

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 23 September 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and Ellie Plater

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 6.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received Councillors Sandra Barr, Robert Boyle and Ceara Roopchand.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Part I Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 15 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

It was reported that progress was being made with implementing the programme of topics for future meetings which would be discussed in November.

**3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM
FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2025 / 26 - 2029 / 30)**

The Strategic Director and S151 Officer provided an update to the Committee on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Members were advised that the report this year also reflected the Government's Fair Funding Review.

From 2026/27, a three-year settlement was expected alongside a reset of business rates. While the funding position appeared positive for Stevenage, significant uncertainty remained until the final settlement announcement in December.

Members raised a question regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) seeking clarification on how funding would be divided between two, three, or four unitary authorities. Members noted that Stevenage had managed their finances prudently and questioned if it would be at a disadvantage when merged with other authorities.

Officers explained that the MTFs included a three-year settlement, with the first two years taking place prior to LGR if the government timetable was maintained. It was noted that under a unitary model, district and county budgets would be combined, with major pressures arising from adult and children's social care.

It was noted that Stevenage's deprivation levels strengthened its funding position, and Hertfordshire had a comparatively strong balance sheet. The eventual distribution of funding would depend on principles yet to be confirmed.

Members asked for clarification on the external support referenced for Foster Country Park. Officers explained that significant preparation was required ahead of the release of the commuted sum. External support had therefore been secured to ensure the right resources, staff, and equipment were in place before the park opened.

In response to a question asking how the factors within the Fair Funding were quantified, Officers explained that the system was based on multiple weighted factors including deprivation, demographics, transport, rurality, and the local tax base. These weightings determined each authority's share of the national funding pot, adjusted for council tax-raising ability.

It was noted that Stevenage was likely to benefit due to its smaller council tax base and higher levels of deprivation, whereas Hertfordshire County Council was expected to lose funding.

A question was raised regarding flats being occupied within the Foster County Park development without adequate access for bin lorries. Officers confirmed that if a breach of planning conditions had occurred, officers would investigate the matter.

The Chair noted that for the record of the minutes, the Council's Tax Support Scheme would not change at this stage. A banded scheme would likely be required under LGR from 2027/28 to ensure consistency across Hertfordshire.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

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PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FIRST QUARTER REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2025/26 - GENERAL FUND AND HRA

The Assistant Director of Finance presented the First Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report which was presented to Cabinet.

Members were advised that the majority of savings built into the budget were on track to be delivered. The General Fund was projecting a net underspend of £548,000, while the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was projecting a net underspend of £35,000.

It was reported that some capital expenditure had been reprofiled into the following financial year in line with project progress. Officers confirmed that overall, the Council's financial position for the first quarter was stable, with no significant risks

identified at this stage.

The Committee noted the decision of Cabinet.

5 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2024/25 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

The Assistant Director for Finance presented the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2024/25 to the Committee. Members were advised that the Council had successfully delivered its treasury management responsibilities during the year, operating within all approved prudential indicators and maintaining full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

It was noted that the report had also been presented to the Audit Committee for consideration.

All treasury activities had been carried out in line with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, with no breaches of authorised borrowing limits.

It was noted that the Council remained well-positioned to manage interest rate risks and to support delivery of the Capital Programme.

The Committee noted the decision of Cabinet.

6 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER ONE 2025/26**

The Corporate Policy & Performance Manager presented the Quarter 1 Corporate Performance Report. It was noted that this was a standard quarterly update presented to Members, and a presentation had also been delivered to Cabinet by the Chief Executive.

Service performance was reviewed, with one red indicator reported. It was noted that this was the percentage of repairs completed on the first visit. Further narrative was provided within the report.

Members were advised that work was underway to develop new damp and mould performance measures in preparation for the introduction of Awaab's Law, which would be reported to Cabinet in Quarter 2.

In addition, the revised Risk Management Policy (Appendix D) was included for consideration.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

**PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - LOCAL GOVERNMENT
(MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 – REVOCATION OF TAXI RANK,
DANESTRETE, STEVENAGE**

The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation presented to the Committee the report to revoke the taxi rank on Danestrete to facilitate the town centre regeneration scheme. The development would marginally encroach into the highway to allow the developers to erect scaffolding, requiring the revocation of the taxi bay.

Cabinet was advised that statutory consultation on the revocation had been carried out in July and August 2025, along with a taxi forum, but no responses were received from the police, public or taxi hire industry.

Members questioned how the revocation of the taxi rank related to the Council's contractual obligations with the developer. Officers explained that the Council was subject to obligations under the contract and that failure to comply could expose the Council to liquidated and ascertained damages.

At this juncture, members noted that improved signage to direct people to nearby taxi ranks, including the railway station could be beneficial. Officers agreed to take this away for consideration, noting that there were existing nearby bays and that no objections had been received during consultation, which suggested low demand for the revoked bay.

It was confirmed that the revocation was permanent, but officers committed to reviewing the potential for re-provision of taxi bays elsewhere in the town centre, guided by evidence from taxi surveys.

Concerns were also raised regarding pedestrian safety and the lack of clear walking routes due to construction hoardings, which Councillor Hollywell also noted at Cabinet. Officers acknowledged the issue and advised that options to improve safety were being explored, with further information to be reported back to the Committee once feasibility had been established.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

**PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - GRENFELL INQUIRY PHASE 2 UPDATE
REPORT**

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services presented to the Committee the report on Phase 2 of the Grenfell inquiry.

It was noted that 58 recommendations had been made, aimed at improving fire safety, emergency preparedness, and accountability across multiple sectors, including local authorities and social housing providers.

Cabinet noted the actions being taken to strengthen resilience, including partnership working with Hertfordshire local authorities and responders to ensure emergency and business continuity plans were robust and up to date.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

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

It was noted that membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been amended, with Councillor Roopchand appointed to replace Councillor Humberstone.

10 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

11 **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.

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

The Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - APPROVAL OF CONTRACT AWARD TO DELIVER WARM HOMES: SOCIAL HOUSING FUND WAVE 3 WORKS.**

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services informed the Committee that the Cabinet had considered the approval of the contract award to deliver energy efficient and decarbonisation works to the Council's Housing Stock associated with a successful bid for Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Wave 3.

14 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - WRITE OFFS OVER £10K**

The Assistant Director of Finance informed the Committee that the Cabinet had considered writing off Council Tax debt deemed irrecoverable which was properly

due to the Council and was more than £10,000.

15 **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.

16 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR