

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and Ellie Plater

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sandra Barr, Phil Bibby, Leanne Brady and Mason Humberstone.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as approved at the Annual Council meeting held on 22 May 2025, be noted.

4 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 4 June 2025.

1. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

The Strategic Director advised that the Select Committee had provided feedback on the scrutiny work, and no questions were raised by Cabinet in response.

2. GREEN SPACES STRATEGY AND TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

The Assistant Director for Stevenage Direct Services reported that both the Green Spaces Strategy and the Tree and Woodland Strategy had been in development for

some time and had involved consultation with stakeholders and Council officers and specific policy development work with the Environment & Economy Select Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Members were informed that Cabinet members discussed the importance of green spaces in the town and agreed that the strategies were well-aligned with the Council's long term ambitions to enhance and protect these areas over the next ten years. Members welcomed the inclusion of the Forster Country Park, recognising it as a significant asset for Stevenage. The recommendations were approved.

Committee members also highlighted the town-wide importance of green spaces, with reference to the value of Fairlands Valley Park for residents of all age groups.

A question was raised about the funding available for implementing, and whether certain actions could be accelerated. In response, the Environmental Policy and Development Manager confirmed that an additional column had been added to the action plan to indicate where additional resources would be required. It was acknowledged that while full delivery of all actions over the ten-year period could not be guaranteed, the majority were considered achievable within current resources, particularly with the continuation of external funding streams.

3. PLANNING POLICY UPDATE INCLUDING REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME AND REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services advised that Cabinet had been presented with a report containing details of updates to the Local Development Scheme and revisions to the Statement of Community Involvement.

A question was raised regarding how the report related to Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Officers clarified that the Local Development Scheme was a program management document and did not include policy recommendations.

A further question was raised regarding how existing Council strategies, such as the cycling strategy, would be incorporated into strategic planning documents. Officers confirmed that relevant strategies would be reflected in the Local Plan through land-use planning.

A question was raised in reference to paragraph 3.21 of the report regarding the inclusion of Broxbourne in the joint strategic plan, given the lack of a shared boundary. Officers explained that the plan was at a conceptual stage, with the intention to explore collaboration between multiple authorities on strategic growth proposals. Officers commented that it was not unusual for local authorities to collaborate on evidence gathering across a wider area.

Members noted the strong North-South dynamics in the area and speculated on how these patterns might influence future planning. Officers emphasised the importance

of reflecting real-world patterns in plan making, which supported the need for ongoing collaboration with neighbouring authorities.

At this juncture, the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services explained that the government was proposing changes to strategic planning through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, which could result in secondary legislation. Officers confirmed that further reports would be brought to the committee as these proposals developed.

4. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024 / 25

The Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods informed the Committee that the report to Cabinet had outlined the Tenant Satisfaction Measures for 2024/25, which compared favourably to the results of 2023/24. Cabinet members were asked to note the contents and progress detailed in the report, along with the services improvements made by the Housing Department.

It was noted that Cabinet were asked to approve the publication of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures in accordance with the requirements set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

In response to a member's question regarding the scoring metrics included in the report, officers confirmed that C1 represented the highest available grade.

A further question was raised regarding the range of metrics included in the report. Officers clarified that all metrics were prescribed by the Regulator of Social Housing, ensuring consistency and comparability across the sector.

5 **WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 26**

The Chair introduced the Scrutiny Officer who provided an overview of the items on the agenda, noting that several fell within the Budget and Policy Framework items which followed the usual practice to scrutinise the Cabinet executive decisions within the call-in period for Cabinet decisions.

Officers also highlighted examples of previous scrutiny work undertaken by the committee, including:

- A review of the Customer Service Centre relocation, focusing on visitor usage and enquiry handling.
- An examination of website analytics, including user engagement with popular pages and feedback on content and design.
- A session on cybersecurity, covering IT services and threats to local government systems.

It was noted that the Committee would also take part in pre-scrutiny policy development, including the Council Tax Support Scheme, which was being redrafted due to Universal Credit changes. The originally proposed date for this item would be revised, with a meeting expected in July or August 2025.

The Chair encouraged members to propose scrutiny topics, particularly those of a corporate-wide nature, not already within the remit of other select committees such as Environment & Economy or Community Select.

It was noted that an item on the development of the Your-Say Corporate Complaints System and consideration of the Committee's Action Tracker would be brought to future meeting of the Committee.

At this juncture, Members raised a question regarding the Mod.gov app and its use for accessing Overview and Scrutiny reports. The issue was noted, and officers stated that they would look into it and report back to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2025/26, as set out in the agenda, be noted.

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

There was no Urgent Part 1 Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

8 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

5. PIONEERING YOUNG STEM FUTURES

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager updated the Committee on the

Pioneering Young STEM futures proposal. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the Corporate Policy and Performance Manager.

6. PROJECT DELIVERY AND PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR APPOINTMENT: THE OVAL

The Housing Development Delivery Manager updated the Committee on the Project Delivery and Principal Contractor Appointed for The Oval Development. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the Housing Delivery Manager.

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

The Committee noted that there had been no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

12 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR