will assess individual circumstances before applying charges, including offering financial assessments, payment plans, and support referrals.</p> <p>Ensure key information is available in accessible formats (e.g., Easy Read, large print, translated versions, and through verbal explanation if required).</p>		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?	<p>Highlighted the need for translated and accessible policy documents.</p> <p>Support for transparent, consistent application of charges, and use of the policy to deter property misuse.</p>	Residents?	<p>A formal 6-week statutory consultation is planned. Feedback will inform final amendments to the policy before implementation.</p>
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Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?	The draft policy will be presented at the executive housing working group prior to Cabinet approval, allowing for Member and stakeholder input on financial and equality impacts.		

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

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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>This EqIA has found that the Recharge Policy is fair, legally compliant, and aligned with best practice. While there is a potential for negative or unequal impacts, particularly for financially vulnerable or disabled residents, these can be mitigated through planned support measures. Ongoing monitoring and consultation will ensure the policy continues to meet the needs of all resident groups.</p> <p>The long-term sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) depends on SBC being able to recover reasonable costs. This policy supports that goal while remaining sensitive to the needs of residents</p>
	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?
To make sure we have a robust recharge policy, and fit for purpose support services so the relevant support and guidance can be given to those residents effected	Remove discrimination and barriers and promote equal opportunities and fairness	tbc	TBC	Current practice is to assess cases or groups that are experiencing challenges and putting in place processes and systems to mitigate impacts.

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Kerry Clifford

Date: 20th October 2025

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

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Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Equalities & Young People
Date 12 November 2025



EQUALITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ACTION PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORT – PROGRESS UPDATE

KEY DECISION

Author Charlotte Bott
Lead Officers Charlotte Bott, Daryl Jedowski
Contact Officer Charlotte Bott

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report the annual summary of progress made on the eighteen actions set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) action plan 2024/25, and agree the proposed EDI Action Plan for 2025/26.
- 1.2 To also report the annual overview of key demographic resident and workforce information within the Equality & Diversity Report 2024/25.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Acknowledge the delivery of actions detailed in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan 2024–25 Progress Report (Appendix A), which contribute significantly to embedding and exemplifying Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles throughout Stevenage Borough Council.
- 2.2 Approve and endorse the revised 19 actions in the 2025/26 version of the EDI Action Plan (Appendix B) to ensure future infrastructure is in place to support the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan’s cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 2.3 Agree the publication of the latest annual Equality and Diversity Report for 2024/2025 (Appendix C) and utilise this data to help enhance community

understanding, and shape services to represent the needs of the local population.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 EDI ACTION PLAN

3.1.1 In March 2022, the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Strategy (2022-2026) were approved by the Executive.

3.1.2 The EDI Policy set out the council's commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and the Equality Act (2010). The EDI Strategy set out how the council would progress equality, diversity and inclusion across the community and workforce.

3.1.3 Developed by the Local Government Association (LGA), the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) helps organisations identify and map areas for improvement against best practice EDI requirements. There are 121 criteria in total that fit across four modules. As a result, the council agreed six EDI policy objectives to aligned with the modules:

- 1) We will understand the diverse needs of our communities and how to meet them effectively.
- 2) We will actively engage, encourage, and support local people, groups, and organisations to participate in local democracy to improve opportunity and inclusion.
- 3) We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion through strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chain(s).
- 4) We will use local data to shape services so that the needs of our diverse population are met.
- 5) We aim to improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels so that our communities are represented.
- 6) We are committed to ensuring our staff have the values, skills, and knowledge to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally.

3.1.4 The council has made significant progress under these six objectives in advancing equality across the community and its workforce through the implementation of the EDI Action Plan.

3.1.5 18 actions sat within the six objectives in 2024/25 and covered a variety of projects and programmes, as outlined in section four and in Appendix A.

3.2 STEVENAGE EQUALITIES COMMISSION

3.2.1 In May 2020, Stevenage Borough Council Members voted to support the formation of an independent Equalities Commission to represent the needs of ethnically diverse communities in the town.

3.2.2 The Stevenage Equalities Commission was made up of 20 equal members of strategic bodies representing services within the town and community members and was Chaired by Errol John who was nominated by members of the Commission.

3.2.3 The culmination of this two-year piece of work was a report and a set of recommendations that both sit alongside an action plan. These were all

presented to Councillors and the Senior Leadership Team to be then included in Stevenage Borough Council's updated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

- 3.2.4 Following these initial activities, the Commission's members have been working towards the implementation of the recommendation outlined in the original review as well as seeking external funding to establish a legacy group.
- 3.2.5 Funding for this was secured in April 2024 and activity is underway to formalise the group as a multi-stakeholder cooperative.
- 3.2.6 The continued development of the Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group has been captured and monitored as part of the EDI Action Plan.
- 3.2.7 Significant progress has been made since its inclusion in the action plan, and has been actively supported by Stevenage Borough Council throughout, especially as it looks to become a Multi-Stakeholder Cooperative. This is outlined in more detail in within Appendix A.

3.3 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REPORT

- 3.3.2 Within the EDI Policy and Strategy 2022-26, the council reaffirmed its commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). As part of this, the council agreed to annually published equality information relating to people with protected characteristics (employees, service users, and residents), including gender pay gap information about the council's workforce demographics. This information is presented in the Equality and Diversity Report 2024/2025 (Appendix C).
- 3.3.3 The data in the annual Equality and Diversity Report is used by the council to help understand the demographics of the community, and consequently help design and shape services that represent the needs of the local population.
- 3.3.4 The majority of the statistics included in this report are from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Census, carried over from the 2022-23 report rendition of this report, alongside newly published population estimates and other relevant data. These statistics then enable demographic trends to be identified against the nine protected characteristics within Stevenage, and comparisons made to both Hertfordshire and England, as well as against the previous 2011 census to demonstrate how communities have evolved and changed over the last 10 years.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 In January 2024, the Cabinet agreed the new Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan until 2027. This included a cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI). The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan and the annual Equality and Diversity Report both exemplify the cross-cutting EDI theme embedded within the MSEB framework. They contribute to the establishment of a 'golden thread' of EDI throughout Stevenage Borough Council, demonstrating a clear and consistent link between service delivery and the council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

4.2 EDI ACTION PLAN

- 4.2.2 In particular, by taking this approach the council has streamlined how progress is communicated to Members and residents alike through collating all EDI-related activities into one EDI Action Plan.
- 4.2.3 As part of its second rendition, 18 actions sat within the EDI Action Plan in 2024/25 and covered a variety of projects and programmes. Action owners provided quarterly updates on the development of each item. These updates were then cascaded to the Officer Equality Group (OEG) on a quarterly basis to ensure ongoing monitoring and consultation. These updates are summarised within the EDI Action Plan 24-25 Progress Report (Appendix A).
- 4.2.4 A few key highlights to note from the EDI Action Plan in the past year include the renewal of the council's So Safe Community Safety Strategy; an improved suite of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs); the Stevenage Equalities Commission taking steps to become a Multi Stakeholder Co-operative; continued successful collaborations with the Healthy Stevenage and Mission 44 Partnerships; a 2024 gender pay gap of -0.98 compared to 3.73 in 2023; and the council hosting and supporting a range of equality-driven activities. Further details on these projects can be found in Appendix A and B.
- 4.2.5 As well as the quarterly updates, the progress report also includes relevant background information, an overview of linked consultation and monitoring activities, and a look to next year's proposed EDI Action Plan for 2025-26 (Appendix B).
- 4.2.6 The proposed EDI Action Plan brings together all strands of EDI work across existing council strategies, services, and programmes. This includes the recommendations from the Stevenage Equalities Commission, strategic partnerships with Healthy Stevenage and Mission 44, and EFLG self-assessment considerations, as well as a few new additions.
- 4.2.7 Changes to the EDI Action Plan for 2025-26 include:
- 19 identified actions which span the protected characteristic groups and are aligned with the six EDI policy objectives.
 - Actions 1b and 5a from last year will be combined as they both address the monitoring of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan Cross-Cutting Theme. Further details on the amalgamation of these actions can be found in section two of the progress report (Appendix A).
 - The introduction of two new actions:
 - 3c: Through Age Friendly Stevenage work, embed inclusive engagement with older people from diverse backgrounds to inform and shape Age-Friendly Stevenage priorities and services.
 - 6d: The council will integrate and implement technology to promote digital inclusion and support neurodiverse staff members to ensure accessibility for all.
- 4.2.8 The projects identified as part of the action plan are delivered under the council's existing programmes of work, thereby reducing the need to identify additional budget and resource. This also ensures that the activities and ambitions in the action plan are realistic and attainable so EDI is distinctly embedded across services.
- 4.2.9 As with previous years, a nominated individual from each responsible business area will provide quarterly progress updates during 2025/26. Progress against actions will then be coordinated and recorded in an action plan tracker, which

will be maintained and monitored by the Corporate Policy and Performance Team.

4.2.10 Then as set out in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (2022-2026) and to help ensure that progress against actions continues to be monitored, the EDI Action Plan will be updated and presented to the Officer Equality Group and the Equality & Diversity Governance Group on a quarterly basis. Further, as above, a report setting out progress on the EDI Action Plan 2025-26 will be presented to the Cabinet again next year too.

4.2.11 Acknowledging the progress made so far within the EDI Action Plan, and endorsing next year's proposed actions will help to ensure this EDI cross-cutting MSEB theme is reinforced and upheld across Stevenage Borough Council services.

4.3 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REPORT

4.3.2 Further, agreeing the contents of the latest annual Equality and Diversity Report for 2024/2025 will help enhance community understanding, and shape services to represent the needs of the local population.

4.3.3 While the majority of data presented in this year's report has been retained from the 2022–23 edition, reflecting the continued relevance of the 2021 ONS Census, a range of updated statistics has been incorporated to provide a more current and comprehensive overview of both the town and the council's workforce. This includes refreshed data on population density, life expectancy, languages spoken, live birth rates, earnings by residence and workplace geography, and apprenticeship figures. Additionally, the latest council data has been used to update sections on Benefits Claimants, Community Safety, and Workforce Information.

4.3.4 Through this report, the council is able to understand the make-up of the town and workforce, so that services are fair, accessible, and open to everyone who needs them. The purpose of this report is to demonstrate this understanding and offer insight to officers, members, and residents alike to inform decision-making going forward.

4.3.5 As in previous years, a fully designed version of the report has been commissioned through our internal design services and will be published online for the public via the SBC external website.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the actions within the EDI Action Plan 25-26 over the coming year will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the actions within the EDI Action Plan 25-26 over the coming year will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.3.1 This report directly contains equality, diversity and inclusion items, any consequent implications are discussed within this report or within the Appendices.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, officers responsible for delivering the actions within the EDI Action Plan 25-26 over the coming year will need to consider any risk implications that arise.

5.4.2 The council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the council's objectives and internal control processes and provides good governance assurance.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 The council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report, however officers responsible for delivering the actions within the EDI Action Plan 25-26 over the coming year will need to consider any climate change considerations that arise.

6 APPENDICES

- Appendix A - EDI Action Plan 2024-25 Progress Report
- Appendix B - EDI Action Plan 2025-26
- Appendix C - Equality and Diversity Report 2024/2025



EDI Action Plan 2024/25 Progress Report

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1. Background

1.1 Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It sets out the different ways it is unlawful to treat someone, all within one singular Act. It specifically protects individuals from unfair treatment based on the following characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Although socio-economic duty was removed from the Equality Act (2010), Councillors and Officers are also required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who might be disadvantaged because of their social and economic background. This is also the case for any other characteristics and circumstances that may put someone at a disadvantage, such as domestic abuse and carer status. By considering wider inequalities, Councillors and Officers ensure that policies and services are fair, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all members of the community.

1.2 Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Equality Act (2010), local councils have a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). As a result, Stevenage Borough Council is committed to carrying out its functions through this duty in a way that:

- Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010).
- Promotes equal opportunities and encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.
- Further the council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010), as set out in the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

To action these commitments, the council reaffirmed its intention to:

- Publish a series of clear equality objectives and actions every year.
- Annually publish equality information relating to people with protected characteristics (employees, service users, and residents), including workforce gender pay gap information.
- Complete and publish Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) whenever there is a new or revised policy, procedure, function, or service.
- Build upon the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan (MSEB) cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and further engagement with staff to nurture a progressive, inclusive safe and healthy working environment.

The EDI Strategy also set out the council’s ambitions to go beyond these requirements through implementing an annual EDI Action Plan which would bring together all strands of EDI work across existing council strategies, services, and programmes. The intention would be to establish a clear link between the council’s ongoing and planned policy objectives and projects between August and July every year.

This report reflects upon and summarises the achievements of Stevenage Borough Council’s EDI Action Plan throughout 2024/2025 (Appendix A).

1.3 The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Self-Assessment

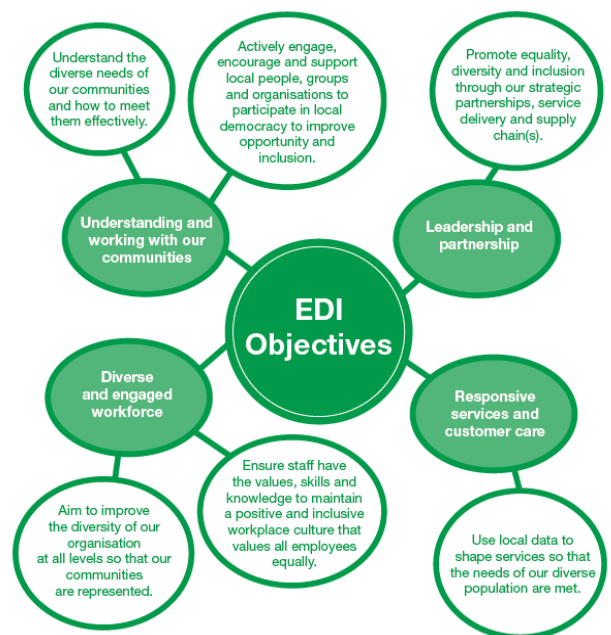
The key to mapping out the council’s existing projects and programmes was the self-assessment of council EDI activity against the EFLG. The purpose of the EFLG is to help organisations review and improve performance against ‘Developing’, ‘Achieving’ and ‘Excellent’ criteria. The council had previously assessed itself against the ‘Achieving’ level. According to EFLG criteria, there are four modules, 17 themes and 121 criteria in total. The green bubbles in the image below display the four key modules of the EFLG. Each of the council’s EDI policy objectives (white bubbles) are then aligned with a module.

The Officers undertaking the self-assessment were required to provide specific examples of existing or future activities against modules and themes within the framework over a period of 10 weeks.

The outcome of the ELFG work indicated that whilst the council comfortably continue to fulfil the ‘Achieving’ level criteria, there were two areas they could develop further:

- The review of EqlAs as part of the service planning cycle to inform decision-making and the wider understanding of existing and future community needs.
- The extent to which the council’s procured services inform and help to uphold and implement its equality objectives.

Both of the above activities would be delivered through existing corporate functions and explored further through the proposed EDI Action Plan.



2. EDI Action Plan 2024-25

The EDI Action Plan 2024-25 consisted of 18 actions that each aligned with one of the council’s six policy objectives, as listed below and in Appendix A:

- 1) We will understand the diverse needs of our communities and how to meet them effectively.
- 2) We will actively engage, encourage, and support local people, groups, and organisations to participate in local democracy to improve opportunity and inclusion.
- 3) We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion through strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chain(s).

- 4) We will use local data to shape services so that the needs of our diverse population are met.
- 5) We aim to improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels so that our communities are represented.
- 6) We are committed to ensuring our staff have the values, skills, and knowledge to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally.

The council has made significant progress under these six objectives in advancing equality across the community and its workforce through the implementation of the EDI Action Plan.

These actions covered a variety of projects and programmes and action owners provided quarterly updates on the development of each throughout the year. These updates were then cascaded to OEG on a quarterly basis to ensure ongoing monitoring and consultation. These updates are summarised in the following report:

2.1 Objective 1: We will understand the diverse needs of our communities and how to meet them effectively.

2.1.1 Action 1a: Community Safety – ‘The council will continue to foster good community relations and social cohesion through the Community Safety Strategy programme of work’

Action Owner: Sarah Pateman OBE, Head of Community Advice & Support

The council’s So Safe Community Safety Strategy programme of work seeks to understand the needs of the community through close partnership working. This year in particular has seen the revision of the Community Safety Strategy. Agreed by Full Council in February 2025, the Strategy will act as the overarching plan for the Community Safety Partnership for the next three years. It also included the SoSafe Action Plan, Strategic Assessment and the council’s focus action plans on topics such as Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG).

Work has also been ongoing with schools across the town, with a series of sessions held for year six students on topics such as peer pressure, county lines and the dangers of drugs. As these talks have been an essential part of the council’s engagement with young people, a bid to expand the programmes has been applied for through the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of the OpEdu8 partnership project. The voice of the child has also been gained this year through partnership working and the council’s safeguarding and domestic abuse work. Data focussed on children ages 0-7 years old and was collected to document and support children through tough times. Further, through the 16 days of Action initiative focussing on domestic abuse, the council hosted an exhibition of survivor stories that displayed impactful photography to the public. The council are still looking for continued funding for these school OpEdu8 talks, so this will remain a priority into next year.

Partnership working with Hertfordshire Constabulary has also enabled greater support to be available for rough sleepers this past year. Initiatives such as Operation Urban combined the council’s No More Service and the Rough Sleeper Team with police to target hotspot rough sleeper areas to offer support and advice during the winter months, including targeted support for women. Drop-in sessions offered customers food parcels, hot meals, advice, referrals, and festive events. Street meets also continue to be an essential part of the way the council and the police engage with the community, as well as capturing the voice of the customer through data from Hertfordshire Constabulary’s system, ECHO.

Additionally, the Adult Offender Protocol project commenced this year across the County, with funding from probation and the Serious Violence fund. Clear Hold Build and the Safer Streets Funding projects also came to an end in March 2025, with a highlight report presented at the July SoSafe Meeting. Further, two Resettlement Co-ordinators were recruited to work with partners and the community to produce an action plan around Asylum Seekers/Refugees residing and working in Stevenage. Whilst Clear Hold Build has ended, other police projects and operations will be supported for 2025/26 including Male Violence Against Women and Girls (MVAWG) meetings as part of the council's existing VAWG Action plan.

The Community Advice & Support team have also been supporting the local elderly population this year through attending events such as the annual Older Persons Day to give residents an opportunity to talk to officers directly. This action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan to continue to document the impactful Community Safety Strategy programme of work.

2.1.2 Action 1b: EqlA Service Plan Monitoring – 'The council will continue to monitor its approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EqlA) through Service Plans, and how the information is used to inform decision making and the wider understanding of existing and future community needs.'

Action Owner: Charlotte Bott, Corporate Policy & Research Officer

Following the review of the EqlA process and service plans last year, this action sought to continue to monitor the completion of EqlAs throughout the council's introduction of new or revised policies, strategies, procedures and services.

An EqlA helps to evidence, understand and mitigate the impact that the council's decisions might have on different types of people. As part of the council's approach to understanding the diverse needs of the community, equality objectives were integrated into service plans across the organisation, and progress towards them managed by key decision makers. This progress was then used to inform decision-making, and steps taken if any deficiencies are identified.

The council continues to provide guidance to staff on the EqlA process, through the internal publication of an updated EqlA Toolkit, guidance and embedded 'critical friend' review process for all staff.

Since this latest version of the EDI Action Plan was introduced in July 2024, a total of 19 EqlAs were received, independently reviewed and then revised within the council. These covered a variety of areas including:

- Commercial Food Waste Collections
- Community Safety Strategy
- Corporate Procurement Strategy
- Fees & Charges
- Flat Block Recycling
- Gambling Act & Licensing Act
- Green Spaces Strategy And Tree & Woodland Strategy
- Mission 44's Pioneering Young STEM Futures Programme
- Parking Permit Controls
- Safeguarding Adults

- Smoke Control Area Policy & Procedure
- Vulnerability Policy (Housing Service)

Going forward, Service Plans will continue to be utilised alongside the Equalities Inbox to monitor the receipt of EqlAs throughout the year. As a result this action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan, however it will be amalgamated with Action 5a to encompass the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan (MSEB) cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as EqlAs are now considered the main way the council regularly monitors EDI. It will be listed as follows:

- 5a: Through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan, the council has committed to the cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This will encourage staff to consider the impact on equalities when designing and delivering services through Equality Impact Assessments (EqlA).

2.1.3 Action 1c: SEC Legacy Group – 'The council will continue to champion the work of the Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) through the facilitation of the SEC Legacy Group. The Legacy Group will work with partners for 12 months to deliver meaningful change in response to the findings of the SEC.'

Action Owner: Gemma Marat, Neighbourhood Warden Manager

The Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) was first set up in April 2021 following a motion carried by the council to address racial disparity in Stevenage and to assess the nature, extent, and impact of racism in the town. The recommendations of the SEC indicated that further work with partners was needed to identify next steps and opportunities for joint working. The SEC Legacy Group was facilitated by the council and a Legacy Group Action Plan introduced to set out the main activities of the group.

Following the successful delivery of the SEC's Beyond Barriers Conference at the Gordon Craig Theatre on 15th October 2024 to coincide with Black History Month and Hate Crime Awareness Week, commissioners reviewed the actions from the three themed workshops and guest speakers' recommendations to evolve the action plan and produce a dedicated priorities report that would be their focus for 2025.

As 2025 begun, and to formally incorporate this new revised action plan, the legacy group carried out steps to formally become a Multi Stakeholder Co-operative in consultation and collaboration with charity, Voice4Change. Thus far, secretariat support for SEC has been provided by the council through external funding. Going forward, the council will continue to champion the legacy of the SEC by supporting the establishment of the Stevenage Race Equality Co-operative (SREC). This new, legally incorporated, member-led organisation will carry forward the Commission's key recommendations in relation to race equality, representation, and accountability.

The SEC Legacy Group will transition into an advisory role within SREC's governance, helping maintain a clear link between the Commission's findings and their implementation. SREC will be organised around thematic working groups that reflect the original Commission priorities (e.g., Health, Education, Representation), with membership drawn from VCFSE organisations, public bodies, and local communities. This structure will provide long-term, community-led infrastructure and demonstrate the Council's continued commitment to the MSEB Corporate

Plan, especially regarding its aims around civic pride, inclusive growth, and building strong communities.

This action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan to gain consistent continuous updates on the great work carried out by the SEC.

2.2 Objective 2: We will actively engage, encourage, and support local people, groups, and organisations to participate in local democracy to improve opportunity and inclusion.

2.2.1 Action 2a: Housing Management Forum – 'The council will strengthen the voice of tenants and leaseholders, including consideration of people's differing needs, through the development and implementation of a Resident Engagement framework.'

Action Owners: Matt Gough, Special Projects Lead (Housing)
& Jane Konopka, Head of Community Development

This year, the council has adopted a new Resident Engagement Strategy & Framework. Developed in consultation with tenants, staff and Councillors, the strategy sets out the councils' commitment to strengthen tenant engagement and also consolidates the way in which performance is scrutinised by residents. Similarly, the Tenants Annual Report was presented to Cabinet and published alongside the council's Annual Housing Complaints and Improvement Plan this year, which sets details of the work that has been undertaken in both the delivery and improvement of services. This was also undertaken alongside the development of a number of new core programmes and polices including for aids and adaptations, repairs and maintenance, dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB), and high-rise block improvements. These measures demonstrate how Stevenage Borough Council has sought to enhance the role of its tenants in decisions and have a direct influence on service developments.

Further, the Regulator of Social Housing new set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, that provide quarterly feedback from tenants across a number of key service areas, have been fully integrated. This information is not only utilised within the council's Corporate Performance Framework, but also to inform the development and improvement of services through a dedicated Resident's Voice page on the council's external website that hosts a wide range of information relating to housing and ways to get involved with decision making.

As part of this Tenant Satisfaction Measures framework, tenants are annually surveyed and overall satisfaction with the council as landlord has increased by 10.9% over the last year to 66%. There has also been a 10% increase in the number tenants that feel that the council listens to their views, up to 55.1%. 61.6% also noted that felt they were kept informed, again an increase on the previous year from 50.9%. Overall, more than 73% of tenants surveyed felt that they were treated fairly and with respect. These results illustrate how positive the impact this improved programme of engagement has had on tenants.

This action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan to continue to ensure tenant feedback, profiles and preferences are prioritised and captured.

2.2.2 Action 2b: Digital Engagement – ‘The council will digitally engage with residents as part of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan to help shape the approach to the development of local community plans and provide opportunities for people, including those who share protected characteristics, to participate in local democracy.’

Action Owner: Daniel Morrallée, Corporate Policy & Research Officer

As part of the 2024/25 Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme, the council engaged with over 1,300 residents through a combination of digital and in-person activities, despite challenges posed by pre-election periods during the summer and adverse weather conditions throughout winter. Increasing the council’s presence on social media platforms and streamlining the neighbourhood team to specifically engage with residents at community centres, events, neighbourhood centres, in drop-in sessions, and on walkabouts was key to enabling consistent communication. Data collected from these sessions incorporated key resident insights and was analysed in tranches across the year with support from £275,000 in funding. Data was then presented to Cabinet members with the aim of further addressing residents’ priorities in the 2025/26 period.

Further, throughout these efforts, key demographic information was gained to better understand who the council were reaching and then target the unheard voices across the community. Whilst their primary focus was on age and gender, a broad set of both quantitative and qualitative questions were also incorporated to help gain improved insights into local priorities, and ensuring they aligned with the needs and concerns of the community.

As the new financial year began in April 2025, resident engagement data continued to be analysed and an overview of the findings for each neighbourhood area presented at both the June and July Communities & Neighbourhoods Strategic Board meetings. This analysis will be instrumental in shaping the allocation of the council’s 2025/26 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), as well as determining area-based priorities and guiding the future direction of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Programme. Ensuring initiatives continue to reflect the needs of the community and support more targeted, community-led investment across local areas is a key priority for the council.

This engagement will also be further strengthened by the 2025 Residents Survey, which is currently underway and expected to capture feedback from an additional 1,100 residents. Combined, these datasets will provide a robust evidence base at a neighbourhood level, to support the continued development of the council’s new Co-operative Neighbourhoods delivery model. This approach will ensure local voices remain at the heart of service design and community investment. Therefore this action will continue into next year’s EDI Action Plan to continue gain regular updates on engagement activities, as well as the upcoming UKSPF allocations and resident survey results.

2.2.3 Action 2c: Civic Leadership Programme ‘The council and its partners will work together to establish a Civic Leadership Programme that targets and provides support for underrepresented communities who are interested in political representation and standing for public roles.’

Action Owner: Gemma Marat, Cooperative Neighbourhoods Programme Manager

Targeting underrepresented communities who are interested in standing for public roles through a Civic Leadership Programme was an initiative put forward as part of Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) discussions. This proposal received widespread support from the commission, that includes membership from local Borough Councillors, County Councillors, and former Councillors, as well as a diverse range of industry leads from across Stevenage.

Following SEC's Beyond Barriers Conference in October 2024, the commission approached Operation Black Vote (OBV), who presented at the conference, to put together a civic leadership programme to be delivered in Stevenage in 2025. It was agreed that a Diagnostic/Familiarisation cycle would occur first to establish the Stevenage context. This would involve a review of data and statistics, engagement with local community partners, and a concluding feedback session summarising their findings. On completion of the diagnostic work, OBV would then design a tailored programme for Stevenage based on their findings. Civic Leadership Programmes are typically divided into three phases:

1. *Phase 1: Attract and Recruit*

OBV would work in collaboration with Stevenage partners to design a targeted recruitment campaign to attract under-represented groups to take part in the programme.

2. *Phase 2: Programme Delivery*

A combination of masterclasses, workshops, seminars, observations of live meetings and tailored personal development.

3. *Phase 3: Celebrate and Evaluate*

Opportunity for everyone involved in the programme to mark the readiness of participants to use their voice and agency in society to make a difference and to join the powerful community of the OBV Alumni. Evaluation of the course and a dedicated graduation ceremony would also occur.

In February 2025, it was officially confirmed that OBV had been commissioned to deliver a research and development piece over three months to examine the current situation for Stevenage in terms of BAME representation in Civic roles and look into how that could be developed and supported. This would occur in line with the prioritisation work being undertaken by the legacy group, with the commission's chair, Errol John, and group members regularly meeting with OBV and working with them to design and implement the research.

It was then agreed that OBV and SEC would deliver the aforementioned Diagnostic/Familiarisation programme between June and August 2025. This would specifically involve carrying out research and analysis of the democratic deficit in Stevenage to develop an understanding of the issues; engaging with Black and Brown communities and partners in Stevenage to understand their perspective on how to meet the challenges; and using research, data and feedback from the community and partners to understand the context of community leadership which will be used to design a civic and citizen programme for Stevenage.

This planned Civic Leadership Programme will help deliver on the Commission's recommendation to improve democratic inclusion. This programme will take place over 4–6 weeks and will empower residents from Black, Asian, and other minority communities to take

an active role in civic life, whether through local government, public boards, school governance, or other representative roles. This activity will also form part of the Council's broader strategic aim to create more inclusive systems and representative leadership at all levels of public life. This action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan to continue to document the implementation of the Civic Leadership Programme by the SEC and OBV.

2.3 Objective 3: We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion through strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chains

2.3.1 Action 3a: Social Value Procurement – 'The Council will review the extent to which its procured services inform and help to uphold and implement our equality objectives.'

Action Owner: Kirsten Brown, Corporate Procurement Manager

The Social Value Portal has been a great way for the council to understand the themes, outcomes and measures of community needs. Identified in response to the self-assessment against the EFLG best practice framework, this action sought to track EFLG's equality outcomes of monitoring and reporting on commissioned and procured services. These social measures would include monitoring improved opportunities for disadvantaged people; improved employability of young people; and implementing initiatives throughout the supply chain to identify and manage the risk of modern slavery.

The council's practices are proportionate to the value and complexity of the requirement and officers have to consider removing barriers to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME)'s in bidding. Consequently how equality diversity and inclusivity is included and what weight it carries will vary, however all contracts over the threshold of the Public Contracts Regulations will expect bidders to self-certify that they are compliant with the EDI law. A record of which contracts have EDI considerations over and above that is not kept.

This action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan as it is an EFLG requirement and will continue to be considered as part of procurement practices and embedded within council culture.

2.3.2 Action 3b: Healthy Stevenage – 'Through its Healthy Stevenage Partnership, the council will continue to promote activities and events that reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents.'

Action Owner: Ryan Ansell, Health & Sport Strategy Manager

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership fosters collaboration amongst partners to improve health, promote wellbeing, and reduce health-based inequalities locally. This project demonstrates how the council can effectively utilise partnerships to help shape future activities, as well as actively sharing and promote these. This was achieved primarily via monthly partner updates and through the Healthy Stevenage meetings, but in an effort to enhance their communication and outreach further, the partnership introduced a regular newsletter to highlight positive stories, celebrate the achievements of the council's partners, and provide timely updates on forthcoming events and activities.

The council also renewed their Healthy Stevenage Strategy this year, with the partnership playing a pivotal role in both the development and delivery of this renewal. The continued collaboration and input of all partners was instrumental in shaping the future of health and wellbeing within the community.

Through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership, the council continues to specifically promote initiatives that tackle health inequalities and enhance the wellbeing of residents. An example of this was through the ongoing delivery of the Stevenage Healthy Hub, which has secured funding for the next two years. This ensured the continuation of a valuable local resource with a targeted focus on delivering Stop Smoking support and free wellbeing checks to residents, particularly in areas of higher deprivation or greater need. Alongside this, the Healthy Hub continued to support a number of established programmes, including the Dementia Café, menopause support group, youth counselling services, and the exercise referral scheme. All of these schemes play an important role in supporting physical and mental wellbeing across different communities and age groups.

In an attempt to further expand this offer, the Council applied to the Hertfordshire Public Health Prevention Innovation Programme to develop a new wellbeing app, however, were unsuccessful in securing this bid. Nevertheless, the council achieved three other successful bids that will have a direct and positive impact on the residents of Stevenage, and engagement will continue with these initiatives to ensure they are embedded within local provision and complement the Healthy Hub's offer. This approach ensures that health inequalities remain at the forefront of partnership work and that services continue to adapt to meet local need.

Further, a key focus this year has been supporting Stevenage's ageing population, particularly through recent work to become an Age-Friendly Community. As part of this, the council has been working closely with Age UK to gather valuable insight from older residents through the Age-Friendly Communities Survey. This ongoing commitment to supporting an ageing population also played an important role in shaping the new Healthy Stevenage Strategy, ensuring that future health and wellbeing initiatives were inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all residents. The council will continue to strengthen partnerships with health providers, voluntary organisations, and community groups to improve access to services and promote a healthier, more connected Stevenage. As a result, a new action will be added to the EDI Action Plan that specifically documents the great work conducted by the council with specific regard to supporting Age Friendly communities. This action will sit within the same overarching objective of promoting EDI through strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chains, and be listed as:

“Through Age Friendly Stevenage work, embed inclusive engagement with older people from diverse backgrounds to inform and shape Age-Friendly Stevenage priorities and services”.

This Healthy Stevenage Partnership action will also be carried over into next year's EDI Action Plan to continue to gain consistent updates on the successful collaboration of the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.

2.3.3 Action 3c: Mission 44 - 'Through our ongoing partnership with Mission 44, the council will provide opportunities for young people to engage with STEM Education and careers, with a particular focus on those who are facing social injustice. This is linked

to the council's wider commitments around Enterprise & Skills, which is focused on ensuring that Stevenage residents are able to make the most of the opportunities on their doorstep.'

Action Owner: Daryl Jedowski, Corporate Policy & Business Support Manager

Whilst only added to the EDI Action Plan this year, the council's partnership with Mission 44 (M44) has become a key way that equality, diversity and inclusion is promoted since this collaboration first began in 2023.

This strategic partnership with M44 has enabled the council to support young people in Stevenage to access emerging opportunities in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) through the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme. Following the conclusion of the first Discovery phase of this programme, the council began making plans in October 2024 to move forward with the next phase that would look to increase the breadth and depth of the interventions the council has been able to deliver across both primary and secondary schools in Stevenage, as well as linking into additional businesses.

The initial proposal for Phase Two was shared with colleagues at M44 in January 2025, and reviewed and discussed throughout February ahead of being formally agreed by M44's board in June and Stevenage Borough Council's Cabinet in July. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was also utilised as crucial bridge funding for the initiative so projects could continue delivery within this academic year, despite the gap in approval and funding from Mission44.

Through the extension of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures partnership with M44, the next phase of the programme will see £1.1 million investment over five years, from a blend of local and national funding sources. With Stevenage forecast to create up to 15,000 new jobs by 2040, including over 8,000 in STEM-related fields, the council is committed to ensuring all young people, particularly those experiencing social injustice, can benefit from the town's economic growth.

New partnerships, including a direct collaboration with Airbus, will also enhance the programme's offer by embedding industry expertise into delivery. The initiative remains a core element of the wider Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan - Transforming Our Town - Enterprise & Skills agenda and will again be complemented by UK Shared Prosperity Fund bridge funding in 2025/26 to ensure continuity of activity during the current academic year again. Due to the nature of this partnership continuing on for the next 5 years, this action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan for 2025/26.

2.4 Objective 4: We will use local data to shape services so that the needs of the diverse population are met

2.4.1 Action 4a: The Equality & Diversity Annual Report – 'The Council will publish the Equality & Diversity Report 2022/2023 and use the information it contains to help shape its services so that the needs of the diverse population are met'

Action Owner: Charlotte Bott, Corporate Policy & Research Officer

As part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the council is committed to annually publishing equality information relating to people with protected characteristics, and this is

done through the Equality and Diversity Annual Report. Published in winter, this report utilises the most recent Census data, alongside other key data sources, to outline key demographic information about the residents of Stevenage. This information is then used to help shape the council's services, programmes and projects so they reflect the changing needs of the community.

This year, the report includes the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Census data for Stevenage, Hertfordshire and England, alongside updated statistics on population, sex and age following the publication of the ONS Mid-2023 Population Estimates. Key statistics from the recent ONS Births in England and Wales 2023 report were added to the Pregnancy / Maternity section of this report, as well as the latest council data has also been added to the Benefits Claimants, Community Safety and Workforce Information sections.

A few of the key highlights include a 0.7% population growth from 2021 to 2022; Stevenage has a slightly younger (15-64yrs) resident population than Hertfordshire and England (64% vs. 63.9% and 63%, respectively); a decreased total fertility rate of 1.46 children per women compared to 1.58 in 2022; employment rate increased (61.7% to 62.2%); and an increase in residents gaining degrees (22.1% to 29.6%) between the 2011 and 2021 census'.

Following senior leadership team approval, the report was shared on the internal intranet, external website, and amongst managers for dissemination. Due to the Equality & Diversity report being published annually, this action will continue into next year's EDI Action Plan and has also been captured in the team's Service Plan 25/26.

2.4.2 Action 4b: Gender Pay Gap – 'The Council will publish the Gender Pay Gap report 2022 and use it to inform its findings to inform its review of the Workforce Strategy and gender pay parity in the workforce'

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

The council is committed to annually publishing their Gender Pay Gap report as part of their PSED, and using the findings of the to further inform its continuing focus on inclusive recruitment and retention practices as part of the wider Workforce Strategy. The gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings based upon hourly pay. These figures are expressed as a mean and a median.

In line with the financial year ending, analysis was conducted on Stevenage Borough Council's workforce as of 31st March 2024. The mean gender pay gap was found to sit at -0.98, indicating that actually on average women are paid higher than their male comparators. This is compared to 3.73 in 2023, and 4.23 in 2022. Additionally, the median (mid-point) for 2024 for the whole workforce is 2.60%, which demonstrates that good progress is being made when compared to the figure of 4.40% in 2020.

The below table provides a comparison of the reported hourly pay gender pay gaps across Hertfordshire's county, district and borough councils for 2024-25.

Council	Mean Percent	Median Percent
Hertfordshire County Council	0.5	1
Broxbourne Borough Council	3.74	3.74

Dacorum Borough Council	-5	-7
East Hertfordshire Council	13	9
Hertsmere Borough Council	2.7	-3.5
North Hertfordshire District Council	14.6	13.1
St. Albans City Council	6.84	7.99
Stevenage Borough Council	-0.98	2.6
Three Rivers District Council	-16.09	-29.38
Welwyn Hatfield Council	12.44	13.71

The results were also compared to the ONS survey, calculated for each quartile and in line with guidance published by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Government Equalities Office. The findings were then shared with senior leaders and published publicly on social media and on the Data Transparency webpage on the external website. This year's report reflects the council's ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace, as well as how significant strides have been made to narrow the pay gap across all levels.

As it is an annual requirement for the council to publish their gender pay gap, therefore this action will be again included in next year's EDI Action Plan.

2.4.3 Action 4c: Workforce Data – 'The council will continue to review its workforce data and explore opportunities to collate specific ethnicity data that can help identify and address key issues in line with commitments made as part of UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter.'

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

This action was added at the last iteration of the EDI Action Plan in response to the Stevenage Equalities Commission suggesting that there was a significant absence of local data on ethnicity trends. The council then committed to exploring opportunities to collate specific ethnicity data upon review of their workforce data. As a result, Human Resources (HR) set out a year-long timeframe involving a data cleanse, specialised investment in system changes, and liaising with key officers to determine what information could be extracted, what data would be required, and what options were available to build a report to track progression/development opportunities internally. The commitment to introducing ethnicity pay gap recording was also in line with the council's pledge to instigate UNISON's Anti-Racism charter.

Since this commitment, the Race Equality Bill was announced in the King's Speech in July 2024. This bill seeks to specifically introduce specific race equality legislation "to enshrine the full right to equal pay in law", as well as set out equal pay rights for people from minority ethnic groups and disabled people, including mandatory ethnicity and disability pay reporting for employers with 250+ employees to help close the ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

Throughout the past year, the council have continued to work on this and build a report with the commissioned developer. However, this was delayed slightly whilst the council waited for statutory guidance on reporting methodology and legal definitions to be published. As of July 2025, the required report is complete and the council is now able to run ethnicity pay gap

reporting with the first report to be produced for the next EDI Action Plan update. This action will therefore continue into next year and be adapted to ensure ethnicity pay gap reporting is continually monitored.

2.5 Objective 5: We aim to improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels to be representative of our communities.

2.5.1 Action 5a: EDI Cross-Cutting Theme – ‘Through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan, the council has committed to the cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This will encourage staff to consider the impact on equalities when designing and delivering services.’

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

The Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan sets out the Council’s priorities for the next three years. It provides a framework for decision-making and resource allocation in the shape of five priorities and three cross-cutting themes. One of these cross-cutting themes is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and the main way of which the council monitors that every policy, strategy, procedure and service considers and embodies the diverse needs of its community is through Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs).

An EqIA helps to evidence, understand and mitigate the impact that the council’s decisions might have on different types of people. As part of the council’s approach to understanding the diverse needs of the community, equality objectives were integrated into service plans across the organisation, and progress towards them managed by key decision makers. This progress is then used to inform decision-making, and steps taken if any deficiencies are identified. The council undertakes EqIAs for all employment policies, strategies, procedures, services and any employment related decisions. More details of the council’s approach to EqIAs in the past year is outlined under Action 1b of this EDI Action Plan.

This action will continue into next year’s EDI Action Plan; however it will be amalgamated with Action 1b to encompass the fact that EqIAs are the main way the council monitors EDI through its Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan cross-cutting theme.

2.5.2 Action 5b: EDI Cross-Cutting Theme – ‘Through the inclusion of Diversity and Inclusion as a key theme within the Workforce Strategy 2024-27, following Cabinet approval, the council will commit to continuing to develop its response to improving the diversity of the organisation.’

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

The council committed to continuing to build upon its ambitions of the Diversity and Inclusion cross-cutting Theme of the Workforce Strategy (2024-2027) or the next three years at the October’s Cabinet meeting. Delegated authority was also approved for Heads of HR to agree an annual action plan with portfolio holders. Following approval, engagement with Business Units begun with feedback and suggestions gained to inform the actions for year one. The theme of diversity and inclusion was continuously monitored throughout the council’s recruitment and employment practices. As of July 2025, the actions within the Workforce Strategy are reported on annually and a new action plan is currently being developed for year

two, with a review due in October 2025. This year, the council was also reaccredited for the third time as a Disability Confident Employer.

This will continue to be included within next year's EDI Action Plan to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the Diversity and Inclusion theme in 2024-27 Workforce Strategy.

2.6 Objective 6: We are committed to ensuring our staff have the values, skills, and knowledge to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally

2.6.1 Action 6a: Champion Workshops – 'The council will work with the Officer Equality Group to develop individuals led 'Champion' workshops that focus on particular EDI subjects. The purpose of the events will be to share understanding and raise awareness.'

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

The council committed to working with the OEG to develop focused workshops on particular EDI subjects to raise awareness and understanding of each topic. A series of events occurred to raise awareness of EDI themes throughout the year. The council also relaunched Corporate Values to reinforce expected standards of behaviour. In line with the new prevention of Sexual Harm legislation that came into effect from 26 October 2024, HR rolled out mandatory training to all staff to reinforce their responsibilities for preventing sexual harm and expected behaviours. A series of Dementia-Friendly staff training sessions were also held in Autumn 2024 too.

An Officer Equality Group (OEG) comprised of officers from different business units also convenes bi-monthly to discuss equality matters and chart a course forward. This group, chaired by dedicated senior leadership team Equalities Champion and Assistant Director for the Strategic ICT Partnership, Matt Canterford, actively works towards discussing various equality subjects and raising awareness about topics that matter most to staff. Over the past year, OEG meetings have covered topics such as:

- EDI Action Plan quarterly updates
- Ethnicity terminology
- Future of LGBTQ+ Network
- Invisible Disabilities
- Older Persons National Network
- Prevention of Sexual Harm Strategy
- Social & Leisure Hub accessibility
- STEM Youth Action Group
- Stevenage Day 2025 – Pride stall overview
- Stevenage Equalities Commission Beyond Barriers Conference debrief
- Windows 11 Accessibility

Additionally, a dedicated Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Community Training Workshop was recently held during OEG to increase understanding of the community amongst colleagues across the council. The OEG also refer to an events calendar that outlines all key dates from the world of EDI clearly for staff.

A dynamic and inclusive intranet has served as a vital platform for the council's ongoing initiatives too. Regularly published articles and blogs contribute to fostering empathy and understanding internally, with strategically timed posts during key dates for Ramadan, VE Day, Stress Awareness Month, and 16 Days of Activism to challenge violence against women and girls this year. These articles provide insights into diverse perspectives, creating a culture where inclusivity is not only acknowledged but celebrated. There is also a dedicated EDI intranet page that's designed to store all EDI information including individual stories, educational blogs, EqIA guidance and policies.

This action will carry over into next year's EDI action plan to continue to monitor the discussions, activities, and consequent actions of the OEG, however ownership will be reallocated to the members of OEG to advocate for topics more directly.

2.6.2 Action 6b: LGBTQ+ Network – 'The council will support the creation of an LGBTQ+ staff network group to ensure an inclusive workplace through encouraging discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding.'

Action Owner: Casey O'Brien, Customer Service Advisor

Following its addition to this year's action plan, the LGBTQ+ group has since been formed and met regularly throughout 2024/25 with range of topics being discussed including Stevenage Day, LGBTQ+ History month and organising dedicated staff events for anyone who wanted to could attend as their full authentic self, even if they didn't feel comfortable to do so at work.

However, following the retirement of the SLT champion spearheading this network at Christmas 2024, the decision was made to combine both the LGBTQ+ networking group and the Officer Equality Group (OEG) to offer a supportive environment for all colleagues and expand conversations on EDI topics to a wider audience. The LGBTQ+ Network have a standing item at every bi-monthly OEG meeting where the Supreme Court ruling that 'sex' means biological sex in the Equality Act 2010, approved flags, and a debrief from an LGBTQ+ History Month talk hosted at the local Airbus, Europe's largest aerospace company, site have all been discussed.

This action will continue to be included in next year's EDI Action Plan, to ensure the LGBTQ+ Network have a dedicated space to share their voice at future internal staff meetings.

2.6.3 Action 6c: Neurodiversity Network – 'The council will explore the possibility of establishing a Neurodiversity staff network group to ensure an inclusive workplace is in place and informed by discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding.'

Action Owner: Kirsten Frew & Clare Davies, Heads of HR & OD

Following a number of internal blogs posted on the intranet last year, this action was added to explore the possibility of establishing a Neurodiversity staff network group as a way to ensure an inclusive workplace is in place and informed by discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding. It was consequently added into the Workforce

Strategy action plan, details provided under Action 5b above, to ensure action was taken to explore this inclusive opportunity.

Networking groups are seen as a great way to meet colleagues from different areas of the organisation and share experiences, working together to make the council an even better place to work. The objective of a new Neurodiversity Network Group would be to ensure an inclusive workplace is in place and management and colleagues are informed through discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding. An internal blog post was posted on the intranet in July 2025 to ascertain interest, and findings will be shared at the next EDI Action Plan quarterly update, so this action will therefore carry over into 2025/26 to monitor if this new staff network will be established.

2.6.4 Action 6d: Staff Survey – ‘The council will continue to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture, and following the results of the 2024 All Staff Pulse Survey, will develop specific corporate actions to advance inclusion and wellbeing amongst staff.’

Action Owner: Vicky Hickford, Assistant HR Business Partner

Following the results of the 2024 All Staff Pulse Survey, the council committed to developing a series of specific corporate actions to help advance inclusion and wellbeing amongst staff.

The first was to continue administering inclusion training, which has been a continuous programme of training since its introduction. A dedicated EDI session is also held as part of the Essential Manager training to ensure the new generation of managers embodies the principles of the council and is inclusive in every service or piece of work they provide. Further mandatory training is also being explored to expand the knowledge base of council officers and members.

The second sought to raise the profile of the Officer Equality Group (OEG) through marketing campaigns and continued meetings as trusted representatives. This is again a continuous action as OEG meetings are held bi-monthly throughout the year. Further details of the activities of the OEG are documented under Action 6a of this EDI Action Plan.

The third noted the success of Neurodiversity blogs posted in 2023/24, also mentioned at Action 6c above, and sought to explore options for specific e-learning or further sessions from speakers with Q&A options. Throughout the year, this has been explored by the Learning and Development team and will be scheduled in amongst future commitments.

Then finally the fourth corporate action addressed the desire for further comms around not tolerating bullying / harassment / discrimination and encouraging colleagues to report incidences. An article has been drafted; however it is scheduled to launch during the next Anti-Bullying week in Autumn, and will incorporate elements of the recent mandatory sexual harassment training to reiterate the council’s principles.

The next staff survey was launched in April 2025, and the results were presented to Senior Leaders in July so this overarching action will be updated within the 2025/26 EDI Action Plan to create a new series of corporate actions that embody officers’ priorities.

3. Consultation and Monitoring

To ensure that the revised version of the EDI Action Plan continued to include actions that were meaningful to Stevenage Borough Council staff as the actions directly impact them, a

two-week consultation survey was disseminated on the intranet. This gave staff a chance to share their views and flag any absent EDI issues. The EDI Action Plan was also shared for comment with Officers and Members of the Equality & Diversity Governance Group (EDGG) and the Officer Equality Group (OEG).

A total of 20 responses were gained, with the majority of respondents (75%) agreeing with all proposed actions and welcoming a range of existing projects and programmes that embody EDI across the organisation, which is an improvement from last year's consultation when 61% agreed with all proposed actions. Examples of comments provided include:

- "Good to see a range of activities across the organisation."
- "The EDI action plan covers all areas."
- "Very progressive in this area."
- "Important to keep focus on in current climate."
- "I am satisfied that the EDI Action Plan covers all six objectives."
- "Good to see SBC taking the initiative, particularly in climate where there is so much negativity getting publicity."
- "I think the proposed works well with the Town's core values. We are a unique and very mixed community and it is fantastic to see everyone being included."
- "I think this is brilliant and encompasses everything to ensure it is fair and proportionate. Equal opportunities is incredibly important to ensure everyone thrives no matter their advantages or disadvantages."
- "Makes everyone feel included, we are all humans trying to make ends meet."
- "These topics cover the diverse needs of staff well, looking forward to seeing them continue over the next year."

For the respondents that thought more could be done to advance EDI within the council (25%), their concerns focussed upon advancing the Neurodiversity offer available, specifically recommending the inclusion of management training to better ensure an inclusive workplace for all. As a result, this will be incorporated into Action 6c that is already looking into expanding the Neurodiversity Network within the council. Similarly, respondents also outlined their desire to strengthen the digital accessibility support available. Whilst it was acknowledged that the introduction of Windows 11 includes more accessibility options, staff requested that this be expanded to ensure there is wider user-friendliness across all digital platforms and greater reasonable adjustment options are available. This suggestion will be embedded into a newly introduced action that specifically seeks to integrate and implement technology to promote enhanced digital inclusion, further details are provided in section four of this report.

Finally, colleagues additionally expressed a desire to see greater promotion of this EDI Action Plan as "it doesn't seem to be widely known about" and many are "not aware of the details of the action plan". Consequently, future marketing opportunities will be explored to ensure the awareness of the EDI Action Plan increases, as well as the Officer Equality Group where staff can get directly involved in activities linked to EDI.

4. EDI Action Plan 2025/26

- 4.1 Following the consultation feedback, the draft EDI Action Plan 25/26 underwent a thorough review and is proposed to include a combination of existing programmes of work and two newly introduced workstreams. The overarching six equality objectives

will remain in place until 2027 when they are scheduled for review, but until then, 19 actions are proposed across the six objectives for 2025/26.

- 4.2 All 18 actions will carry over from the previous EDI Action Plan due to their ongoing nature. These actions cover elements such as the Community Safety SoSafe Strategy, SEC activities, resident engagement, procurement, Healthy Stevenage Partnership, and equality data reporting, as outlined throughout this report. However, actions 1b and 5a will be combined as they both address the monitoring of EqlAs through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan Cross-Cutting Theme. Further details on the amalgamation of these actions can be found in section two of this report.
- 4.3 Two new actions are proposed for next year's EDI Action Plan 24-25, as follows:
- 3c: Through Age Friendly Stevenage work, embed inclusive engagement with older people from diverse backgrounds to inform and shape Age-Friendly Stevenage priorities and services.
 - 6d: The council will integrate and implement technology to promote digital inclusion and support neurodiverse staff members to ensure accessibility for all.
- 4.4 A complete draft EDI Action Plan for 2025/26 can be found at Appendix B.

5. Appendices

- A. EDI Action Plan 24/25
- B. EDI Action Plan 25/26

Table of Abbreviations

ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
EDGG	Equality and Diversity Governance Group
EDI	Equality Diversity and Inclusion
EFLG	Equality Framework for Local Government
EqIA	Equalities Impact Assessment
HR	Human Resources
M44	Mission 44
MSEB	Making Stevenage Even Better (Corporate Plan)
MVAWG	Male Violence Against Women and Girls
OBE	Order of the British Empire
OBV	Operation Black Vote
OD	Organisational Development
OEG	Officer Equality Group
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SEC	Stevenage Equalities Commission
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SREC	Stevenage Race Equality Co-operative
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
UKSPF	United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

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Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan 2025-26

(August 2025 - July 2026)

The proposed Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan contains two types of actions; those that are being delivered by services as part of **existing** programmes of work, or **newly** introduced actions. All these actions build upon our ambitions as an ‘Achieving’ Council under the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) or are in response to recommendations from the Stevenage Equality Commission (SEC). Each action is aligned with an objective of the Council’s Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (2022) and will underpin the council’s approach to advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion over the next year.

SBC Objective 1: We will understand the diverse needs of our communities and how to meet them effectively.				
Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. The council will continue to foster good community relations and social cohesion through the Community Safety SoSafe Strategy programme of work.	Community Safety	All	Existing	June 2026
b. The council will continue to champion the work of the Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) through the facilitation of the SEC Legacy Group. The Legacy Group will work with partners to deliver meaningful change in response to the findings of the SEC.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	Race	Existing	June 2026
SBC Objective 2: We will actively engage, encourage, and support local people, groups, and organisations to participate in local democracy to improve opportunity and inclusion.				
Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. The council will strengthen the voice of tenants and leaseholders, including consideration of people’s differing needs, through the development and implementation of a Resident Engagement framework.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	All	Existing	June 2026

b. The council will digitally engage with residents as part of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan to help shape the approach to the development of local community plans and provide opportunities for people, including those who share protected characteristics, to participate in local democracy.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	All	Existing	June 2026
c. The council and its partners will work together to establish a Civic Leadership Programme that targets and provides support for underrepresented communities who are interested in political representation and standing for public roles.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	Race	Existing	June 2026
SBC Objective 3: We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion through strategic partnerships, service delivery and supply chain(s).				
Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. The council will review the extent to which its procured services inform and help to uphold and implement our equality objectives.	Procurement	All	Existing	June 2026
b. Through its Healthy Stevenage Partnership, the council will continue to promote activities and events that reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	All	Existing	June 2026
c. Through Age Friendly Stevenage work, embed inclusive engagement with older people from diverse backgrounds to inform and shape Age-Friendly Stevenage priorities and services.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	All	New	June 2026
d. Through our ongoing partnership with Mission 44, the council will provide opportunities for young people to engage with STEM Education and careers, with a particular focus on those who are facing social injustice. This is linked to the council's wider commitments around Enterprise & Skills which is focused on ensuring that Stevenage residents are able to make the most of the opportunities on their doorstep.	Housing & Neighbourhoods	Age, Race & Socio-Economic Duty	Existing	June 2026

SBC Objective 4: We will use local data to shape services so that the needs of our diverse population are met.

Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. The council will publish the Equality & Diversity Report 25/26 and use the information it contains to help shape its services so that the needs of the diverse population are met.	Corporate Policy & Performance	All	Existing	December 2025
b. The council will annually publish the Gender Pay Gap report and use its findings to inform its gender pay parity in the workforce	HR	Gender	Existing	March 2026
c. The council will continue to review its workforce data and collate specific ethnicity data to help identify and address key issues in line with the Race Equality Bill and UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter.	HR	Race	Existing	April 2026

SBC Objective 5: We aim to improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels so that our communities are represented.

Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. Through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan, the council has committed to the cross-cutting theme of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This will encourage staff to consider the impact on equalities when designing and delivering services through Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA).	Corporate Policy & Performance	All	Existing	June 2026
b. Through the inclusion of Diversity and Inclusion as a key theme within the Workforce Strategy 2024-27, following Cabinet approval, the council will commit to continuing to develop its response to improving the diversity of the organisation.	HR	All	Existing	June 2026

SBC Objective 6: We are committed to ensuring our staff have the values, skills, and knowledge to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally.

Action(s)	Lead Responsibility	Protected Characteristic	Existing / New	Due by
a. The council will continue to host bi-monthly Officer Equality Group that host a series of individual-led workshops that focus on various	Corporate Policy & Performance	All	Existing	June 2026

EDI subjects. The purpose of these workshops will be to share understanding and raise awareness.				
b. The council will continue to support the LGBTQ+ staff network group to ensure an inclusive workplace through encouraging discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding.	Corporate Policy & Performance	Sexual Orientation	Existing	June 2026
c. The council will explore the possibility of establishing a Neurodiversity staff network group to ensure an inclusive workplace is in place and informed by discussions, events, and initiatives that promote awareness and understanding.	HR	Disability	Existing	June 2026
d. The council will integrate and implement technology to promote digital inclusion and support neurodiverse staff members to ensure accessibility for all.	IT	Disability	New	June 2026
e. The council will continue to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture, and following the results of the 2025 All Staff Pulse Survey, will develop specific corporate actions to advance inclusion and wellbeing amongst staff.	HR	All	Existing	June 2026

Table of Terminology

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Protected Characteristics

*Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC)
Service Plan*

An EqIA is a document that helps us to evidence, understand and seek to mitigate impacts that our decisions might have on different types of people.

There are nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act (2010), these are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Marriage and Civil Partnership
5. Pregnancy and Maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or Belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual Orientation

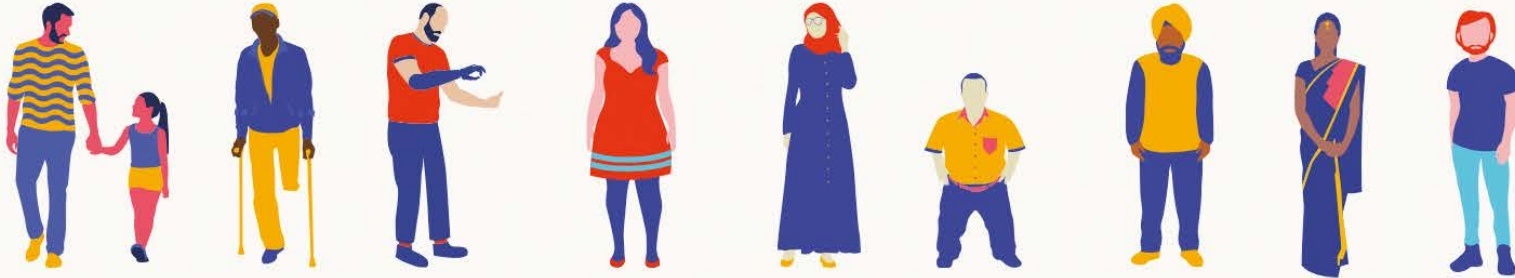
Although socio-economic duty was removed from the Equality Act (2010), Councillors and Officers are required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who might be disadvantaged because of their social and economic background.

The SEC was set up in April 2021 to assess and address racial disparities and inequalities in Stevenage. A document setting out a team's objectives and deliverables for the year.

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A co-operative Council



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Equality & Diversity in Stevenage 2024-25



Message from Cllr Coleen De Freitas, Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Young People – Stevenage Borough Council

Welcome to our annual report on equality and diversity.

I am delighted to introduce my first Equality and Diversity Annual Report since becoming Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Young People. Stevenage Borough Council is committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across its workforce and community. By ensuring we post regular and informative demographic information and collaborate closely with local communities, staff, and partners across the town, we can encourage residents and staff to feel confident in expressing their differences, as well as feel as if they belong and are included.

In March 2022, the council published its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy and Strategy for 2022-26. In the policy we reaffirmed our commitment to fulfilling the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

(PSED) and Equality Act (2010). In our strategy, we also set out the council's ambitions to go beyond legislative requirements and implement an annual EDI Action Plan which brings together all strands of EDI work across existing council strategies, services, and programmes. The third iteration of which was signed off and implemented in October 2025 and included 19 actions that sit across the six agreed overall long-standing objectives. These actions cover a wide range of EDI issues including the Stevenage Equalities Commission (SEC) Legacy Group, the council's strategic partnerships with Mission 44 and Healthy Stevenage, the ongoing use of Equality Impact Assessments, and the creation of various staff network groups. Quarterly updates on the progress of all 19 actions will be monitored and a report summarising the outcomes of these

actions published. By bringing these strands together, we are able to identify and monitor the activities the council undertakes to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion.

In this year's report, up-to-date demographic information has been obtained through the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Mid-2023 Population estimates and the 2021 Census, as well as a variety of other up to date sources. The census data collection included a range of data on age, sex, religion, ethnicity, disability, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, education, and economic activity. This increased understanding of local demographics will enable us to ensure that our services, within the constraints of our available resources, reflect the changing needs of our community.

As our town continues to change and develop, the following pages provide you with an overview of how our community and our workforce is made up which I hope you find as useful and interesting as I certainly have.

Cllr Coleen De Freitas



Equality and Diversity at Stevenage Borough Council

Introduction

Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting an equal and diverse town and workforce, and we have set out how we plan to achieve this through our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (2022 - 2026). You can find this on our website at www.stevenage.gov.uk.

As a council, we have a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the PSED and the Equality Act 2010. The PSED requires local authorities to conduct functions in a way that gives due regard to:

- Removing discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- Promoting equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.
- Encouraging good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who do not.

The Equality Act 2010 also requires local authorities to:

- publish equality information relating to people with protected characteristics (employees, services users, and residents), including publishing of gender pay gap information about its workforce, every year.
- prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any of the aims of the equality duty at least every four years.

In addition to the requirements of the Equality Act, and as set out in the council's EDI policy objectives, we are committed to using local data to shape services. By making this commitment we can ensure that the design of services represent the needs of the local population. The content of this report will inform our understanding and help us achieve this.

As a co-operative council, we are keen to know what our residents and other stakeholders think of our publications and of our work. Do you have an idea or suggestion that can help to further improve the town and the lives of the people living in it? If so, you can contact us in the following ways:

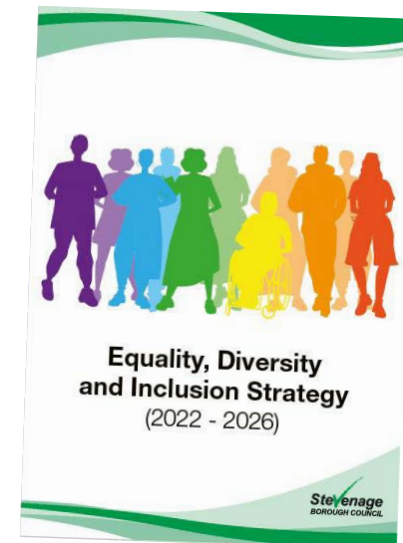
Email: equalities@stevenage.gov.uk

Phone: 01438 242242

In writing to:
Equality and Diversity, Stevenage Borough Council, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

Twitter: twitter.com/stevenagebc

Facebook: facebook.com/sbc



Highlights of 2024/25

Stevenage Borough Council has supported and celebrated Equality and Diversity in a number of ways over the last year, and the following are just a few examples demonstrating this:

- The Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group continues to bring together leaders, organisations and advocates together to tackle the critical issues of race and equality. Over the past year, it has carried out formal steps to become a Multi Stakeholder Co-operative in consultation and collaboration with charity, Voice4Change; as well as commissioning Operation Black Vote to put together a civic leadership programme.

Since Stevenage was officially recognised as an Age-Friendly Community by the Centre for Better Aging, the council has been working closely with Age UK to gather valuable insight from older residents through the Age-Friendly Communities Survey. This work will help strengthen partnerships, improve access to services and promote a healthier, more connected Stevenage for older residents.

- Collaboration with Mission 44, Sir Lewis Hamilton's charity, has continued through support young people in Stevenage to access emerging opportunities in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) through the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme.
- Stevenage Borough Council's mean gender pay gap now sits at -0.98, an improvement from 3.73 in 2023, and 4.23 in 2022. This achievement reflects the council's ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable workplace.
- A series of internal blogs were regularly published throughout the year on key topics such as for Ramadan, VE Day, Stress Awareness Month, and 16 Days of Activism to challenge violence against women and girls.



These provide insights into diverse perspectives, creating a culture where inclusivity is not only acknowledged but celebrated.

- The council monitors its approach to the protected characteristics through Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) and completed a total of 19 new EqIAs between July 2024 – June 2025. An EqIA helps to evidence, understand and mitigate the impact that the council's decisions might have on different types of people.
- The Officer Equality Group is an internal bi-monthly staff group meeting consisting of 23 members, it is responsible for the development and monitoring of the council's EDI Action Plan. The 2024-25 edition included 18 actions that brought together all strands of EDI work across existing council strategies, services, and programmes.
- Equality & Diversity Governance Group is a member and staff-led group that holds quarterly meetings, and is chaired by Cllr Coleen De Freitas. It is responsible for promoting the principles of the council's EDI objectives and ensuring that the aims of the EDI Strategy are achieved.

A Summary of Demographic Changes

Stevenage Demographics

Stevenage and its community are changing every day and as a council we aim to ensure that the services we provide are reflective of these changes. This report will increase our understanding of local demographics and help shape decision making across the council and ensure our services reflect the needs of our community.

- Stevenage has seen its population grow by 0.7% from 89,500 in 2021 to 90,146 in mid-2023 estimates.

Stevenage hosts a slightly younger resident population than Hertfordshire and England, with residents aged 15 to 64 years making up 64% of Stevenage's population, compared to 63.6% and 62.9% in Hertfordshire and England, respectively.

- 24.7% of Stevenage residents were from an ethnic minority in 2021, compared to 16.9% in 2011.
- More Stevenage residents than ever before (44.9%) do not practice a religion, compared to 34.1% in 2011.
- Stevenage hosts the third highest proportion of LGBTQ+ residents in its district in Hertfordshire (2.7%) matching Watford but just below North Herts (2.8%) and Welwyn Hatfield (3%).
- 17.2% of Stevenage residents have a disability covered under the Equality Act, which is a 1.5% increase from the 2011 census.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) in Stevenage is 1.46 children per woman

in 2023, a decrease from 1.58 in 2022 but a slightly higher rate than the TFR for England (1.44).

- 9.1% of residents are unpaid carers, which is and is a slight decrease from 10.2% in the 2011 census, but notably higher than Hertfordshire and England where 8.1% and 8.5% of the population provide unpaid care, respectively.
- The majority of Stevenage residents (43.9%) are married or in a registered civil partnership.
- 12.3% of residents were part of a lone-parent household in 2021, a decrease from 12.4% in 2011 but notably higher than both the county and national average of 10.7% and 11.1% respectively.
- 77.6% of Stevenage residents have a Level 1 qualification or above, which is slightly higher than the national average of 76.6%.
- 5.4% of Stevenage residents had taken part in an apprenticeship scheme, again this was higher than the Hertfordshire and England averages of 4.5% and 5.3% respectively.
- 78.7% of the residents who are of working age (16-64) in Stevenage were employed, which is an increase from 62.2% in 2021. Employment is particularly high within the life sciences sector due to Stevenage's central location within the Golden Research Triangle of Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, and London.



What does equality cover?

Everyone's right to be treated fairly is covered in law by the Equality Act 2010.

The Act protects nine characteristics, and they are:

- Sex
- Age
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Reassignment
- Disability
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

When a person feels that they have not been treated fairly because of any of these characteristics it is called unlawful discrimination.

Although the socio-economic duty was removed from the Equality Act 2010, Councillors and Officers are also required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who might be disadvantaged because of their social and economic background. This could be, for example, a working family who are in receipt of benefits and have little spare income, or a group who, due to wider systemic inequalities such as disability or gender pay-gaps, may have lower than average wages which impact their economic status.



Our Community

In this section, information about the growing population is considered in relation to the Protected Characteristic groups. By doing this we can improve our understanding of key equality and diversity information about Stevenage in comparison to both Hertfordshire and England as a whole.



Demographics

Population

Source: ONS 2021 Census, Mid-2023 Population Estimates, 2022-based Population Projections

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2023 population estimates that the resident population of Stevenage is 90,146, which is an 0.7% increase from the Census 2021 data when the resident population was reported to be an estimated 89,500. The population of Stevenage is also expected to rise to 94,038 by mid-2047. In comparison, Hertfordshire's population currently sits at 1,215,387 and will rise to 1,328,768 by mid-2047. Then England's overall population in mid-2023 was 57,690,323 with an increase to 60,400,000 expected by mid-2047.

The latest 2021 Census also outlined Stevenage that has a population density rate of 3,446 usual residents per square kilometre, making it the second most urban district in Hertfordshire after Watford (4,774). This is also an increase from 3230 usual Stevenage residents per square kilometre in the 2011 Census. In comparison, Hertfordshire and England's population density rates were 730 and 434 in 2021, respectively.

Sex

Source: ONS Mid-2023 Population Estimates

45,603 (50.6%) of Stevenage residents were female and 44,543 (49.4%) were male in mid-2023, which is similar to the 2021 Census when 45,337 (50.7%) of Stevenage residents were female and 44,158 (49.3%) were male. In comparison, Hertfordshire had a slightly higher overall percentage of females at a rate of 51.2% with 622,486, compared to 44,543 (48.8%) males. Further, England was estimated to contain 28,833,717 females (51.04%) and 27,656,342 males (48.95%) in 2023.

Age

Source: ONS Mid-2023 Population Estimates

The average (median) age of Stevenage residents is 38.4 years old. Children aged 15 years old and under account for 20.4% of Stevenage's population, which is slightly higher than the countywide rate of 20.0% and national rate of 18.5%. Similarly, Stevenage hosts a slightly younger resident working population than Hertfordshire and England, with residents aged 16 to 64 years making up 64% of Stevenage's population, compared to rates of 62.6% and 62.9% in Hertfordshire and England, respectively.

Stevenage's trend of hosting a younger resident population than Hertfordshire and England can also be seen in the over 65 years old bracket as they make up 15.5% of Stevenage residents, compared to significantly higher rates in Hertfordshire (17.4%) and England (18.7%).



Age	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents	90,146 100%	1,215,387 100%	57,690,323 100%
Under 4 years old	5,350 5.9%	68,908 5.7%	3,064,637 5.3%
4-9 years old	5,834 6.5%	76,588 6.3%	3,348,767 5.8%
10-14 years old	6,049 6.7%	81,285 6.7%	3,528,940 6.1%
15-19 years old	5,194 5.8%	70,914 5.8%	3,405,063 5.9%
20-24 years old	4,381 4.9%	58,397 4.8%	3,456,372 6.0%
25-29 years old	5,884 6.5%	71,209 5.9%	3,777,849 6.6%
30-34 years old	7,357 8.2%	81,677 6.7%	4,013,423 7.0%
35-39 years old	7,236 8.0%	86,796 7.1%	3,950,900 6.9%
40-44 years old	6,327 7.0%	88,768 7.3%	3,783,402 6.6%
45-49 years old	5,337 5.9%	82,514 6.8%	3,434,274 6.0%
50-54 years old	5,760 6.4%	83,864 6.9%	3,809,016 6.6%
55-59 years old	6,164 6.8%	82,102 6.8%	3,863,850 6.7%
60-64 years old	5,271 5.9%	70,569 5.8%	3,470,743 6.0%
65-69 years old	4,060 4.5%	56,172 4.6%	2,882,871 5.0%
70-74 years old	3,189 3.5%	48,506 3.8%	2,589,994 4.5%
75-79 years old	2,880 3.2%	45,917 3.8%	2,387,125 4.1%
80-84 years old	1,841 2%	28,932 2.4%	1,476,485 2.6%
85+ years old	2,032 2%	32,269 2.7%	1,446,612 2.5%

Further, life expectancy at birth in Stevenage is 79.5 years for men and 82.1 years for women. In contrast, life expectancy at birth for men is 81 years and 84.3 years for women in Hertfordshire, and 78.8 years and 80.7 years in England, respectively.

Ethnicity

Source: Ethnicity - ONS Census 2021, Table TS021 & Table KS201EW

According to the 2021 Census, 82.8% of Stevenage's population identified with the broad ethnic group of White, a decrease from 97.7% in 2011 but higher than the Hertfordshire and England 2021 averages of 81.8% and 81.0% respectively.

Ethnicity by Broad Ethnic Group	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents	89,498 100%	1,198,798 100%	56,490,065 100%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	6,700 7.5%	103,668 8.6%	5,426,423 9.61%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	4,340 4.8%	44,894 3.7%	2,381,722 4.22%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	3,216 3.6%	45,126 3.8%	1,669,375 2.96%
White	74,099 82.8%	980,061 81.8%	45,783,379 81.05%
Other ethnic group	1,143 1.3%	25,049 2.1%	1,229,166 2.18%



24.7% of Stevenage residents were from an ethnic minority (non-White British) in 2021, compared to 16.9% in the 2011 Census. In comparison, 28.2% of residents in Hertfordshire and 26.5% in England overall are from an ethnic minority group.

Romanian was Stevenage's most spoken non-English language with 1.4% being speakers in 2021, followed by Polish with 1.1% of residents being speakers. Romanian is also Hertfordshire's most spoken non-English language (1.3%), whereas Polish is England's (1.1%).



Religion

Source: Religion - ONS Census 2021, Table TS030

44.9% of Stevenage residents identify with no specified religion and is therefore the majority response, this is significantly higher than Hertfordshire and England levels (36.6% and 36.7%). In comparison, only 34.1% of Stevenage residents identified with no religion in 2011, meaning a significant increase of 10.8% of residents not identifying with a religion was seen.

Christianity is still the most popular religion in Stevenage with 43.3% of residents identifying as Christian, but this has significantly reduced from 54.4% since 2011. This 2021 rate is also slightly lower than population proportions in Hertfordshire (46.5%) and England (46.3%).

3.2% of Stevenage residents are Muslim; an increase since 2011 when 2% of Muslim residents. This is significantly lower than population demographics in Hertfordshire and England where 4% and 6.7% identified as Muslim, respectively.

Religion	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents	89,495 100.0%	1,198,798 100.0%	56,490,048 100.0%
Christian	38,712 43.3%	557,117 46.5%	26,167,899 46.3%
Buddhist	398 0.4%	6,562 0.5%	262,433 0.5%
Hindu	1,397 1.6%	35,545 3.0%	1,020,533 1.8%
Jewish	163 0.2%	26,436 2.2%	269,283 0.5%
Muslim	2,822 3.2%	47,378 4.0%	3,801,186 6.7%
Sikh	307 0.3%	6,016 0.5%	520,092 0.9%
Other	523 0.6%	8,630 0.7%	332,410 0.6%
No Religion	40,158 44.9%	438,365 36.6%	20,715,664 36.7%
Not Stated	5,015 5.6%	72,749 6.1%	3,400,548 6.0%

Sexual orientation

Source: Sexual Orientation – ONS Census 2021, Table TS079

According to the 2021 census, 90.6% of Stevenage residents consider themselves to be straight or heterosexual, similar to Hertfordshire's percentage of 90.7% and slightly higher than the national average of 89.4%.

2.7% of Stevenage residents identify with Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Plus (LGBTQ+) sexual orientations, matching North Hertfordshire, and just below Welwyn Hatfield (3%). Therefore meaning Stevenage hosts the third highest proportion of LGBTQ+ residents in its district in Hertfordshire. Overall, Hertfordshire's hosts 2.39% and England hosts 3.17% of LGBTQ+ residents.

0.1% of Stevenage residents are in a same-sex civil partnership, matching both Hertfordshire and England's average. Then 0.2% are in a same-sex marriage, matching Hertfordshire but slightly less than England's average of 0.3%.

Sexual Orientation	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents aged 16 years and over	71,239 100%	959,081 100%	46,006,957 100%
Straight or Heterosexual	64,574 90.6%	869,781 90.7%	41,114,478 89.4%
Gay or Lesbian	906 1.3%	10,644 1.1%	709,704 1.5%
Bisexual	827 1.2%	9,583 1.0%	591,690 1.3%
Pansexual	85 0.1%	1,884 0.2%	45,435 0.1%
Asexual	37 0.1%	465 0.0%	26,614 0.1%
Queer	13 0.0%	161 0.0%	13,928 0.0%
All other sexual orientations	80 0.1%	174 0.0%	72,380 0.2%
Not answered	4,717 6.6%	66,389 6.9%	3,432,728 7.5%

Gender Identity

Source: Gender Identity – ONS Census 2021, Table TS070

According to the 2021 Census, 94.3% of Stevenage residents' gender identify is the same as the sex they were registered with at their birth, which is similar to Hertfordshire and England's averages of 94.2% and 93.5% respectively.

0.4% of residents have a different gender identity to the sex registered at birth, compared to 0.41% in Hertfordshire and 0.44% in England. Within this overall figure, 80 Stevenage residents identified as a Trans woman, 81 as a Trans man, 31 as non-binary and 33 as all other gender identities.

Gender Identity	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents aged 16 years and over	71,236 100%	959,082 100%	46,006,986 100%
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	67,160 94.3%	94.2%	903,368 93.5%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	127 0.2%	1,554 0.2%	113,757 0.2%
Trans woman	80 0.1%	856 0.1%	45,696 0.1%
Trans man	81 0.1%	833 0.1%	46,536 0.1%
Non-binary	31 0.0%	475 0.0%	28,700 0.1%
All other gender identities	33 0.0%	281 0.0%	17,178 0.03%
Not answered	3,724 5.2%	51,715 5.4%	2,752,788 6%

Disability

Source: Long term health problem or disability - ONS Census 2021, Table TS038

17.3% of Stevenage residents assessed themselves as disabled under the Equality Act that limited their day-to-day activities in 2021, compared to 14.4% and 17.3% in Hertfordshire and England, respectively. 45.8% of Stevenage residents with a health condition(s) lasting more than 12 months were in employment.

6.9% of residents had a long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities were not limited, matching Hertfordshire but 0.1% higher than England's overall figure.

Long term health problem or disability	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents	89,495	1,198,798	56,490,051
	100%	100%	100%
Disabled under the Equality Act	15,468	172,675	9,774,514
	17.3%	14.4%	17.3%
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	6,303	66,460	4,140,360
	7.0%	5.5%	7.3%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	9,165	106,215	5,634,154
	10.2%	8.9%	10%
Not disabled under the Equality Act	74,027	1,026,123	46,715,537
	82.7%	85.59%	82.7%
Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	6,192	82,664	3,856,040
	6.9%	6.9%	6.8%
No long term physical or mental health conditions	67,835	943,459	42,859,497
	75.8%	78.7%	75.9%

Carers

Source: Provision of unpaid care - ONS Census 2021, Table TS039

According to the 2021 Census, there were 7,603 unpaid carers in Stevenage, which is the equivalent to 9.1% of our population and is a slight decrease from 10.2% in the 2011 census. Stevenage's unpaid carer population is notably higher than Hertfordshire and England where 8.1% and 8.5% of the population provide unpaid care, respectively.

Of the 7,603 unpaid carers in Stevenage, 3.2% provided nine hours or less a week of unpaid care, 1.2% provided 10-19 hours, 0.9% provided 20-34 hours, 1.1% provided 35-49 hours, and 2.7% provided over fifty hours.

Provision of unpaid care	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents aged 5 and over	83,876	1,128,638	53,413,087
	100%	100%	100%
Provides no unpaid care / week	76,273	1,035,857	48,734,827
	90.9%	91.8%	91.2%
9 hours or less unpaid care a week	2,681	38,852	1,668,987
	3.2%	3.4%	3.1%
10-19 Hours unpaid care a week	1,002	12,739	634,729
	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%
20-34 Hours unpaid care a week	760	8,326	452,263
	0.9%	0.7%	0.8%
35-49 Hours unpaid care a week	883	8,826	517,513
	1.1%	0.8%	0.8%
50+ Hours unpaid care a week	2,277	24,038	1,404,771
	2.7%	2.1%	2.6%

Deprivation

Source: DLUHC 2019

In terms of Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Stevenage overall is ranked 117th out of 317 authorities (133 in 2015). Bedwell and Bandle Hill are within the 20 per cent most deprived wards in the country, and Shephall is within the 30 per cent most deprived. Around 16 per cent (2,855) of children live in low income families in Stevenage.

Please note that this data is due to be updated in Autumn 2025, and further analysis will be included in next year's report.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Source: Births in England and Wales 2023, Live Births 2024 - ONS

The birth rate in Stevenage in 2024 sat at 12.2 live births per 1,000 people, which is higher than 10.9 in Hertfordshire and 10.5 in England. Specifically, there were 933 (483 male and 450 female) live births in Stevenage, 12,268 (6,279 male and 5,989 female) in Hertfordshire and 567,708 (291,202 male and 276,506 female) in England in 2024.

Stevenage hosts the Lister Diamond Jubilee Maternity Unit, which was formally opened by Queen Elizabeth II as part of her Diamond Jubilee celebrations in October 2011.

Lone parent households and households with dependants

Source: Household Composition - ONS Census 2021, Table TS003

According to the 2021 census, just over one in five households in Stevenage (21.3%) included a couple with dependent children, compared with 21.5%

in 2011. 12.3% of residents were part of a lone-parent household in 2021, a decrease from 12.4% in 2011 and notably higher than both the county and national average of 10.7% and 11.1% respectively.

Household Composition	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All households	36,510	482,887	23,436,088
	100%	100%	100%
Lone Parent Family Total	4,488	51,580	2,594,905
	12.3%	10.7%	11.1%
Lone Parent Family with dependent children	2,748	31,461	1,617,072
	7.5%	6.5%	6.9%
Lone Parent Family with non-dependent children	1,740	20,119	977,833
	4.8%	4.1%	4.2%





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Education

Source: Education – ONS Census 2021, Table TS067; DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships

According to the 2021 Census, 77.6% of Stevenage residents have a Level 1 qualification or above, which is higher than the national average of 76.6%. When compared to the 2011 census, Stevenage has seen a rise in the number of residents over the age of 16 gaining level 4 (degree-level or higher) qualifications from 22.1% in 2011 to 29.6% in 2021. There has also been a reduction in the amount of residents who have no qualifications, from 21.5% in 2011 to 17% in 2021.

Highest Level of Qualification	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
All usual residents aged 16 years and over	71,236 100%	959,078 100%	46,006,926 100%
No qualifications	12,113 17%	140,644 14.7%	8,317,793 18.1%
Level 1 and entry level qualifications	9,213 12.9%	91,151 9.5%	4,456,190 9.7%
Level 2 qualifications	10,908 15.3%	129,038 13.5%	6,126,117 13.3%
Apprenticeship	3,836 5.4%	43,603 4.5%	2,446,926 5.3%
Level 3 qualifications	12,205 17.1%	152,047 15.9%	7,784,978 16.9%
Level 4 qualifications or above	21,096 29.6%	378,321 39.4%	15,606,455 33.9%
Other qualifications	1,865 2.6%	24,274 2.5%	1,268,467 2.8%



In 2021, 5.4% of Stevenage residents had taken part in an apprenticeship scheme, again this was higher than the Hertfordshire and England averages of 4.5% and 5.3% respectively. However, more recently the Department for Education (DfE) outlined that in 2023-2024 there were 560 apprenticeships starts and 310 achievements in Stevenage. This data has then been broken down across sector subject areas, highlighting that the majority of apprenticeships in Stevenage, and across the country, sit within the Health, Public Services and Care sector:

Sector Subject Area	Stevenage		Hertfordshire		England	
	Starts	Achievements	Starts	Achievements	Starts	Achievements
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	1.80%	3.20%	1.90%	2.20%	1.80%	2.20%
Arts, Media and Publishing	1.80%	0.00%	0.50%	0.00%	0.60%	0.60%
Business, Administration and Law	25.00%	25.80%	32.80%	32.40%	27.90%	27.90%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	5.40%	3.20%	5.80%	5.60%	7.10%	7.20%
Education and Training	3.60%	6.50%	2.90%	3.70%	2.70%	3.00%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	8.90%	12.90%	10.00%	12.00%	13.50%	14.20%
Health, Public Services and Care	35.70%	35.50%	25.70%	25.30%	27.90%	27.10%
History, Philosophy and Theology	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Information and Communication Technology	8.90%	6.50%	9.90%	9.60%	8.00%	7.80%
Languages, Literature and Culture	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	1.80%	3.20%	1.70%	2.20%	1.20%	1.50%
Preparation for Life and Work	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	8.90%	6.50%	8.80%	7.70%	9.00%	8.30%
Science and Mathematics	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%
Social Sciences	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%	0.10%

Stevenage hosts 47 active education institutions, including 43 schools. This includes North Hertfordshire College which is partnered with Sir Lewis Hamilton's Mission 44 charity, Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and the University of Hertfordshire to spearhead the Pioneering Young Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Futures programme.

Skills

Sources: Economic Activity – ONS Census 2021, Table TS066, Annual Population Survey 2025, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2024, ONS Inter Departmental Business Register, ONS Earnings and Working Hours

Stevenage is located at the heart of the Golden Research Triangle with proximity to advanced life sciences clusters in Oxford, London, and Cambridge. As a result, the human health and social work activities industry employs the highest rate of Stevenage residents with 7,679 employees (16.9%), followed by the Wholesale and retail trade; and the repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles industry, according to the 2021 Census.

82.9% of the estimated working age (16-64) population of Stevenage were economically active in 2025, compared to 82.9% in Hertfordshire and 79.5% in England, as per above top:

In 2023, £2,867 million was added to the national economy by Stevenage. In 2024, there were 3,320 enterprises and 3,960 local units were registered in Stevenage, as outlined opposite:



Economically Active	Stevenage		Hertfordshire		England	
Economically Active	46,600	81.9%	657,800	82.9%	30,647,000	79.5%
In Employment	44,800	78.7%	636,800	80.1%	29,168,000	75.6%
Unemployed	2,000	4.4%	21,000	3.2%	1,479,000	4.8%
Economically Inactive	10,1000	18.1%	130,000	17.1%	7,528,000	20.5%

Total Enterprises	Stevenage		East of England	
	3,320	100%	270,380	100%
Micro (0 – 9)	3,000	90.4%	242,510	89.7%
Small (10 – 49)	260	7.8%	22,755	8.4%
Medium (50 – 249)	50	1.5%	4,120	1.5%
Large (250+)	15	0.5%	995	0.4%

Total Local Units	Stevenage		East of England	
	3,960	100%	309,790	100%
Micro (0 – 9)	3,335	84.2%	264,215	85.3%
Small (10 – 49)	480	12.1%	36,870	11.9%
Medium (50 – 249)	125	3.2%	7,690	2.5%
Large (250+)	20	0.5%	1,015	0.3%



Further, the mean annual gross pay for all jobs that utilise Stevenage as their place of work was £43,391 in 2024. This is higher than both the mean Hertfordshire annual pay of £36,313 and England’s mean annual pay of £39,030. Opposingly, the mean annual gross pay for Stevenage residents was £36,294, which is lower than both Hertfordshire’s resident annual pay of £48,255 and England’s resident annual pay of £39,004. Therefore indicating that individuals utilising Stevenage as their place of work were more likely to earn an average of £7,097 more than Stevenage residents, which is conflicting to both county and nationwide trends as per below:

Mean Annual Gross Pay Estimates	Stevenage	Hertfordshire	England
Place of Work	£43,391	£36,313	£39,030
Residents	£36,294	£48,255	£39,004

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Benefits Claimants

Sources: Department for Work and Pensions; Stevenage Borough Council

In May 2025, 8,982 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in Stevenage, a 17.18% increase from 7,665 households in May 2024. This significant increase is a result of the migration from benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit.

In April 2025, there were 5,385 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage, which is a 13.58% increase from 4,741 in April 2024.

In July 2025, the number of Council Tax Support recipients of working age (non-pensioners) was 3,284, which is a 1.92% increase from 3,222 in July 2024.



Community Safety

Source: Stevenage Borough Council

The Council’s SoSafe Community Safety Partnership Strategy (2025-2028) focuses on the priorities that are important to the people of Stevenage. The aim of the strategy is to build safer, stronger, and more confident communities. The six key objectives are:

- Highlight the risks to the community of drug possession and crime
- Provide safe reporting and support to victims of violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse
- Promote awareness of Cuckooing and the support available to victims
- Divert individuals from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Collaborate with partners and young people regarding the risks around County Lines and associated ASB
- Raise awareness around online fraud and the warning signs to the community

As indicated in the recent Residents' Survey (2025) one of the top priorities for residents is to reduce current levels of crime and ASB and enhance police visibility, so through the work with partner agencies we want to keep people informed about the town's crime and ASB-related statistics and address perceptions:

- Between April 2024 and March 2025, the council dealt with 237 ASB cases, an average of 19 per month, and 140 Environmental Enforcement cases.
- The most common type of ASB was Verbal/Harassment/Intimidation/Threatening – 62 cases (or 26%). The ASB Team uses a number of powers to tackle ASB such as Community Protection Notices, the property closure power, civil injunctions, taking action against SBC tenants' tenancies and more.

• We had 96 cases of fly-tipping reported to us between April 2024 and March 2025. Where a perpetrator was identified, in 66 cases we got them to clear the waste themselves. We served 4 fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping during the same period. We also use Notices against Tenancies and Community Protection Notices/Warnings.

The term 'hate crime' refers to offences that are either motivated, or perceived to be motivated, by hostility towards one of the five monitored hate strands: race/ethnicity, faith/religion, sexual orientation, transgender and disability. A single offence can involve multiple hate strands. It is widely accepted that hate crimes are under reported, not all victims are comfortable with reporting their experiences directly to the police. Some victims may find visiting police stations intimidating or daunting, some may not be aware of alternative ways of reporting, or they fear being outed in terms of their sexuality or disability. Third party reporting centres (TPRCs) overcome these barriers by providing an alternative way to report a hate crime. Stevenage Borough Council is a Third-Party Reporting Centre for hate crime and through our partners and as part of the Council's wider ambitions to raise awareness of issues relating to equality and diversity, will continue to encourage hate crime reporting.

- Recorded hate crime in Stevenage increased by 34% between 2023/24 and 2024/25.
- Stevenage also reported 1878 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) incidents, compared to 1206 reported incidents last year. Therefore, an increase in VAWG offending can be observed over this period with an increase aggravating factors such as Domestic Abuse (DA), Partner on Partner, Public Place and Harassment also occurring throughout the year.

- The No More Service offers support to people when drugs, alcohol and/or offending negatively affect their daily life. The service offers crisis intervention along with client led support and signposting to other agencies to suit the individual's needs. The No More Service supported 80 clients throughout 2024/25. 21 were female, 59 were male. Of those 80, 26 were referred for support with substance misuse issues, 16 for alcohol issues and the remaining 38 for offending related issues.



- The Youth No More Service supports young people across Hertfordshire aged 11 – 21 (or 25 with SEND), helping them reduce their risk of exploitation, tackle substance misuse, engage with education, reduce offending, and engage with partner agencies such as those providing mental health support. The service received 72 referrals in 2024/25, 20 of which were female, and 52 were male.
- There were 978 notifiable offences flagged as DA and 890 DA non-crime offences across Stevenage in 2024/25. Stevenage saw a 0.5% increase in DA offences and a 5.6% increase in DA non-crime offences, when compared to 2023/2024.



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Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) is a Hertfordshire-wide service that provides advice, guidance and support to individuals and their families who are or have experienced domestic abuse. The service encourages and empowers victims and survivors to make decisions that are right for them, accepting referrals from any agency / victim and survivor, regardless of their risk level.

- In 2024-2025, SADA received 1,374 referrals county-wide, a 25.52% decrease from 2023-2024 when 1,845 referrals were received. There were 461 referrals for individuals from Stevenage, of these 60 were male and 401 were female, and again this is a 26% decrease when compared to 623 referrals received last year.

Workforce information for 2024

Source: Stevenage Borough Council

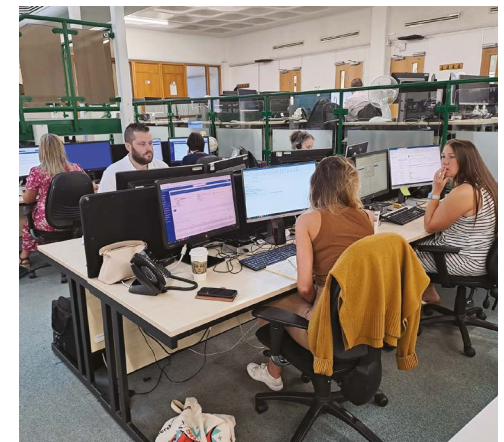
Below is the profile of the Stevenage Borough Council workforce. The profile data excludes staff on casual contracts and covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2024.

