



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 2025

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Gemma O'Donnell
committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: J Brown (Chair), A McGuinness (Vice-Chair), S Barr, P Bibby, S Booth, R Boyle, L Brady, K Choudhury, P Clark, A Elekolusi, A Gordon, L Guy, M Humberstone and E Plater

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March 2025.

5 – 10

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the Terms of Reference as agreed at Annual Council on 22 May 2025.

11 – 12

4. PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

To consider the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 4 June 2025.

1. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 11 - 54

2. GREEN SPACES STRATEGY AND TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 55 - 184

3. PLANNING POLICY UPDATE INCLUDING REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
SCHEME AND REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 185 - 264

4. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024 / 25
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 253 - 264

Notice of Decisions to follow

5. WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 26

To approve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025 – 26.
13 – 18

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

To consider any urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

9. PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 March 2025.

10. PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

To consider the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 4 June 2025.

5. PIONEERING YOUNG STEM FUTURES
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 269 - 354
6. PROJECT DELIVERY AND PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR APPOINTMENT: THE OVAL
Cabinet Agenda Page Nos. 355 – 428

Notice of Decisions to follow

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

To consider any urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice Chair), Myla Arceno, Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Lynda Guy, Tom Plater, Nigel Williams, Anne Wells.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 6.58pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ceara Roopchand and Sarah Mead.

Councillor Tom Plater declared that within his current occupation he worked for the MP of Stevenage, Kevin Bonavia.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

3 **PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 March 2025:

4. CORPORATE CO-OPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

The Corporate Procurement Manager introduced the report, which supported the delivery of the Making Stevenage Even Better plan and addressed the legal changes from the Procurement Act 2023. The Committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

In response to a question regarding the reason for the delegated authority, it was advised that due to the tight timescales, the strategy needed to be approved by Cabinet in March 2025.

A member sought clarification on whether the strategy would impact the procurement of agency worker contracts. It was clarified that the strategy set out how the Council procured services, with a focus on social value, insourcing and

cooperative principles within the legal framework.

A further question was raised about the climate policies and emission considerations in the Council's supplier contracts. Officers explained that pre-market engagement and selection questionnaires allowed the council to assess supplier sustainability and incorporated social value into the procurement process. The council would also seek to embed these priorities throughout the contract lifecycle.

5.. CONFIRMATION OF AMENDMENT TO TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E (G) (I) (OFFICES) AND CLASS (E) (G) (III) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION

The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report, which ensured that from January 2026, planning permission would be required for changes from light industrial/office use to residential plans. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

A member requested clarification if this item was driving further training for elected members of the Planning and Development Committee. It was noted that it was a separate matter, but further details on the required training were to be provided, and National Planning Policy updates were expected to be brought to cabinet in June for further clarification.

A question was raised about whether any specific buildings had been identified in relation to the report. The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services explained that the published Article 4 Directions included a map showing the specific protected buildings across the town.

6. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2024/25

The Strategic Director introduced the report, providing an update on the Council's performance suite. Cabinet was asked to note the improvement plan with the regulator for Social Housing following the previous year's housing inspection.

At this juncture, it was noted that there has been a slight increase in the garage void rate, however renewed efforts were underway to improve occupancy through proactive marketing. The Strategic Director outlined the commended work on the Arts and Heritage Trail, particularly the artwork on utility boxes and encouraged members to identify other suitable boxes for similar projects.

A question was raised regarding the reason behind garage voids across the town. It was explained that the increase had been triggered by several factors, including rent prices, specific location preferences and repair issues. It was noted that works were taking place to make garages more lettable, and that the Council was in the process of procuring a new garage maintenance contract. Officers also explained that void levels were low compared to other authorities.

A member asked whether issues such as lighting and conditions of the units were

being considered, and it was noted that these factors were under review. Officers also tracked reasons for termination.

7. THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (INCLUDING THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25) .

The Assistant Director for Finance introduced the report and provided an update on the Council's financial position for 2024/25. The Committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

8. VOIDS POLICY AND LETTABLE STANDARDS

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services introduced the report on the new Void Management Policy and revised Lettable Standard which had been submitted to the Cabinet for approval. The policy outlined how the Council managed properties when they became vacant, while the Lettable Standard aimed to manage future tenant's expectations and ensure consistency in property standards upon re-letting.

9. AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services provided an update on the policy review, which aimed to support tenants and ensure the Council was fulfilling its legal and regulatory obligations.

At this juncture, a question was raised regarding the revisions being made to reflect legal requirements and to improve transparency on decision making. Officers confirmed that the updates aimed to align with best practices and new consumer standards, including the requirement to offer an adaptations service.

10. HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS

The Head of Planning Policy provided an overview of the process, which came into effect in December 2024. Local authorities in England were granted powers to hold High Street Rental Auctions for vacant town centre properties, aiming to revitalise high streets and bring long-term vacant properties back into use. It was noted that the Council had proposed designating the Town Centre and Old Town High Street, in line with the local plan policies, as potential High Street Rental Auction areas.

A question was raised about whether pieces of land would be included in the process, and officers confirmed that further clarification would be sought due to the new legislation.

A further question was raised about working with uncooperative landlords, to which officers explained that the legislation included a 22-week process with several opportunities for the property owner to appeal. The Council could require the

freeholder to enter a lease but would not take ownership of the property. It was noted that the legislation had not yet been tested in practice, with around 11 pilot areas expected to provide insights into potential legal challenges from freeholders. Further clarification on the process when available.

Members raised a question regarding the Council's responsibilities as commercial landlords to fill vacant plots under the new legislation. Officers clarified that the legislation primarily targeted private landowners and was intended as a last resort.

Officers also explained that the Council's estate management had an occupancy rate of around 95%, with some properties being held on short-term lets due to regeneration plans. The process could only be initiated after a property had been vacant for 366 days, and several conditions would need to be met. The guidance for the legislation, which included an appeal process, was provided in the report for reference.

11. URGENT PART I DECISIONS

An update was provided on an urgent report presented to the Cabinet, which delegated permission to the Leader of the Council to make an interim submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government regarding Hertfordshire's proposals for local government reorganisation and devolution. The Cabinet considered the short urgent report and delegated the responsibility to the Leader for the interim non-binding decision.

Members asked a series of questions and commented on the potential merits of various options being put forward by the 10 district and borough Council's and the County Council to MHCLG.

Members thanked the officers involved including the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors for the urgent work undertaken with this matter since the invitation from MHCLG for a submission from authorities in a very short timeframe and for the content in the report.

4 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.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 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.

7 PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 March 2025:

12. PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS

The HR Manager updated the Committee on the procurement process for the supply of the Council's agency workers. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the HR Manager.

13. SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE – DESIGN AND PLANNING SUBMISSION

The Regeneration Manager updated the Committee on the design and development of the Sports and Leisure Centre. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the Regeneration Manager.

14. SBC LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LOCALITY REVIEW UPDATE)

The Assistant Director for Housing Development updated the Committee on the Council's Land and Development Programme as part of the locality review update.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

15. MAJOR PROJECT – BRAGBURY END

The Assistant Director for Housing Development introduced the report on the Development project at Bradbury End. A number of questions were asked regarding this item, which were answered by the Assistant Director for Housing.

16. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

The Committee noted there had been no Urgent Part II Business at the Cabinet Meeting.

8 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.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Membership - 14 (Not to be Members of the Cabinet but to include the Chairs of the 2 Select Committees)
2. Quorum - 4
3. Terms of Reference
 - 3.1. To consider the activities of the Cabinet and to have responsibility to reconsider any executive decision that has been subject to call-in, in accordance with the provisions of the Scrutiny provisions as set out in the Council's Constitution.
 - 3.2 Responsibility for the scrutiny of all initial proposals for the development of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework provisions in the Council's Constitution.
 - 3.3 To determine a Scrutiny work programme to examine the spending, policies and administration of the Council's services within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature and relationships with partners and external agencies involved with these areas, together with a timetable and method of study for each topic.
 - 3.4 To determine formal recommendations in relation to scrutiny studies undertaken for reporting to the Council, Cabinet, other Committees, Officers and / or partner agencies as appropriate.
 - 3.5 To review the Forward Plan of Key Decisions in relation to services within the direct purview for services of a corporate and/or Council wide nature, considering if it wishes to make any input to policy issues contained in the Plan and if so, how. In undertaking this work the Committee may call upon the relevant Cabinet Member and/or Assistant Director to provide a briefing or take part in discussion.
 - 3.6 That in respect of policy development of matters that fall within the remit of this Committee, to meet with the relevant Portfolio Holder to comment on individual draft policies that are scheduled to be considered to the Cabinet.
 - 3.7 To work with other Select Committees, as appropriate when considering cross-cutting scrutiny studies and policy development when both Committees have so agreed.
 - 3.8 To consider matters referred to the Committee under the procedure for the Councillor Call for Action in relation to matters

within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature.

- 3.9 In accordance with the Petitions Scheme, consider Petitions, Petition Reviews and interview Senior Council Officers (as requested by a Petition) in relation to matters within the direct purview for services of a Corporate and/or Council wide nature.
- 3.10 In conjunction with the Select Committees, responsibility for the on-going development of the Scrutiny function of the Council.
- 3.11 To report to the Cabinet, other committees or Council, as appropriate.

Lead AD	SD Richard Protheroe
Deputy	
Chair	Cllr Jim Brown
Vice-Chair	Cllr Andy McGuinness

Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025-26
(Including review items, statutory Budget and Policy Framework items, and policy development items)

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Strategic Director/Assistant Director	Other Details	Complete ✓ x
YourSay Councillors Complaints System – What will the new system provide? <div>Page 1</div>	AD Business Change & Digital, Nadia Capuano. Business Improvement Manager, Greg Arends. Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources & Performance,	To be scheduled.	(i) One meeting. (ii) No scope required. (iii) Presentation from officers leading to a Q&A with Scrutiny Members.		With the agreement of the Chair this item was deferred from 2025/25 to the current Municipal Year 2025-26 due to the work needed by officers to bring options to Members on a new Member complaint system.	

Scrutiny Review items 2024/25:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting & (iv) other details	Comment by lead Strategic Director/Assistant Director	Other Details	Complete ✓ ✕
	Cllr Jeannette Thomas.					
Further one-off review items to be scheduled		To be scheduled.			The Scrutiny Officer and the Deputy Chief Executive, Richard Protheroe will discuss with the Chair of O&S any possible items that could be brought forward to be included in the O&S Committee's work programme and scheduled as a stand-alone item at a regular meeting of the Committee.	

Monitoring of Previous Recommendations/Actions								Complete
Scrutiny items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/ Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/ Deputy	✓ ✕
Consider the Committee's Action Tracker		15 July 2025	One meeting	Members comment on the document – which may lead to further monitoring	No scope required			

Any monitoring of previous reviews will be agreed when the Committee considers the action tracker at its meeting on 15 July 2025.

Statutory Budget & Policy Framework Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details
The 2026/2027 HRA and Rent Setting	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/ Portfolio Holder for Resources	December 2025	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	

Statutory Budget & Policy Framework Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope required)	Other details
Budget Options 2026/27	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources	November 2025	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD with supporting papers	No scoping required	
Council Tax Support Scheme (refresh of scheme reviewed annually by the Cabinet)	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources	January 2026	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD & AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	
General Fund Budget and Council Tax Setting	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer/Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources	January 2025	Yes, covered in one meeting	Presentation by SD & AD with supporting papers	No scoping required	

Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item covered in?	Expectation/ Style of meeting	Scope details	Other details	Complete ✓ x
<u>Council Tax Support Scheme and Universal Credit</u> <div>Page 17</div>	Clare Fletcher SD Sec 151 Officer Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Resources & Performance, Cllr Jeannette Thomas.	Monday 23 June 2025 6pm	One	Lead by the SD and Chaired by the Chair of O&S. This provides an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to meet with officers and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to carry out some pre-scrutiny of the any proposed changes or amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme and to discuss the content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to help shape the final outcome.			

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