The council's services are organised into 15 business units:

- Building Safety & Property Services
- Communications and Marketing
- Constitutional Services
- Digital and Transformation
- Estates
- Finance
- Housing and Neighbourhoods
- Housing Development
- Human Resources and OD
- IT
- Planning and Regulatory
- Regeneration
- Stevenage Direct Services
- Strategic Leadership Team

The council's business units, with the support of the Human Resources department, will use this data in future workforce planning.

*Please note: In the tables below, * indicates a figure representing five or less. We have not included actual figures to ensure that individual members of staff cannot be identified.*



Employees by protected characteristic

Service	Employees Headcount	Working Pattern		Sex		Ethnicity % of ethnic minority employees (inc White Other)	Disability % of employees declaring a disability	Sexual Orientation % of employees who are LGB	Religion or Belief % of employees disclosing a religion of belief
		FT	PT	Male	Female				
Building Safety & Property Services	100	91	9	60	40	13.27%	*	*	43.62%
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	13	*	*	*	10	*	*	*	69.23%
Digital and Transformation	35	23	12	14	21	20.00%	*	*	63.64%
Estates	19	*	*	11	8	*	*	*	66.67%
Finance	36	27	9	8	28	36.11%	*	*	65.63%
Housing and Neighbourhoods	200	154	46	40	160	18.18%	5.15%	*	53.30%
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	14	*	*	*	11	*	*	*	*
IT	29	28	*	22	7	32.14%	*	*	60.87%
Planning and Regulatory	49	40	9	21	28	22.45%	*	*	46.67%
Regeneration	9	*	*	*	6	*	*	*	77.78%
Stevenage Direct Services	139	122	17	112	27	12.32%	7.25%	*	43.80%
Strategic Leadership Team	15	*	*	10	*	*	*	*	76.92%
Total	669	552	117	310	359	18.13%	6.13%	2.40%	51.82%

Age Profile of Employees

Service	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and above
Building Safety & Property Services	*	15	28	20	30	*
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	*	*	*	*	7	*
Digital and Transformation	*	6	10	*	13	*
Estates	*	*	8	*	7	*
Finance	*	*	11	14	8	*
Housing and Neighbourhoods	8	55	46	39	46	6
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	*	*	6	*	*	*
IT	*	*	12	6	6	*
Planning and Regulatory	*	*	18	13	10	*
Regeneration	1	*	*	*	*	*
Stevenage Direct Services	6	24	33	31	38	7
Strategic Leadership Team	*	*	*	6	*	*
Total	23	115	184	143	179	25

Ethnicity of Employees

Service	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Mixed Ethnic Group	Other Ethnic Group	White British	White Other
Building Safety & Property Services	*	*	*	*	86.73%	*
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	*	*	*	*	92.31%	*
Digital and Transformation	*	*	*	*	80.00%	*
Estates	*	*	*	*	78.95%	*
Finance	*	*	*	*	63.89%	*
Housing and Neighbourhoods	3.54%	8.59%	*	*	81.82%	3.03%
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	*	*	*	*	76.92%	*
IT	*	*	*	*	67.86%	*
Planning and Regulatory	*	*	*	*	77.55%	*
Regeneration	*	*	*	*	77.78%	*
Stevenage Direct Services	*	5.07%	5.07%	*	87.68%	*
Strategic Leadership Team	*	*	*	*	80.00%	*
Total	4.23%	5.89%	4.08%	0.91%	81.87%	3.02%

Religion of Employees

Service	Buddhist	Christian	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	No religion	Other religion	Sikh
Building Safety & Property Services	*	38.30%	*	*	*	56.38%	*	*
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	*	69.23%	*	*	*	*	*	*
Digital and Transformation	*	54.55%	*	*	*	36.36%	*	*
Estates	*	46.67%	*	*	*	*	*	*
Finance	*	56.25%	*	*	*	34.38%	*	*
Housing and Neighbourhoods	*	47.80%	*	*	3.30%	46.70%	*	*
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	*	*	*	*	*	61.54%	*	*
IT	*	43.48%	*	*	*	39.13%	*	*
Planning and Regulatory	*	44.44%	*	*	*	53.33%	*	*
Regeneration	*	77.78%	*	*	*	*	*	*
Stevenage Direct Services	*	41.32%	*	*	*	56.20%	*	*
Strategic Leadership Team	*	69.23%	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	*	46.19%	*	*	2.81%	48.18%	1.82%	*

Employees by Length of Service

Service	Length of Service			Voluntary Turnover	Total Turnover
	Less than 5 years	5 to 10 years	more than 10 years		
Building Safety & Property Services	53	17	30	13.00%	14.00%
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	6	*	*	*	*
Digital and Transformation	11	8	16	*	*
Estates	7	6	6	*	*
Finance	19	10	7	*	*
Housing and Neighbourhoods	112	44	44	20.00%	21.00%
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	6	*	*	*	*
IT	8	11	10	*	*
Planning and Regulatory	19	12	18	*	*
Regeneration	*	6	*	*	*
Stevenage Direct Services	55	23	61	16.55%	25.90%
Strategic Leadership Team	6	*	*	*	*
Total	309	148	212	13.75%	16.74%

Number of Leavers

Service	Leavers					
	Voluntary (HC)	Non Voluntary (HC)	TUPE (HC)	Voluntary (%)	Non Voluntary (%)	TUPE (%)
Total	92	20	0	82.14%	17.86%	0.00%

Leavers by Protected Characteristic

	Working Pattern		Sex		Ethnicity	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief
	FT	PT	Male	Female	% of ethnic minority employees (inc White Other)	% of employees declaring a disability	% of employees who are LGB	% of employees disclosing a religion of belief
All leavers	94	18	50	50	20.91%	10.20%	*	52.83%



Starters by Protected Characteristic

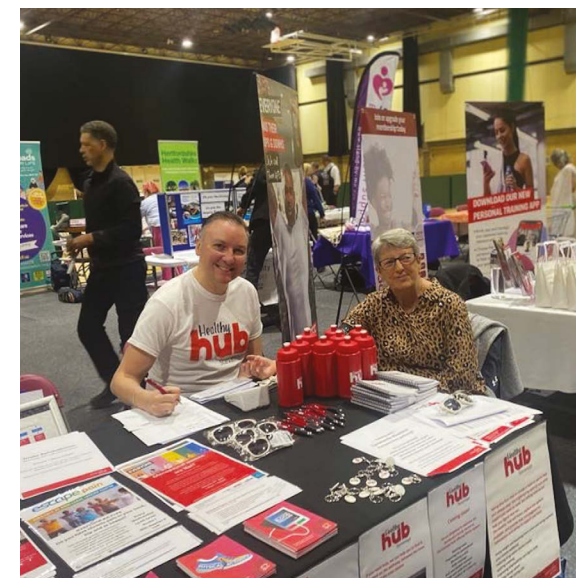
	Working Pattern		Sex		Ethnicity	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief
	FT	PT	Male	Female	% of ethnic minority employees (inc White Other)	% of employees declaring a disability	% of employees who are LGB	% of employees disclosing a religion of belief
All starters	102	21	63	60	27.87%	5.04%	*	51.75%

Base Pay

Service	Base Pay - Headcount				Base Pay - As a Percentage			
	Less than £20k	£20k up to £30k	£30k up to £50k	Over £50k	Less than £20k	£20k up to £30k	£30k up to £50k	Over £50k
Building Safety & Property Services	*	22	69	*	*	22.00%	69.00%	9.00%
Communications and Marketing	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Constitutional Services	*	*	10	*	*	*	76.92%	*
Digital and Transformation	*	17	13	*	*	48.57%	37.14%	*
Estates	*	*	10	*	*	*	52.63%	*
Finance	*	*	15	14	*	19.44%	41.67%	38.89%
Housing and Neighbourhoods	*	24	167	*	*	12.00%	83.50%	*
Housing Development	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Human Resources and OD	*	*	9	*	*	*	64.29%	*
IT	*	*	20	*	*	*	68.97%	24.14%
Planning and Regulatory	*	12	22	15	*	24.49%	44.90%	30.61%
Regeneration	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Stevenage Direct Services	*	73	60	*	*	52.52%	43.17%	*
Strategic Leadership Team	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total	*	168	406	95	*	25.11%	60.69%	14.20%

Pay By Protected Characteristic

	Sex		Working Pattern		Ethnicity	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Religion or Belief
	Male	Female	FT	PT	% of ethnic minority employees (inc White Other)	% of employees declaring a disability	% of employees who are LGB	% of employees disclosing a religion of belief
Less than £20k	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£20k up to £30k	14.80%	10.31%	19.43%	5.68%	16.07%	9.70%	3.92%	52.98%
£30k up to £50k	24.07%	36.62%	50.52%	10.16%	18.80%	5.58%	2.11%	50.13%
Over £50k	7.47%	6.73%	12.86%	1.35%	18.95%	*	*	57.32%
Total	46.34%	53.66%	82.81%	17.19%	18.13%	6.13%	2.40%	51.82%

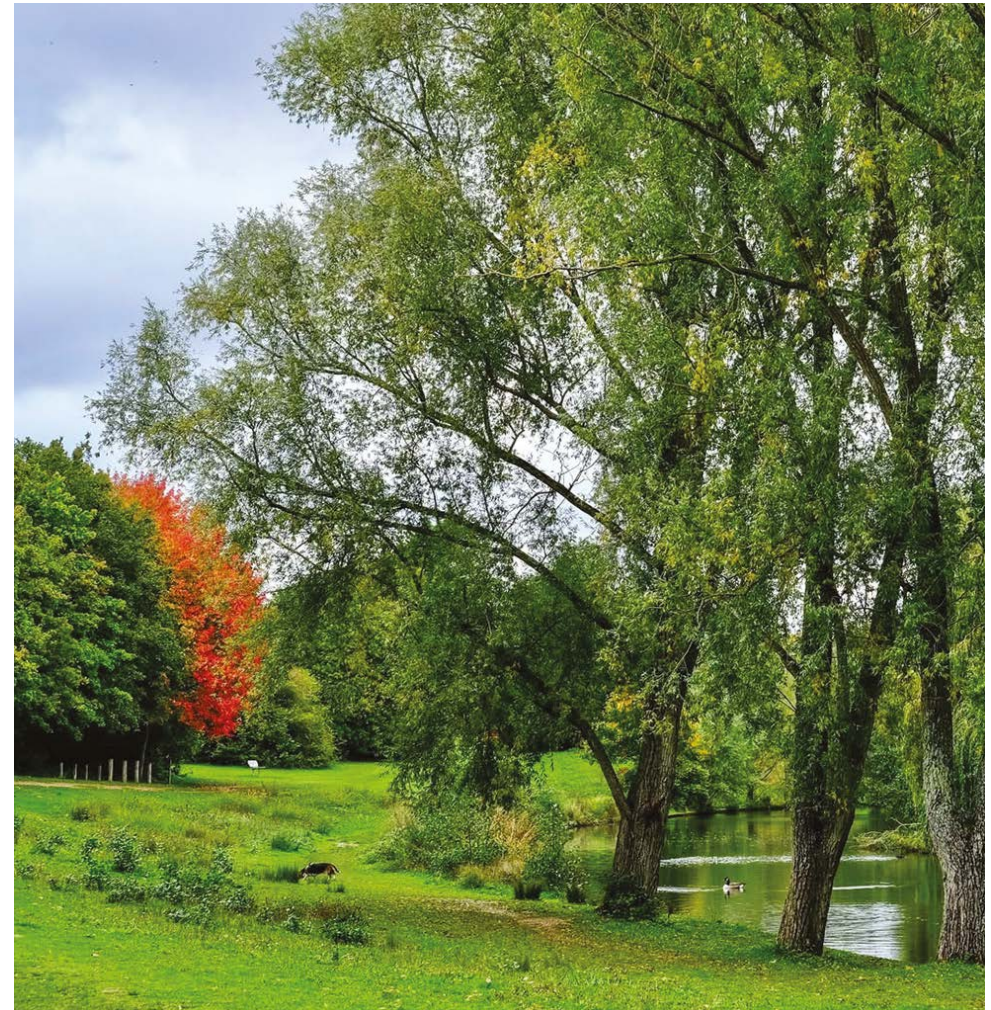


Pay by Age

	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and above	All Ages
Less than £20k	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
£20k up to £30k	1.64%	5.08%	4.48%	3.44%	8.67%	1.79%	25.11%
£30k up to £50k	1.64%	11.21%	16.89%	13.45%	15.40%	2.09%	60.69%
Over £50k	*	1.35%	5.53%	4.48%	2.84%	*	14.20%
Total	3.29%	17.64%	26.91%	21.38%	26.91%	3.89%	100.00%

Table of Acronyms

ASB	Anti-Social Behaviour
DA	Domestic Abuse
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
FT	Full-time
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LGBTQ+	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Plus
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PEED	Public Sector Equality Duty
PT	Part-time
SADA	Survivors Against Domestic Abuse
SBC	Stevenage Borough Council
SEC	Stevenage Equalities Commission
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TPRCs	Third party reporting centres
TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)





A co-operative Council



Stevenage Borough Council

Equality & Diversity information for Stevenage 2024-25

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