



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 14 October 2025

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: 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, E Plater and C Roopchand

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 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 September 2025.

Page Nos. 5 – 10

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet 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).

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 11 – 70

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the proposal to increase the fees and charges relating to taxi and private hire licensing, whilst ensuring that the fees set by the Council remain fair, transparent and proportionate to the cost of administering the licensing service.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 71 – 104

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 105 – 162

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for a new Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy for 2025-2027.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 163 – 200

7. 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

8. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

9. 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.

10. 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 23 September 2025.

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for an Estates commercial opportunity.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 201 - 210

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for the update including progression of the New Sports and Leisure Facility.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 211 – 514

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for the programme wide update across the Government's Towns Fund programme being delivered by Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Development Board partners.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 515 - 580

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to update Members on the Council's subsidiary companies and those the Council has an interest in.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 581 - 598

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

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the progress across the existing Land and Development programme, including updates on key sites and opportunities.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.

Page Nos. 599 – 670

16. 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

17. 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, 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 Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
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.

4

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

Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: ###

Meeting	CABINET
Portfolio Area	Resources and Performance
Date	8 October 2025
Authors	Veronika Mendy/Annajoy David
Contributors	Atif Iqbal Senior Leadership Team



REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

KEY DECISION

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report seeks 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).
- 1.2 Fees and Charges are reviewed and set on an annual basis. For the General Fund, the majority of the revised fees will take effect from January 2026. For the Housing Revenue Account, the new fees will be implemented from April 2026.
- 1.3 Fees and Charges represent a vital component of the Council's financial strategy. It is essential that charges are set prudently to ensure cost recovery, while also being fair, transparent, and applied consistently across services.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the General Fund (GF), as shown at Appendix A, be approved.

- 2.2 That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as shown at Appendix B, be approved.
- 2.3 That 2026/27 Retail Outdoor Seating fees as shown at Appendix C, be approved.
- 2.4 That 2026/27 Fast track/Accelerated Planning fees (pilot) as shown at Appendix D, be approved.
- 2.5 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.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Local government continues to navigate financial pressures, shaped by long-term changes in central Government funding. These pressures have been further exacerbated by legacy impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and higher inflation. According to data published by the National Audit Office (NAO), Stevenage's Core Spending Power (CSP) decreased by 64.5% in real terms (based on 2019/20 prices) between 2010/11 and 2020/21. In addition, the cost-of-living crisis and increasingly complex community needs have driven up demand for Council services. In response, the Council has identified and delivered cumulative savings of £16.5 million since 2010/11 through its key priority initiative, "Balancing the Budget," to maintain financial stability.
- 3.2 The most recent Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) and HM Treasury publications indicate that the UK continues to face a constrained public spending environment. The July 2025 Public Spending Statistics confirm that funding projections beyond April 2025 remain modest, with real-terms growth in public sector spending expected to stay below 1% annually, continuing the trend of budget erosion due to inflation.
- 3.3 The Spending Review 2025 (SR25), presented to Parliament in June 2025, outlines the new Government's fiscal plans through to 2028/29 for day-to-day spending. The publication and consultation on Fair Funding which resets Councils finances (taking into account factors such as deprivation) over the next three years, does see an improved financial outlook for Stevenage Borough Council as set out in the September Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). However, the MTFS has assumed a level of increased fee income for 2026/27 and there is a Balancing the Budget savings target of £350K-£400K thereafter.
- 3.4 The Council's 'Balancing the Budget' priority has four work streams to achieve financial stability for the Council so that it maintains a prudent level of balances and remains financially resilient across the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, while at the same time being able to deliver on ambitious Future Town Future Council (FTFC) aims, including regeneration of the town centre, housing delivery and co-operative neighbourhood management. The figure below shows the connection between the Council's Making Your Money Count priority and charging appropriately for Council services.

Figure 1. Making Your Money Count Priority



- 3.5 This approach will support services in reducing the cost of delivery and where possible, enable them to achieve break even positions where appropriate.
- 3.6 The 2025 Stevenage Residents Survey showed that for residents, increasing fees and charges is preferable to reducing or cutting the services and Increasing Council Tax.

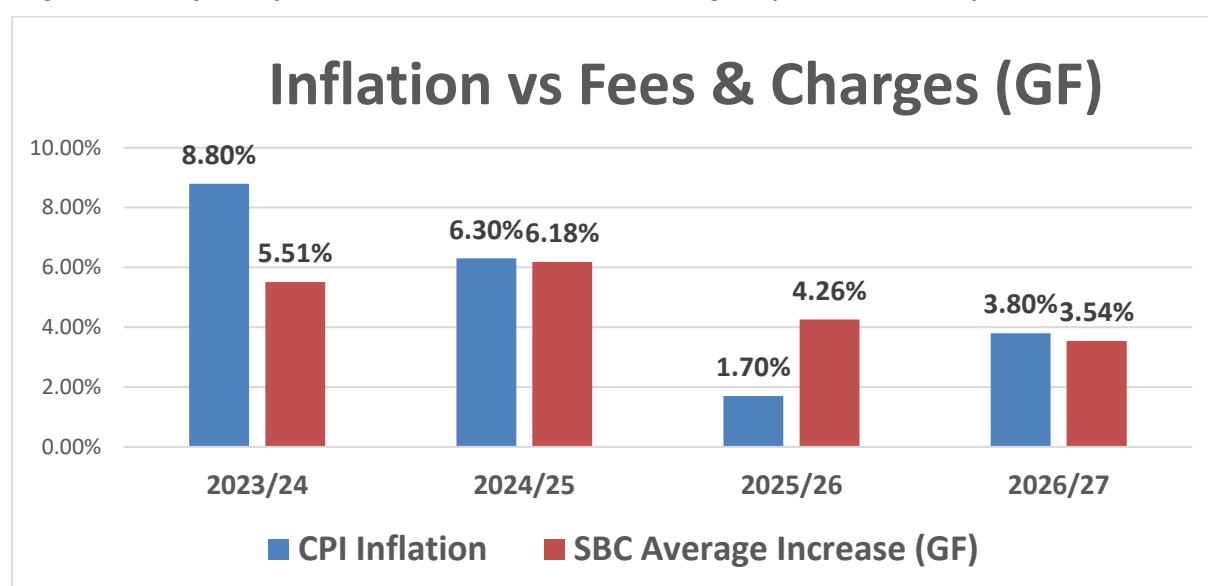
4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The MTFS assumes savings for the General Fund of £1Million in 2026/27. Over the next three years, 2026/27 to 2028/29, the Balancing the Budget savings target is £1.8Million (assuming FFR 2.0 changes but not confirmed until mid-December) as approved at the September 2025 Cabinet.
- 4.2 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) also requires savings circa £2Million per year to meet the cost of those services, and this will be set out as part of the HRA Business Plan to be reported to the November 2025 Cabinet.
- 4.3 Fees and charges are essential tools in addressing future budget gaps and mitigating pressures. On the General Fund, at the time of budget setting the budget book showed that for 2025/26, the income from fees & contributions equates to £23.4Million. The top four income streams (parking, commercial property, garages and contributions) account for 75% of this income.
- 4.4 In some cases, fees and charges from one service area support other Council services and subsidise non-income generating services. It is

important to explore opportunities for sustainable new income streams which are then built into the Council's MTFS to meet any funding gap.

- 4.5 Members should note that inflation added an additional £2Million of pressure to Council budgets in 2023/24, £0.986Million of pressure in 2024/25 and £1.508Million in 2025/26 (including pay award and NI increase gross cost). When setting the 2025/26 budget the September CPI was 1.7% (as shown below in the chart) but increased to 3.8% in August 2025.

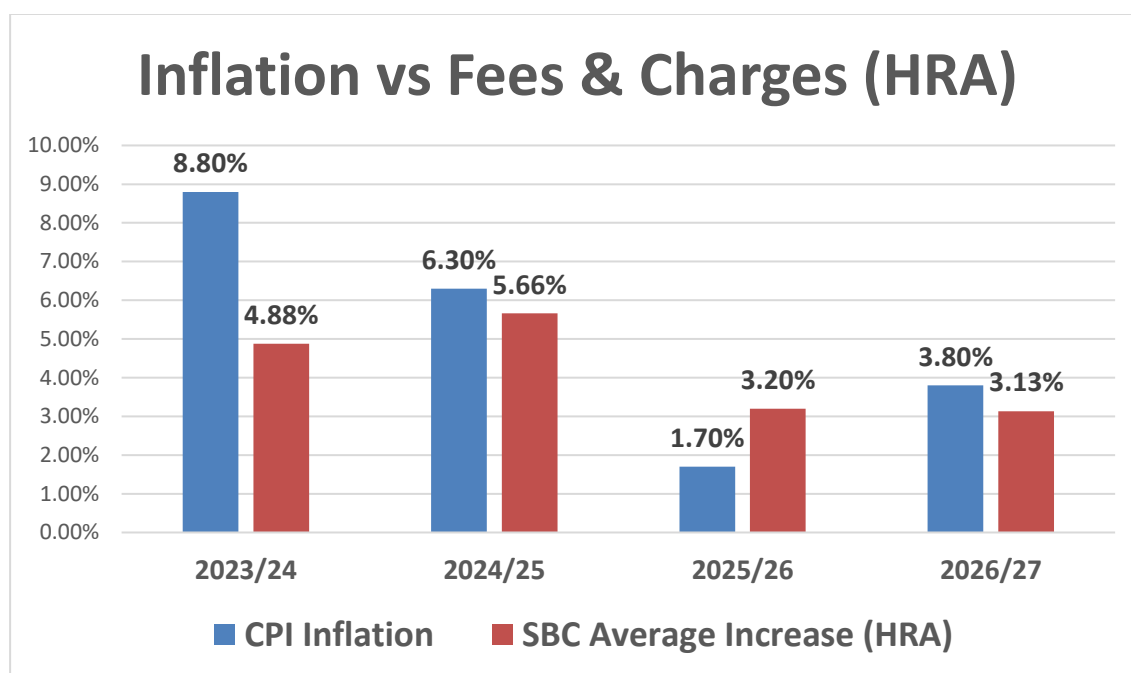
Figure 2. Trajectory of inflation vs Fees and Charges (General Fund)



Previous years CPI rates are as of September that year.

For 2026/27, latest available CPI is August 2025 CPI.

Figure 3. Trajectory of inflation vs Fees and Charges (HRA)



Previous years CPI rates are as of September that year.

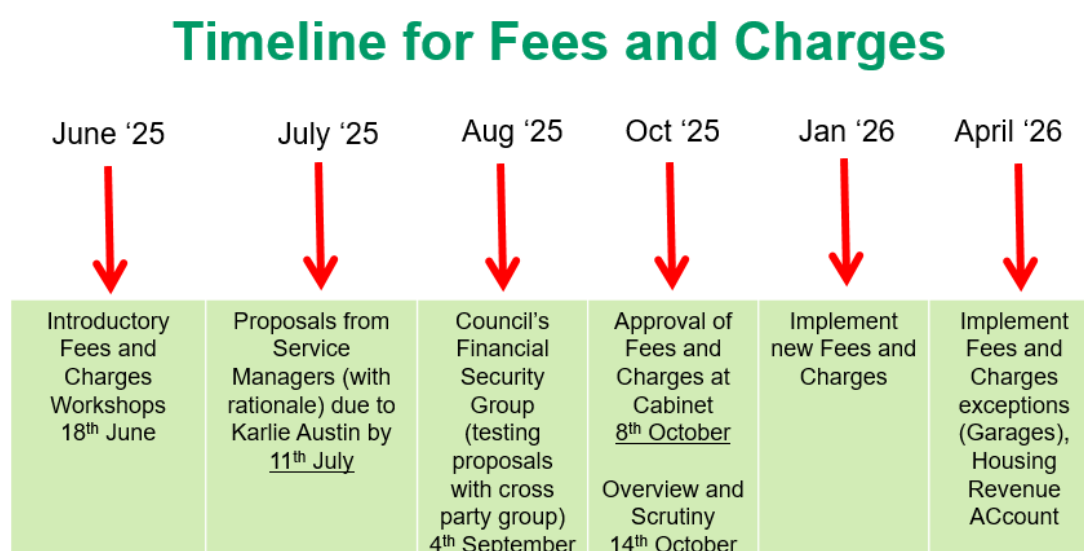
For 2026/27, latest available CPI is August 2025 CPI.

- 4.6 In August 2025, CPI inflation stood at 3.8%, unchanged from July 2025. The Bank of England expect inflation is likely to rise slightly further to 4% by September and then to fall back to the 2% target after that but there are risks around this path. These figures reflect ongoing inflationary pressures, particularly from energy and employer cost adjustments. Without corresponding funding support, councils may continue to experience financial strain and face significant pressure to bridge the budget gap.
- 4.7 Pay awards have gradually reduced over the last few years from an average in excess of 5% to 3.2% in the current financial year but still remains the biggest inflation element for the Council.
- 4.8 Looking ahead to 2026/27, the MTFS has assumed fees and charges increases. In response, officers have reviewed each area of fees and charges individually. The Council remains committed to its established fees and charges principles, which include ensuring that costs to the taxpayer are covered and, where appropriate and feasible, achieving full cost recovery through service charges.
- 4.9 All fees and charges proposals are assessed against the following key considerations:
- True cost of service delivery
 - Charging model category (e.g. subsidised, cost recovery, commercial)

- Service specific inflationary pressures
- Demand levels and market competition
- Impact on residents and businesses
- Benchmarking against comparable services
- Changes in trading and charging legislation

4.10 The process of setting fees and charges for the upcoming financial year begins in June. It involves active engagement with service managers, as well as officers from the commercial and finance teams, and includes input from Members to ensure alignment with strategic and operational priorities.

Figure 4. Timeline for Fees and Charges 2026/27



- 4.11 The Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG), a cross-party group of Members, met on 4th September 2025 to review proposals for Fees and Charges for the General Fund 2026/27.
- 4.12 Increases to fees and charges for 2026/27, detailed in Appendices A to D are recommended to meet the Balancing the Budget target. Based on the majority of CFSG cross-party members voting to approve the proposed fees and charges, these recommendations have been incorporated in this Cabinet report.
- 4.13 In this Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG) cross-party meeting held on 4th September 2025, all the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 within Appendices A-D were unanimously agreed by the members except four lines which are detailed below.

Figure 5. Summary of CFSG responses where fees were not agreed unanimously.

Fee	Number of Members that agreed	Number of Members that disagreed
Off Street Parking - New Town Short Stay (Westgate/Forum/St Georges) fees increase average 5.90% (Appendix A, page 1)	5	1
Off Street Parking - New Town Long Stay fees increase average 4.55% (Appendix A, page 1)	5	1
Off Street Parking - Primett Road South (Mon-Fri 1600-0600) from £1.00 to £1.10 (Appendix A, page 1)	5	1
Tenant's Retrospective Charges to increase average 3.00% (Appendix B, page 3)	5	1

- 4.14 CFSG was also consulted on the proposed introduction of new administration fees within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for tenants wishing to make changes to their tenancy for example Joint to Sole, Sole to Joint, Mutual Exchanges and Non-Statutory Successions. Following feedback from members and a subsequent review by the service, it has now been agreed that these charges will not be implemented as tenants should not face barriers, financial or otherwise to essential tenancy changes. As these were newly proposed fees, their withdrawal does not impact the projected income from fees and charges.

Planning Fees

- 4.15 The Planning fees for 2026/27 are set out in Appendix A for implementation from January 2026. The Government have set out that new measures which will be put in place to allow changes to the setting of Planning fees to Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. However, the Bill is somewhat off in achieving Royal Assent and thus becoming an act of Parliament.
- 4.16 It is therefore possible that in-year revisions to Planning fees and charges may be recommended to Cabinet following royal assent of the bill.
- 4.17 In addition to the above, the Planning department has undertaken a wholesale review of its fees and charges. This has prompted a comprehensive review of the pre-application fee schedule along with introducing new fees and charges in order to generate additional income to help reduce any identified funding gap within the service.

Outdoor Seating Fees (circa £2.5k per year)

- 4.18 Outdoor seating licence, which is valid for 12 months, this licence supports local businesses to place tables and chairs outside their premises for customer use to assist the local food and beverage sector. This licence applies to Stevenage-owned land, primarily situated in the New Town Centre.
- 4.19 The fees for outdoor seating and other licences to display at street level have remained stagnant for the past seven years. Due to Covid happening within this period, the Town centre team were committed to continue providing support to businesses to ensure they thrive in the immediate post pandemic environment.
- 4.20 Officers undertook a benchmarking exercise to examine the pricing structures and policies adopted by other local authorities for outdoor seating licences. As part of this price review officers have endeavoured to keep costs as close to current pricing models. This approach aims to support the hospitality sector by maintaining accessible pricing and by giving customers and local residents greater dining options and growing cover numbers for local food and beverage business. Proposed fees for 2026/27 are included in Appendix C.

Fast Track/Accelerated Planning Fees Pilot (circa £3k per year based on 20 potential applications)

- 4.21 The statutory determination date for planning applications is 8 weeks. A fast-track planning application is offered as an accelerated planning application process for customers where applications are guaranteed to be determined prior to the statutory guidelines. In return for this service an additional fee is applied alongside the statutory charge. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 contains powers that allow local authorities the ability to charge for discretionary services.
- 4.22 Officers propose a pilot of a fast-track service effect from April 2026 for a period of 12 months. This will allow the planning service time to consolidate any validation procedures and terms and conditions ahead of the pilot. No additional resources will be required to provide the service. Applicants will be informed in advance if resourcing constraints may affect availability of the fast-track service. The Council can also withdraw the fast-track service at any time to focus on legislative and contractual obligations. All relevant documents will need to be completed and submitted with the correct details on application to be eligible for the fast track. On review, the customer will be informed if their planning application meets the fast-track criteria. If an application is referred to the planning committee for review, any fees already paid will not be reimbursed in the event of delays, as this process falls outside the direct control of planning officers.

- 4.23 As part of the pilot, the number of requests will therefore be subject to ongoing monitoring and review. This will identify trends and areas for improvement of the service on an ongoing basis. Data on the numbers of applications, the time taken, and the income received will be recorded. Customer feedback will also be taken into consideration and amendments to the process implemented, if required. Proposed fees for 2026/27 are included in the Appendix D.
- 4.24 At a meeting of the Council's Executive on 10 July 2012, Members approved that for the letting garages to voluntary and community sector groups and organisations (VCOs): 'When the charges are introduced, the introduction will be graduated over a period of time until they reach a maximum of 50% of the prevailing full rent.'
- 4.25 As agreed by Members of the Commercial and Investment Working Group in December 2022, for 2025/26 and 2026/27, VCOs will be charged 40% of the price of the garage (based on the specific garage type).
- 4.26 In the event that VCOs do not wish to pay the increased charge for that garage type, if possible, they will be offered the option of moving to a different, cheaper garage (subject to availability) or they have the option to terminate their license.

Further Changes to HRA fees and charges

- 4.27 The HRA has seen a significant increase in costs and therefore savings required although not all charges for 2026/27 are increasing, a review of areas such as Independent Living, Support charges and Service charges will be undertaken by the Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods during 2026/27 and brought back to Members for consideration.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 If the changes to fees and charges for the General Fund are all approved, this will result in an increase net budgeted income of £314k (after considering budget rebasing) for 2026/27 which contributes to the savings target as set out in the Council MTFS approved in September 2025. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) have been completed for changes to fees and charges across all service areas.
- 5.1.2 It is recommended that Members approve an increase in General Fund fees and charges effective from January 2026, with the exception of garage fees, which are managed through the Northgate system and will take effect from April 2026. Fees for the Indoor Market will remain frozen for the 2026/27 financial year due to the planned relocation of the market to Park Place, expected in November 2025.

- 5.1.3 If the changes to fees and charges for the Housing Revenue Account are all approved, this will result in an increased income of £24,271 and will be implemented in April 2026.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The Local Government Act 2003 (LGA 2003) includes a general power for local authorities in England and Wales to charge for discretionary services. The discretionary charging powers do not apply to services which an authority is mandated or has a duty to provide. However, councils can charge for discretionary services. In order to do so, the recipient of the discretionary service must have agreed in advance, to pay for the provision of such services. The 2003 Act cannot be used where charging is prohibited or where another specific charging regime applies. Charging is limited to cost recovery and statutory guidance published in 2003 outlines how costs and charges should be established.

5.3 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 The impact of Fees and Charges is evaluated through the completion of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for each service area.
- 5.3.2 The overarching EqIA for Fees and Charges for the General Fund 2026/27 is shown in Appendix E.
- 5.3.3 The overarching EqIA for Fees and Charges for the Housing Revenue Account 2026/27 is shown in Appendix F.

5.4 Human Resources Implications

- 5.4.1 None.

APPENDICES

Part I

- A Fees and Charges 2026/27 – General Fund
- B Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Housing Revenue Account
- C Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Retail Outdoor Seating
- D Fees and Charges 2026/27 – Fast Track/Accelerated Planning
- E Equality Impact Assessment – General Fund
- D Equality Impact Assessment – Housing Revenue Account

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Medium Term Financial Strategy, Revised September 2025

GENERAL FUND PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
Off Street Parking							
New Town:	7am-7pm (6am-7pm at St Georges only) :						
Short Stay (Westgate/Forum/St G)	Mon-Saturday up to 30 Mins (St Georges & Westgate only)	£1.00	£1.20	£0.20	20.00%		
	Mon-Saturday up to 1 hour	£2.20	£2.30	£0.10	4.55%		
	Mon-Saturday up to 2 hours	£3.30	£3.50	£0.20	6.06%		
	Mon-Saturday up to 3 hours	£4.50	£4.70	£0.20	4.44%		
	Mon-Saturday up to 5 Hours	£5.70	£6.00	£0.30	5.26%		
	Mon-Saturday Over 5 Hours (St Georges)	£6.80	£7.10	£0.30	4.41%		
	Mon-Saturday Over 5 Hours (Forum/Westgate)	£6.80	£7.10	£0.30	4.41%		
	Sunday	£2.50	£2.50	£0.00	0.00%		
	Night Parking 7pm to 7am (6am for St G)	£2.50	£2.60	£0.10	4.00%		
Total Short Stay						£85,670	
(Swingate/Daneshill/Southgate)	Mon-Fri entry before 8.30am to 6pm	£9.90	£10.50	£0.60	6.06%		
	Mon-Fri entry after 8.30am to 6pm	£6.80	£7.10	£0.30	4.41%		
	Mon-Sat 6am-7pm (Southgate Only)	£6.80	£7.10	£0.30	4.41%		
	Saturday 6am - 6pm	£6.80	£7.10	£0.30	4.41%		
	Sunday	£2.50	£2.60	£0.10	4.00%		
	Night Parking (7pm to 6am or 6pm - 6am)	£2.50	£2.60	£0.10	4.00%		
Total Long Stay						£15,060	
Railways	Mon-Sat up to 6 hours	£7.50	£7.80	£0.30	4.00%		
	Mon- Sat 6-24 hours (Proposed new time band)	£11.50	£12.00	£0.50	4.35%		
Railways	Sunday	£4.20	£4.50	£0.30	7.14%		
Total Railways						£72,700	
Season Tickets	New Town (price per month)	£100.00	£100.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Blue Badge Holders (Season Ticket, price per Annum)	£60.00	£65.00	£5.00	8.33%		
	Rail (price per month)	£175.00	£175.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Season Tickets						£10,700	
New Town Total						£184,130	
Old Town:							
Primett Rd North	Monday - Saturday 0600-1600 hours						
	up to one hour	£1.40	£1.50	£0.10	7.14%		
	up to two hours	£2.00	£2.10	£0.10	5.00%		
	up to three hours	£2.80	£3.00	£0.20	7.14%		
	Up to five hours	£3.70	£4.00	£0.30	8.11%		
	More than five hours	£3.70	£4.00	£0.30	8.11%		
	Evenings (Mon-Sat) (4pm to 6am)	£1.00	£1.10	£0.10	10.00%		
	Sundays (6am-Mon 6am)	£1.00	£1.10	£0.10	10.00%		
Primett Rd South	Monday-Friday						
	0600-1600hrs	£3.70	£4.00	£0.30	8.11%		
	1600-0600hrs	£1.00	£1.10	£0.10	10.00%		

Increases are roughly in line with suggested inflation.

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
	<u>Saturday 0600-1600:</u>						
	up to one hour	£1.40	£1.50	£0.10	7.14%		
	up to two hours	£2.00	£2.10	£0.10	5.00%		
	up to three hours	£2.80	£3.00	£0.20	7.14%		
	More than three hours	£3.70	£4.00	£0.30	8.11%		
	<u>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</u>	£1.00	£1.10	£0.10	10.00%		
Church Lane North	<u>Mon-Sat 0600-1600hrs</u>						
	up to one hour	£1.40	£1.50	£0.10	7.14%		
	up to two hours	£2.00	£2.10	£0.10	5.00%		
	up to three hours	£2.80	£3.00	£0.20	7.14%		
	More than three hours	£3.70	£4.00	£0.30	8.11%		
	<u>Saturday 4pm-Monday 6am</u>	£1.00	£1.10	£0.10	10.00%		
Season Tickets	Old Town (price per month)	£55.00	£55.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Old Town Total						£13,990	
Off Street Parking Total:						£158,420	
On Street Parking							
Town Centre	up to 30 mins	£1.20	£1.25	£0.05	4.17%		
	Up to 1 Hour	£2.40	£2.50	£0.10	4.17%		
	Up to 2 Hours	£3.60	£3.80	£0.20	5.56%		
	Up to 3 Hours	£4.80	£5.00	£0.20	4.17%		
	Up to 4 Hours	£6.00	£6.50	£0.50	8.33%		
	Up to 5 Hours	£7.20	£8.00	£0.80	11.11%		
	Over 5 hours	£13.00	£14.00	£1.00	7.69%	£15,400	

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
Corey's Mill Lane Pay & Display	up to 1 hr £1.50	£2.20	£2.30	£0.10	4.55%		Prices benchmarked to ensure SBC prices competitive with surrounding parking; e.g. Lister Hospital 1 Hr £3.80 vs SBC £2.30, 2 Hrs £5.70 vs SBC £3.60, 3 hrs £7.60 vs SBC £5.40.
	up to 2 hrs £2.50	£3.30	£3.60	£0.30	9.09%		
	up to 3 hrs (max stay) £4.00	£5.00	£5.40	£0.40	8.00%	£27,720	
Old Town Parking Permits	First Permit	£45.00	£45.00	£0.00	0.00%		
(Zone OT)	Second Permit	£71.00	£71.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Third Permit	£97.00	£97.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Burymead Parking Permits (Zone B)	First Permit	£56.00	£56.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Second Permit	£82.00	£82.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Third Permit	£108.00	£108.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Fourth Permit	£134.00	£134.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	20 visitor vouchers	£15.00	£15.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	First Permit	£68.00	£68.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Ingleside Drive (Zone ID)	Second Permit	£94.00	£94.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Third Permit	£120.00	£120.00	£0.00	0.00%		
(New PPA Start June 25)	20 visitor vouchers	£20.00	£20.00	£0.00	0.00%	£0	
	H Bar Marking Application fee	£38.00	£40.00	£2.00	5.26%		
	H Bar Marking Fee	£105.00	£110.00	£5.00	4.76%		
	Suspension Application Fee	£125.00	£130.00	£5.00	4.00%		
	Parking Bay Suspension (per additional bay)	£22.00	£23.00	£1.00	4.55%	£1,110	
On Street Parking Total						£44,230	
Highways & Engineers							
Street Naming/Numbering							
	First Dwelling Numbering	£140.00	£150.00	£10.00	7.14%		
	Next ten dwellings (per dwelling)	£73.00	£76.00	£3.00	4.11%		
	All further dwellings	£37.00	£39.00	£2.00	5.41%		

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
	Naming of a building (e.g. block of flats)	£300.00	£315.00	£15.00	5.00%		Increases above inflation due to demand/increased development.
	Naming of new street	£300.00	£350.00	£50.00	16.67%		
	Change of house name (or adding alias)	£115.00	£120.00	£5.00	4.35%		
	Commercial numbering first unit	£370.00	£390.00	£20.00	5.41%		
	Commercial numbering further units	£185.00	£195.00	£10.00	5.41%	£820	
External Works (e.g. Other LAs)							Fees are based on officer hourly rates and include an estimated pay award plus NI increases.
Examples of Hourly Charge out rate for staff time (VAT to be added)	Engineering Services Manager	£82.00	£85.00	£3.00	3.66%		
	Principal Engineer	£76.00	£80.00	£4.00	5.26%		
	Traffic & Parking Enforcement Manager	£72.00	£76.00	£4.00	5.56%		
	Engineer	£57.00	£60.00	£3.00	5.26%		
	Inspector	£54.00	£57.00	£3.00	5.56%	£1,090	
Town Centre Charges							Increases on most lines are marginal but due to size of the budget these increases equate to a % higher than inflation.
Street Hoarding Licences	Hoarding/Scaffold Licence (per week/50m run)	£58.00	£60.00	£2.00	3.45%		
	Application Fee	£105.00	£110.00	£5.00	4.76%		
	Crane Licence	£2,650.00	£2,800.00	£150.00	5.66%		
	Skip Licence (per fortnight)	£51.00	£54.00	£3.00	5.88%	£1,030	
Highways & Engineers Total						£2,940	
Garages:							
Prices shown are "NET" of VAT. Housing Tenants generally do not pay VAT but other customers do pay VAT, meaning the actual weekly increase for a Category A garage would be 60p. Around 2/3rd of all customers do pay	Standard Garage (Category A)	£14.45	£15.00	£0.55	3.81%	£93,920	
	Standard Garage (Category B)	£13.51	£13.92	£0.41	3.06%	£2,150	
	Standard Garage (Category C)	£12.68	£13.07	£0.39	3.07%	£1,210	
	Road Facing Garages	£16.55	£17.13	£0.58	3.50%	£38,840	
	Bubble	£7.00	£7.25	£0.25	3.57%	£320	

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
VAT.	Large A	£14.98	£15.50	£0.52	3.50%	£0	Increases are roughly in line with suggested inflation.
	Large B	£14.56	£15.07	£0.51	3.50%	£20	
	Large Wide A	£15.08	£15.61	£0.53	3.51%	£1,210	
	Large Wide B	£14.77	£15.28	£0.51	3.47%	£0	
	Premium Garage	£17.94	£18.57	£0.63	3.51%	£1,580	
	Premium Wide	£24.70	£25.56	£0.86	3.48%	£40	
	Premium Road facing	£20.28	£20.99	£0.71	3.50%	£170	
Commercial	Standard Commercial	£18.20	£18.84	£0.64	3.52%	£5,850	
	Commercial Large 1	£25.73	£26.63	£0.90	3.52%	£2,360	
	Commercial Large 1 Road Facing	£26.25	£27.17	£0.92	3.50%	£1,800	
	Commercial Large 2	£21.53	£22.28	£0.75	3.51%	£9,370	
	Commercial Large 2 Road Facing	£22.31	£23.09	£0.78	3.48%	£1,020	
	Commercial 3	£79.80	£82.59	£2.79	3.50%	£1,820	
	Commercial 4	£41.06	£42.49	£1.44	3.50%	£4,710	
	Commercial 5	£54.66	£56.58	£1.92	3.51%	£1,250	
Freeholder Charges	Cleansing, Weeding and Sweeping	£16.40	POA	TBC	TBC	£0	
Garages Total			Average increase	3%		£167,640	
Indoor Market							Prices frozen for 2026/27 following move to Park Place.
	Indoor Market				0.0%	£0	
Indoor Market Total						£0	
Bulky Waste:							Increases are roughly in line with suggested inflation.
	3 Items	£49.50	£51.00	£1.50	3.03%		
	6 Items	£80.00	£82.50	£2.50	3.13%		
	7 Items	£90.00	£93.00	£3.00	3.33%		
	8 Items	£100.00	£103.00	£3.00	3.00%		
	9 Items	£109.00	£112.50	£3.50	3.21%		
	10 Items	£119.00	£123.00	£4.00	3.36%		
	Cancellation Fee	£12.00	£12.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Bulky Waste Total:						£2,800.00	
Trade Refuse:							In order to increase market share, the service aims to price in line or marginally lower than local competitors. Trade recycling increased in line with inflation but has been proposed to fix refuse prices for 26/27.
	Refuse 1100L bin, weekly collection - Inside Stevenage	£23.95	£23.95	(£0.00)	(0.02%)		
	Refuse 1100L bin, weekly collection, Outside Stevenage	£25.45	£24.45	(£1.00)	(3.93%)		
	Paper/Cardboard (Fibre) 1100L bin, fortnightly collection - I	£12.72	£13.00	£0.28	2.19%		
	Paper/Cardboard (Fibre) 1100L bin, fortnightly collection In	£13.50	£14.00	£0.50	3.70%		
	25 TRADE SACKS	£74.70	£74.70	£0.00	0.00%		
	50 TRADE SACKS	£139.90	£139.90	£0.00	0.00%		
	75 TRADE SACKS	£192.30	£192.30	£0.00	0.00%		
	100 TRADE SACKS	£251.80	£251.80	£0.00	0.00%		
	125 TRADE SACKS	£308.60	£308.60	£0.00	0.00%		
	150 TRADE SACKS	£371.50	£371.50	£0.00	0.00%		
	200 TRADE SACKS	£467.10	£467.10	£0.00	0.00%		
	300 TRADE SACKS	£659.40	£659.40	£0.00	0.00%		
	500 TRADESACKS	£1,065.48	£1,065.48	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF240	£9.65	£9.65	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF330	£9.65	£9.65	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF360	£9.65	£9.65	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF660	£17.37	£17.37	£0.00	0.00%		

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
	REF1100	£23.95	£23.95	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF660 Schools	£14.95	£14.95	£0.00	0.00%		
	REF1100 Schools	£18.54	£18.54	£0.00	0.00%		
	REC240 Plastic	£7.22	£7.50	£0.28	3.88%		
	REC240 Glass	£7.22	£7.50	£0.28	3.88%		
	REC240 Paper	£7.22	£7.50	£0.28	3.88%		
	REC360 Plastic	£9.10	£9.40	£0.30	3.30%		
	REC360 Glass	£9.10	£9.40	£0.30	3.30%		
	REC360 Paper	£9.10	£9.40	£0.30	3.30%		
	REC660 Paper	£11.75	£12.20	£0.45	3.83%		
	REC1100 Paper	£12.75	£13.20	£0.45	3.53%		
New	Account Set Up Fee	£0.00	£20.00	£20.00	-		
New	Duty of Care Fine Fee	£0.00	£50.00	£50.00	-		
New	Contaminated Waste Charge	£0.00	£50.00	£50.00	-		
New	Replacement Bin Fee	£0.00	£270.00	£270.00	-		
Trade Refuse Total:						£9,080	
Skips:							4 and 6 yard skip service ceased 1st Jan 2025. Prices frozen for RoRos as demand is low.
Material	Skip Size						
RoRos	20 Yard	£659.33	£659.33	£0.00	0.00%		
RoRos	40 Yards	£659.33	£659.33	£0.00	0.00%		
Skips Total:						£0	
Third Party Tipping							New charges implemented as part of star chamber process.
	Cancelled Appointment on day	£0.00	£30.00	£30.00	-		
	Missed Appointment on day	£0.00	£30.00	£30.00	-		
	Gate Fee	£0.00	£10.00	£10.00	-		
	General Waste - p/t	£170.00	£170.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Hardcore / Soil - p/t	£56.00	£56.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Green	£10.00	£10.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Wood - p/t	£68.00	£68.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Contaminated load	£250.00	£250.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Third Party Total:						£0	
Cemeteries:							
	Burials -5' single	£940.00	£975.00	£35.00	3.72%		
	Burials - 6' double	£1,265.00	£1,303.00	£38.00	3.00%		
	Burials - 8' - treble	£1,650.00	£1,711.00	£61.00	3.70%		
	Natural Burial - Grant of Rights	£1,280.00	£1,327.00	£47.00	3.67%		
	Natural Burial - 5' single	£910.00	£943.00	£33.00	3.63%		
	Natural Burial - Ashes (single)	£370.00	£383.00	£13.00	3.51%		
	Natural Burial - Ashes (double)	£535.00	£555.00	£20.00	3.74%		
Purchase of Grant of Exclusive Rights to Grave/Plot	Child - 50yrs	£299.00	£310.00	£11.00	3.68%		

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
	Adult - 50yrs	£1,391.00	£1,442.00	£51.00	3.67%		Increases are roughly in line with suggested inflation.
	Garden of Rest	£462.00	£479.00	£17.00	3.68%		
	Grant Transfer	£103.00	£107.00	£4.00	3.88%		
Pre-Purchased Graves							
	Child - 50yrs	£1,299.00	£1,347.00	£48.00	3.70%		
	Adult - 50yrs	£2,391.00	£2,479.00	£88.00	3.68%		
	Dead	£150.00	£156.00	£6.00	4.00%		
	Single	£645.00	£670.00	£25.00	3.88%		
	Double	£962.00	£998.00	£36.00	3.74%		
Cremated Remains - Sanctum	Sanctum Vault - 2 internments (30yr)	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	£0.00	0.00%		
New	Sanctum Vault - 2 internments (50yr)	£0.00	£1,450.00	£1,450.00	-		
	Lease Renewal	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Lease Transfer	£87.00	£87.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Cremated Remains	Grave Space	£340.00	£352.00	£12.00	3.53%		
	Garden of Rest	£340.00	£352.00	£12.00	3.53%		
	Lawn Birches (scattering)	£82.50	£85.00	£2.50	3.03%		
	Rose Gardens	£795.00	£824.00	£29.00	3.65%		
Cremated Remains - Double Casket	Grave Space	£495.00	£514.00	£19.00	3.84%		
	Garden of Rest	£495.00	£514.00	£19.00	3.84%		
	Rose Gardens	£1,112.00	£1,153.00	£41.00	3.69%		
	Chapel Hire	£160.00	£166.00	£6.00	3.75%		
Saturday Internments	Burials	£1,442.00	£1,495.00	£53.00	3.68%		
	Ashes	£443.00	£460.00	£17.00	3.84%		
Memorials	Headstone	£265.00	£275.00	£10.00	3.77%		
	Memorial (Garden of Rest)	£245.00	£254.00	£9.00	3.67%		
	Additional Inscription	£100.00	£105.00	£5.00	5.00%		
Commemorative Information	Memorial Wall / Paving - renewal fee for 5 yr	£57.00	£60.00	£3.00	5.26%		
	Digital Book of Remembrance - per entry	£100.00	£105.00	£5.00	5.00%		
	Plaques for Tree & Shrubs	£125.00	£130.00	£5.00	4.00%		
	Memorial Tree Leaf (5 years)	£155.00	£160.00	£5.00	3.23%		
New	Memorial Tree Leaf (10 years)	£0.00	£280.00	£280.00	-		
	Bench Plaques (10yr)	£500.00	£500.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Exhumations - Cremated Remains	£515.00	£535.00	£20.00	3.88%		
Cemeteries Total:						£11,120	
Allotments:							No Increase proposed.
	Price per M ² per year	£0.90	£0.90	£0.00	0.00%		
	100M ² per year	£90.00	£90.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	250M ² per year	£225.00	£225.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Allotment Setup Admin Fee	£25.00	£25.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Allotments Total						£0	

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
Fishing:							Minimal increases to fees (+£1/£2) however due to size of budget this equates to a higher than inflation % increase.
	Adult Day Ticket	£9.00	£10.00	£1.00	11.11%		
	Junior Day Ticket	£7.00	£8.00	£1.00	14.29%		
	Night Fishing	£22.00	£24.00	£2.00	9.09%		
	2nd or 3rd Rod - cost per additional rod	£5.00	£5.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Fishing Total						£930	
Planning:							New charging structure proposed for planning. Savings reported through star chamber process.
Major Developments							
Category A - Major development •100+ residential units (gross); •Site exceeds 3ha; or •6,000sq.m+ non-residential floorspace (including change of use).	Fixed Fee - Up to a maximum of four meetings with officers, including one with design/heritage advisor advice and a second meeting to discuss viability.		£18,000.00				
	Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.		£750.00				
	Category B1 – Large major development •75-99 residential units; or •Site is between 2ha and 2.99 ha with residential units proposed; or •Between 4,001 to 5,999sq.m non-residential	Fixed Fee - Up to a maximum of two meetings with officers, including one with design/heritage advisor and one meeting to discuss viability		£14,000.00			
Category B2 – Large major development •50-74 residential dwellings; •Between 3,001sq.m to 4,000sq.m non-residential (including change of use)	Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.		£600.00				
	Fixed Fee - Up to a maximum of two meetings with officers, including one with design/heritage advisor and one meeting to discuss viability		£10,500.00				
	Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.		£500.00				
Category B3 – Large major development •25-49 residential dwellings; •Between 2,001sq.m to 3,000sq.m non-residential (including change of use)	Fixed Fee - Up to a maximum of two meetings with officers, including one with design/heritage advisor and one meeting to discuss viability		£7,000.00				
	Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.		£470.00				
	Category C – Small major development •10-24 residential dwellings; •The site is between 0.5ha and 1.99ha with residential units proposed; or •1000 to 2000 sq.m non-residential (including change of use).	Fixed Fee - Up to a maximum of two meetings with officers, including one with design/heritage advisor and one meeting to discuss viability		£5,000.00			
Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.			£470.00				
Bespoke Fees applicable to Major Developments - Categories A, B1, B2, B3 and C		Per Hour		£250.00			
	Meeting with Assistant Director (per hour)		£350.00				
	Meeting with Head of Planning (per hour)		£150.00				
	Design/Heritage Advice		£200.00				
	Technical Workshops		£2,500.00				
Minor & Householder Developments							
Category D – Minor development •6-9 dwellings units (gross); or •The site is between 0.5ha and 1ha; or •Between 500 to 999sq.m of non-residential (including change of use)	Up to a maximum of two meetings with officers and one meeting on specialist advice (design/heritage/viability).		£2,000.00				
	Any additional meetings or advice charged per meeting.		£350.00				

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
Category E – Minor Development (2) •2-5 dwellings units (gross); or •Sites less than 0.5ha; or •Up to 499sq.m of non-residential (including change of use).	Fixed Fee - One meeting with officers, Design/Heritage advice provided in writing.		£1,500.00				
Category F •Creation of a single-dwelling.	Fixed Fee - written advice without meeting		£400.00				
	Fixed Fee - written advice with meeting		£450.00				
Category G1 – Householder (including Lawful Development Certificates)	Fixed Fee - written advice with site visit		£320.00				
Note: Proposed extensions and alterations to a dwellinghouse.	Fixed Fee - written advice without site visit		£220.00				
Category G2 – Householder (including Lawful Development Certificates)							
Note: Covers proposals such as driveways, outbuildings, boundary treatments.	Fixed Fee - Virtual Meeting (MS Teams) with follow up note issued in 5 working days (does not include site visit)		£120.00				
Other Specialist Advice							
Category H - Listed Building Advice only Standalone Heritage Advice	Fixed hourly rate		£180.00				
	Bespoke advice from consultants (Quote provided from Council).		£180.00				
Category I – Other Including (but not limited to) Advertisements Telecommunications Shop fronts Conditions							
	Fixed Fee - written advice without meeting		£250.00				
	Fixed Fee - written advice with meeting		£350.00				
PPA's (Planning Performance Agreements)							
Preparing a PPA for Category A to Category C – The applicant would have to contact the planning			N/A				
Category A (Large Major Development) – Officer resources to discharge all planning conditions attached to			£20,000.00				
Category B1 (Large Major Development) - Officer resources to discharge all planning conditions attached			£7,000.00				
Category B3 (Large Major Development) & Category C (Small Major Development) - Officer resources to			£5,000.00				
Legal Agreements (S106)							
Requests related to Legal Agreements (S106)	Confirmation of compliance with a specific agreement (including financial obligations)		£134.00				
	Discharge a Section 106 obligation		£223.00				
	Deed of variation to Section 106 agreement		£2,200.00				
Other Enquiries							
Simple PD Enquiry / Whether property is located in a Conservation or is a Listed Building (5 working days).			£5.00				
Standard General Enquiry (20 working days).			£10.00				
Standard General Enquiry (10 working days).			£20.00				
Advanced General Enquiry – Virtual Meeting / Telephone Call (30 mins).			£100.00				
Planning Total						£0	
Environmental Health & Licensing							
Hackney Carriages:							
Env Health & Licensing:	Housing Act 2004						
	Licence for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	£897.84	£930.00	£32.16	3.58%		
	Service of Housing Act Notices	£466.46	£483.00	£16.54	3.54%	£730	
Env Health & Licensing:	Food Premises						
	Destruction Certificate	£163.06	£169.00	£5.94	3.65%		
	Rescore Inspections	£233.00	£242.00	£9.00	3.86%		
	Health Certificate	£134.16	£134.16	£0.00	0.00%	£460	

In line with Inflation where changed.

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Options considered/Rationale
Env Health & Licensing:	Licensing including: Acupuncture, street trading etc.					£0	
	Licencing Act 2003					£0	
	Gambling Act 2005					£0	
Environmental Health & Licensing Total:						£1,190	
Legal							No increases to TC charges as increased from £50 last year.
Estates	Sale of Freehold Reversion – Residential Leases	£837.00	£865.00	£28.00	3.35%		
	Various transactions involving preparation of an agreement or Deed e.g. small land sales, Deeds of Release, Easements, Garage sales and purchases	£500.00	£515.00	£15.00	3.00%		
Town Centre	New Market Licences	£175.00	£175.00	£0.00	0.00%		
	Market Licences Amendments	£175.00	£175.00	£0.00	0.00%		
Legal Total						£0	
Local Land Charges	Residential Property (Con 29)	£106.60	£110.55	£3.95	3.71%		In line with Inflation.
VAT Is PAYABLE on these fees (fees shown is GROSS of VAT)	Residential Property (LLC1) NO VAT	£19.65	£19.65	£0.00	0.00%		
	Commercial Property and Areas of Land (Con 29)	£135.95	£141.00	£5.05	3.71%		
	Commercial Property and Areas of Land (LLC1) NO VAT	£25.55	£25.55	£0.00	0.00%		
	Con29O Enquiry Q4 and additional parcels of land	£17.85	£18.55	£0.70	3.92%		
	Con29O Enquiry Q5-21 (each)	£8.90	£9.25	£0.35	3.93%		
	Con29O Enquiry Q22	£41.90	£43.45	£1.55	3.70%		
	Additional Enquiry	£19.40	£20.15	£0.75	3.87%	£2,450	
				Grand Total		£400,800	
				Budget Adjustments		-£86,800	
				Draft Budget Increase 2026/27		£314,000	

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Standard Inflation assumed at 3.00%

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Draft Revised Budget (2026/27) (including some assumed adjustments)	Options considered/Rationale
Housing Revenue Account									
Specialist Support									
Guest Bedrooms	Silkin Court, Walpole Court, Scarborough Avenue, Southend Close, Pinewoods & Fred Millard.	£14.90	£16.60	£1.70	11.38%				Additional charge is in line with increased cleaning cost.
Guest flats	Norman Court, Silkin Court	£25.40	£28.60	£3.20	12.58%				Additional charge is in line with increased cleaning cost.
Short Stay Units	Assessment (per day)	£12.90	£15.30	£2.40	18.60%				Additional charge is in line with increased cleaning cost.
	Respite	£25.30	£28.10	£2.80	11.07%				Additional charge is in line with increased cleaning cost.
						5,704	570	6,274	
Laundry Charges	Independent living/flexicare laundry wash	£3.60	£3.70	£0.10	2.78%				
						22,144	-1,534	20,610	Based on the latest volume usage.
Room Hire	Hairdressing at Silkin/Fred Millard. (Hourly charge)	£6.60	£6.80	£0.20	3.03%				
	Private chiropodist and other services, (per hour)	£6.60	£6.80	£0.20	3.03%				
						2,000	5	2,005	
Support Services and Care connect 24/7 for HRA tenants	Housing related support (includes all services shown under careline alarms)	£19.65	£20.20	£0.55	2.80%				Inflationary Increase applied - full cost of service review currently underway
	Additional pendant for 2nd service user (additional weekly charge) (50 weeks)	£0.50	£0.55	£0.05	10.00%				
	independent living and flexi care support charge for previous HRS protected clients and new residents entitled to HB	£10.50	£11.00	£0.50	4.76%				Increase as per inflation pending to further review and bench marking.
	Response service for new customers (50 weeks)	£8.70	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%				Prize frozen in line to bench marking.
	Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)	£4.90	£5.00	£0.10	2.12%				Increase as per inflation.
	Monitoring only service (50 weeks)	£3.90	£4.20	£0.30	7.69%				Increased as per bench marking.
						587,385	13,873	601,258	

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Standard Inflation assumed at 3.00%

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Draft Revised Budget (2026/27) (including some assumed adjustments)	Options considered/Rationale
Care Connect 24/7 alarm - private	Response service (52 weeks)	£8.70	£9.00	£0.30	3.45%				
	Additional pendant (52 weeks)	£0.60	£0.70	£0.10	16.67%				High percentage due to of low base value.
	Response service out of area (52 weeks)	£8.70	£8.70	£0.00	0.00%				Price freeze to stay competitive.
	Response service to other provider equipment (52 weeks)	£4.90	£5.00	£0.10	2.12%				
	Monitoring only service (52 weeks)	£3.90	£4.20	£0.30	7.69%				Increased as per bench marking.
						128,000	2,600	130,600	
	Winkhaus keys	£15.90	£15.90	£0.00	0.00%				
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Black)	£25.40	£26.20	£0.80	3.13%				
	Fobs - Sheltered Schemes (Shark)	£15.20	£15.70	£0.50	3.26%				
Replacement Pendants	Tynetec pendant	£66.10	£68.10	£2.00	3.03%				
	Chiptech	£58.30	£60.00	£1.70	2.92%				
Key safe	Supply	£23.20	£23.90	£0.70	3.02%				
						4,177	37	4,214	
General Needs Tenants and Leaseholders:									
Key Fobs	Old Style "Black fobs"	£25.40	£26.20	£0.80	3.13%				
	New "Shark" Fobs	£15.20	£15.70	£0.50	3.26%				
Communal door entry keys	Replacement keys for entry doors to flat blocks.	£24.30	£25.00	£0.70	2.88%				
Laundry charges - Roundmead	Wash tokens	£6.90	£7.10	£0.20	2.90%				
	Dry Tokens	£3.70	£3.80	£0.10	2.81%				
Management Fees for Westwood Court & Kilner Close	Administration Fees	£1.40	£1.45	£0.05	3.28%				
						1,987	3,059	5,046	

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Standard Inflation assumed at 3.00%

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Draft Revised Budget (2026/27) (including some assumed adjustments)	Options considered/Rationale
Stores	Use of store	£7.70	£7.90	£0.20	2.60%				
Lock change	Callout	£167.80	£173.00	£5.20	3.10%				
	Admin charge	£60.10	£61.90	£1.80	3.00%				
						17,521	381	17,902	
Tenant's Retrospective Charges									
Inspection charge - depending on cost of work	From £0 to £999	£258.80	£267.00	£8.20	3.17%				
	From £1,000 to £1,999	£264.30	£272.00	£7.70	2.91%				
	From £2,000 to £2,999	£286.30	£295.00	£8.70	3.04%				
	From £3,000 to £3,999	£297.30	£306.00	£8.70	2.93%				
	From £4,000 to £4,999	£352.40	£363.00	£10.60	3.01%				
	From £5,000 to £5,999	£473.50	£487.00	£13.50	2.85%				
Administration	Administration	£187.20	£193.00	£5.80	3.10%				
						6,720	0	6,720	Infrequent charges, no budgetary impact.
Leasehold charges for services (VAT not applicable. All fees are additional income for SBC)									
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*	10 working day response - from date of payment	£209.20	£215.00	£5.80	2.77%				
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*	3 working day response - from date of payment	£319.30	£329.00	£9.70	3.04%				
Re-mortgage enquiries*	Enquiries raised at a time of remortgaging	£99.10	£102.00	£2.90	2.93%				
Redemption of Mortgage	Enquiries raised at a time of remortgaging	£115.00	£119.00	£4.00	3.48%				
Applications for consent for additional borrowing and Postponement of Right To Buy Discount Charge	Enquiries raised at a time of remortgaging	£90.00	£93.00	£3.00	3.33%				
Copy of lease*	fee for providing a copy of the lease	£49.50	£51.00	£1.50	3.03%				
Copy Transfers	fee for providing a copy of the lease	£50.00	£52.00	£2.00	4.00%				
Copies of quarterly service charge invoice*	additional inspection fee	£44.00	£45.30	£1.30	2.95%				
Copies of service charge estimate or actual statement*	additional inspection fee	£44.00	£45.30	£1.30	2.95%				
Deed of Postponement		£143.10	£147.00	£3.90	2.73%				
Notice of Charge		£49.50	£51.00	£1.50	3.03%				
Notice of Transfer/Assignment		£49.50	£51.00	£1.50	3.03%				
Lease extension	Valuation fee	£385.40	£397.00	£11.60	3.01%				
	Legal fee	£836.90	£862.00	£25.10	3.00%				
	Administration fee	£198.20	£204.00	£5.80	2.93%				
	Deposit - £260 or 10% of the premium, whichever is higher	£286.30	£295.00	£8.70	3.04%				
Collective enfranchisement	Valuation fee	£803.80	£828.00	£24.20	3.01%				
	Legal fee	£836.90	£862.00	£25.10	3.00%				
	Administration fee	£198.20	£204.00	£5.80	2.93%				
Consent fee/sub let fee	Cost of requesting permission to sublet the property	£77.10	£79.40	£2.30	2.98%				
						0	5,280	5,280	Infrequent charges, no budgetary impact.
Leasehold Alterations									
Minor alterations - these are internal works within the demised premises that do not require planning permission or building control approval	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£220.20	£227.00	£6.80	3.09%				
	Minor application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£440.50	£454.00	£13.50	3.06%				
	Letter licence - deed	£297.30	£306.00	£8.70	2.93%				
	Full licence - issued by Building Surveyor	£451.50	£465.00	£13.50	2.99%				
	Extension of the letter licence period	£264.30	£272.00	£7.70	2.91%				
Major alterations	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£264.30	£272.00	£7.70	2.91%				
	Major application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£715.70	£737.00	£21.30	2.98%				
	Landlord licence - deed	£517.50	£533.00	£15.50	3.00%				

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Standard Inflation assumed at 3.00%

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Proposed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)	Draft Revised Budget (2026/27) (including some assumed adjustments)	Options considered/Rationale
	Supplemental lease/deed of variation additional premises/restrictions)	£231.20	£238.00	£6.80	2.94%				
	Extension of the letter licence period	£352.40	£363.00	£10.60	3.01%				
Minor alterations - these are internal works within the demised premises that do not require planning permission or building control approval	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£313.80	£323.00	£9.20	2.93%				
	Minor application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£578.10	£595.00	£16.90	2.92%				
	Retrospective letter licence	£473.50	£488.00	£14.50	3.06%				
		£0.00							
Major alterations	Pre-application advice (non-refundable)	£357.90	£369.00	£11.10	3.10%				
	Major application consideration and decision (non-refundable)	£1,035.10	£1,066.00	£30.90	2.99%				
	Supplemental lease (extension of demised premises)	£451.50	£465.00	£13.50	2.99%				
	Landlord licence - deed	£737.80	£760.00	£22.20	3.01%				
Unauthorised alterations (The cost of this will depend on whether it is Minor or Major Works and the figure given is the minimum for major works)	Minor assessment and ruling	£550.60	£567.00	£16.40	2.98%				
	Major assessment and ruling	£814.90	£839.00	£24.10	2.96%				
	Stop and make safe notification (including liaison with other council officers)	£401.90	£414.00	£12.10	3.01%				
	Re-instatement minor works	£814.90	£839.00	£24.10	2.96%				
	Re-instatement major works	£1,079.10	£1,111.00	£31.90	2.96%				
						0	0	0	Infrequent charges, no budgetary impact.
	GRAND TOTAL					£775,638	£24,271	£799,909	
					Less Adjustments to Changes in Usage				
					No Proposed adjustments			£0	
					Total Budget Adjustment			£0	
					Draft Revised Budget for 2026/27			£799,909	

OUTDOOR SEATING PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

Service (per table)	Fee to charge	Rationale:
Tier 1 - non-prime location, single business	£75.00	Fee increased from £45.50 but new fee still below benchmarked fee of £91 per table. This fee is a 25% discount to tiers 2 and 3. Increases kept to minimal with the highest fee increase for a business in this category being £177 per year.
Tier 2 - prime location, single business	£100.00	Madhatter are currently the only businesses in this category and are being undercharged. Chateau Café pays £100 per table, and they are non-prime location and a single business. So, any new prime areas businesses should be able to match this fee.
Tier 3 - non-prime location - chain business	£100.00	Fire Way and Subway are currently the only businesses in this category are. Chateau Café pays £100 per table, and they are non-prime location and a single business. So, any new chain businesses should be able to match this fee.
Tier 4 - prime location- chain business	£142.86	Matches Estates highest fee per table for Noodle Stop and Pitta Hub. Only the big chains such as Starbucks or Costa should be affected. Any new chain business moving into a prime area should be able to match this fee.

Service	Fee to charge	Rationale
Outdoor Spreads	£35 per square metre	This fee ensures that total charges are proportionate to the actual area occupied, thereby improving fairness and transparency in the application of fees. Upon review, officers determined that four of the five businesses currently being charged are paying a fair and proportionate amount relative to the space they occupy. As such, their fees will remain unchanged under the proposed model.

Formalisation of Existing Fees:

Service	Fee to charge	Rationale
New Application Admin Fee – Town Centre	£25	New Applications take 1 hour of officer time to review the application, perform a site visit and then approve the application
New Application Admin Fee – Estates	£0	Any new outdoor seating application fee would be a part of the full leasing processes thus this fee is already costed within that process.
Adjustments to existing application – Town Centre	£25	Reviewing adjusted applications take one hour of officer time to review the application, perform a site visit and then re-approve the adjusted application
Adjustments to existing application – Estates	Upon Application	Business to pay solicitors fee in full if they are wish to a variation to the contract.
Non-compliance cleaning fee – Town Centre	Recharged any cleaning fee done by internal teams	Breach of lease if not kept clean, recharge for cleaning. If problem continues, team can evaluate the situation and enforce contract terms to mitigate issues (up to termination of contract if ever required.)
Non-compliance cleaning fee – Estates	Recharge any cleaning fee done by internal teams	Breach of lease if not kept clean, recharge for cleaning. If problem continues, team can evaluate the situation and enforce contract terms to mitigate issues (up to termination of contract if ever required.).
Advertising A boards - Town Centre	£100	This is the currently being charged to 16 businesses and is generating £1600.
Advertising A boards - Estates	£100	Town Centre charging this amount for A boards in the town centre
Non-compliance A boards - Town Centre	£0	Confiscation of A board until fee paid
Non-compliance A boards - Estates	£0	Confiscation of A board until fee paid

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ACCELERATED PLANNING PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

Service	Registration	Site Visit	Review & Recommendation	Decision	Fee
Fast-track householder application service	1 working day	5 working days	22-28 working Days	29 working days	£194
Fast-track Certificate of Lawful Development service	1 working day	Up to 2 weeks	2-9 working days	10 working days	£97

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Fees and Charges General Fund 2026/27

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

January 2026 - March 2027

Date created	August 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Annajoy David
Version	1
Author	Annajoy David - Head of Commercial
Business Unit and Team	Finance

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:	Fees and Charges General Fund 2026/27	
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?	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?	Yes	

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	No
Promote equal opportunities?	No
Encourage good relations?	No

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.

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

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role:

Date:

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

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

What is being assessed?		Fees and Charges General Fund 2026/27			
Lead Assessor	Annajoy David			Assessment team	Daud Latif Atif Iqbal Annajoy David
Start date	January 2026	End date	March 2027		
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically, every 2 years)		August 2026			

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Users of discretionary chargeable services across Stevenage
What is the key aims of the proposed project?	To assess the impact of the proposed changes to fees and charges for 2026/27 on Stevenage residents and businesses. To ensure that residents and businesses can access a wide range of Council services at different price points. To assist the Council with its financial security by setting an appropriate level of fees and charges to adequately cover the cost of running the service and to combat inflationary pressures.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Concessions are available for some fees and charges (for example garages, allotments).	Promote equal	Services for residents and businesses are available to all.	Encourage good relations	The fees are published online and available to view by

	For those who are council tenants or who are on means tested benefits. There is differentiated charging in place for services such as garages, meaning residents can choose a garage which fits in their price range. There are a wide range of car parks with different price points that residents can choose from. At lister hospital the Council offers cheaper parking up to 3 hours at £5.50 compared to the hospital parking which charges £ 7.60 and operates 24/7 whilst the Council parking operates 7:30am-7:30pm Monday to Saturday. For commercial services, such as trade waste, businesses have a choice as to whether they use the Council or a private sector provider.	opportunities			end users before they apply for a service. Additionally, service users are usually informed of fees ahead of starting works so all parties involved are aware of the fees before committing to works.
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Sectoral knowledge Demand data (Digital Lettings on garages) and usage statistics across all service areas Benchmarking with other local authorities Feedback from past consultations (Parking services) Office for National Statistics (ONS) data
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LGA guidance on local fee setting for regulators (Environmental Health)

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?

The proposed increases in fees and charges for 2026/27 vary across the General Fund as they have been assessed on a case-by-case basis. The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.

A breakdown of some of the key considerations by the services is provided below.

Garage prices are benchmarked against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the proposals compare, the proposed pricing for standard garages in Stevenage ranges from £13.07 to £25.56 per week, with the proposed charges sitting directly in the middle of the other benchmarked local authorities. As part of the customer service provision SBC offer a cleansing, weeding and sweeping program as part of the service to tenants to ensure best value offer for residents and that garage blocks are in optimal condition externally.

Planning services benchmarked their prices against other local offers as part of the fees and charges process. Looking at how the Stevenage proposals compare, the proposed pricing ranges are on average, in line with the pre-application charges which are set out by Hertfordshire based authorities. In addition, the charges were assessed following a review of the cost of providing the service which includes the costs of appointing specialist advisor's dependent on the type of development which is proposed.

Stevenage provide some of the best allotments in Hertfordshire. All sites are secure, there is good water provision at all sites, plus notice boards and information, and many sites have toilet facilities too.

Cemetery services benchmarked their prices against other local authorities and have amended some charges accordingly. The cost of the funeral is normally paid for from the estate of the deceased and for those in financial difficulty and who qualify, a funeral grant can be applied for to help with the cost of burial. Triple fees are applicable for the interment of persons who are non-residents of Stevenage (except for natural burials), meaning that the cost is more affordable for those that reside in the borough. A single 5ft burial is £975 for Stevenage residents so it would be £2925 for externals.

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		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Older people may be on lower/fixed incomes and therefore more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. In relation to parking in Stevenage, they may also be more likely to need to visit the hospital area where prices are recommended to go up by an average of 7.21% with the maximum increase being 40p. ONS data confirms that under 30s and over 65s have lower than average incomes, with ages in between having higher than average incomes, raising the possibility of more than inflationary price increases having a disproportionate effect on them. The price increases in garages, allotments and planning pre-applications might impact the elderly who are on pension credit and could affect young people on low incomes.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and residents use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings. The pre-application service in planning is also a discretionary service and there is no requirement for someone to enter into pre-application discussions with the Council regarding their proposals. Although the Council normally charges a fee for planning enquiries, this fee is waived for elderly individuals to ensure they receive the necessary advice to modify their	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

	property to suit their daily needs. Additionally, if a person has mobility issues and meets the eligibility criteria for support, the costs of any required adaptations are also waived. In addition, older persons can also access free services such as the Planning Portal and Planning Aid for general advice on planning related matters. Concessions are available for allotment holders and bulky waste users on means tested benefits.		
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Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	According to the 2021 Census, 17.2% of Stevenage residents had a disability covered under the Equality Act that limited their day-to-day activities. If increased parking charges discourage driving/parking by others, there will be increased parking availability for blue badge holders (who are not charged on street and for whom heavily discounted car park season tickets are available). ONS data confirms the existence of a disability pay gap in the UK. People with disabilities who do not have a Blue Badge allowing them to park for free may therefore be more vulnerable to socio-economic impacts. A significant reduction in the concession given to disabled season ticket holders should be noted, although the concession will still be considerably higher than recommended in the Concessions Policy. The price increase in garages and allotments might impact on people who are on disability allowance. Holding a garage license is a discretionary service and licensees use them for parking their cars or for storage purposes. If the resident becomes unable to afford the current tier of garages, they will be able to bid on a lower tier, cheaper garage through Digital Lettings.				

	The pre-application service in planning is discretionary and there is no requirement for person to enter into pre-application discussions with the Council regarding a development proposal. In environmental health, certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Through Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees can bid for garages. The Council reserves the right to give priority to anyone who is registered disabled upon providing evidence of a blue badge. In exceptional circumstances a case will be reviewed and decided on its merits. The overall decision will be undertaken by the Garages Manager. For allotments, a range of plot sizes are provided to cater for people's varying needs / abilities. Whilst the Council provides a chargeable enquiry service in planning, the fee is waived for a person who is disabled and wishes to seek general advice about extending a property. In addition, a person who is disabled can apply for planning permission without paying a planning fee in accordance with Central Government Planning Fee Regulations.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Pregnancy & Maternity					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	X
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Pregnant women and their partners may be more likely to attend the hospital, and therefore disproportionately affected by price rises there. The proposed increases in parking charges at Corey's Mill Lane equate to 10p extra for up to 1 hour, 30p extra for up to 2 hours and 40p extra for up to 3 hours. Price rises will impact negatively on lower income customers and whilst there could be an impact of decreased demand on parking users from lower domicile socio economic groups will be impacted . Monitoring on demand levels should be undertaken, and this price increase should be kept under review				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			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	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			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	No impacts identified				

you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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	No impacts identified				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Socio-economic ¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.				

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

you used to support this assessment

In May 2023, 6,163 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in Stevenage. In July 2023, there were 4,252 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage. In March 2023, the number of Council Tax Support recipients of working age (non-pensioners) was 3,154.

Any increase in fees is likely to have or be perceived to have an impact most on those who are already at socio-economic disadvantage.

Whilst most parking fee increases have been kept under 50p per hour mark, an increase in parking could mean that parking becomes unaffordable for some people. At the same time, the town centre is well served by other modes of transport, whilst fees in the vicinity of the hospital would remain significantly cheaper than those offered by the hospital car parks (and therefore clearly below the market rate).

The current and proposed parking charges represent only a small fraction of the overall cost of owning and operating a car. In fact, more than half of households in the lowest income quartile do not own a vehicle. Meanwhile, the societal costs of motoring—such as environmental impact, road maintenance, and congestion—far exceed the revenue collected from motorists. This means that motorists are effectively subsidised by non-motorists through general taxation, giving them an unintended financial advantage. Car ownership is also less common among individuals with protected characteristics, making this disparity more significant. Public transport offers a more affordable alternative, with bus fares capped at £2 per journey. Additionally, elderly and disabled individuals can travel for free on buses, along with a companion.

The price increase in garages might impact residents at a socio-economic disadvantage who are in receipt of benefits. Currently 26.79% of garage licence holders are Council Tenants, which means that they are potentially in receipt of benefits payments, but this is mitigated by the fact that Council tenants do not pay Value Added Tax (VAT) on their garage license and therefore the weekly payments are 20% cheaper. Additionally, Stevenage Garages used for storage are much cheaper than private providers as benchmarked below:

Price per week, 100 sq ft - size of single garage:

- Shurgard: £32.77, Surestore: £43.68, SafeStore: £54.99, Access Storage: £32.77
- SBC garages: cheapest: £7.25, median/common: £15, most expensive £25.56

Around 11% of Stevenage allotment plot holders are currently receiving a concessionary rate.

Allotments will continue to offer good value for money particularly in comparison to other leisure activities in Stevenage. For example:

- Cheapest annual gym membership £329.90 equivalent to £0.90 / day

Average allotment price of £90 per year equivalent to £0.25 / day However, the risk of changes to pre-application planning fees affecting residents at a socio-economic disadvantage is very low as a resident with a socio-economic disadvantage is unlikely to afford to undertake development works. Some fees for cemetery services have increased, which may have a negative impact on those at a socio-economic disadvantage. However, the cost of a funeral is normally covered by the estate of the deceased so may not pose a financial burden. In addition, for those that qualify, a funeral grant can be applied for to help with the cost of a burial. The increased charge for bulky waste may impact the ability of those at a socio-economic disadvantage to pay for waste disposal. There are alternative ways to dispose of unwanted items, such as Facebook Marketplace and the local Household Waste Recycling Centre, which is free of charge.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Awareness raising of concessions available to those on means tested benefits. Through Digital Lettings, potential garage licensees bid for garages. Prices and locations are clearly displayed meaning that potential licensees are fully aware of all the options available. For allotments, a range of plot sizes are provided to cater for people's varying needs / abilities.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	X	Negative impact		Unequal impact	

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Increased parking charges may promote modal shift away from using cars, leading to improved public health through reduced air pollution and increased physical activity.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Discussion between service areas, Finance Business Partners and commercial team on proposed increases.	Residents?	Not consulted with
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted with	Partners?	Not consulted with
Other stakeholders?	For allotments, a satisfaction survey was last carried out with plot holders in 2014. Another survey is required in 2024/25.		

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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	In Environmental Health, certain services to residents are offered at concessionary rates for those in receipt of specified benefits in accordance with policy, which has a positive impact on several of characteristics.
2a. Adjustments made	

Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2b. Continue as planned	The average price increase across the General Fund fees is 3.54% (excluding Planning), which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August. Some elderly, disabled & socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to being charged a higher amount for garages. Every effort will be made for them to be moved to a lower cost garage if requested and if available. Some elderly, disabled, and socio-economically disadvantaged residents may be negatively affected by the increase in planning charges. However, while the Council charges a fee for general householder planning enquiries, this fee is waived for elderly and disabled individuals to ensure they can access necessary advice. Regarding socio-economically disadvantaged residents, current data indicates that demand for planning services is higher among other socio-economic groups. Therefore, the impact on lower-income groups is expected to be minimal. It is recommended that data monitoring be carried out during the next financial year, with findings reported in the 2027/28 F&C General Fund report. Additionally, free planning advice is available through the Planning Portal and Planning Aid. The Council's pre-application advice service is discretionary, meaning it is not a mandatory part of the planning process. In summary, most individuals seeking pre-application advice are unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed fee changes. Allotments will remain largely affordable to most Stevenage residents. Some elderly and socio-economic disadvantaged residents might be negatively affected due to some cemetery fees being increased. Concessions or additional funding support is available for those whose circumstances meet the criteria.
	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?
The Garage Services team will continue to monitor termination levels, offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garage and assist them with the Digital Lettings process.	Digital Lettings will impartially assign garages to bidders based on date of application (bid received) whilst the Garages team will review exceptional cases, promoting equal opportunity. The Garages team will also offer assistance when needed to encourage good relations.	Rebecca Millett	April 2025	The Garage Services team already monitor termination levels and offer assistance to licensees looking for a cheaper garage.
Monitor levels of service uptake across increased fee areas in cemeteries	Provide feedback	Kris White	December 2025	Will form part of financial reporting.

Approved by Assistant Director & Deputy S151 Officer: Atif Iqbal

Date: 01/09/2025

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



HRA Fees and Charges 2026/27

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

April 2026 - March 2027

Date created	August 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Annajoy David
Version	1
Author	Annajoy David - Head of Commercial
Business Unit and Team	Finance

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:	HRA Fees and Charges 2026/27	
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?	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?	Yes	

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	No
Promote equal opportunities?	No
Encourage good relations?	No

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.

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

Name of assessor:

Decision approved by:

Role:

Role: Assistant Director

Date:

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

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

What is being assessed?		HRA Fees and Charges 2026/27			
Lead Assessor	Annajoy David			Assessment team	Atif Iqbal Annajoy David Daud Latif
Start date	April 2026	End date	March 2027		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically, every 2 years)		October 2026			

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Stevenage Council tenants, leaseholders and general residents.
What is the key aims of the proposed project?	To assess the impact of the proposed changes to fees and charges 2026/27 on Stevenage Council tenants, leaseholders and general residents.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	For specialist support charges, anybody on housing benefit and on the fairer charging scheme pays a lower rate than standard.	Promote equal opportunities	For most of the charges where applicable, all residents ranging from private to council tenants are charged the same.	Encourage good relations	The fees are transparent to service users and are listed clearly on the SBC website. A letter notifying any increase is sent out at least 28 days before the change in line with

			For certain fees council tenants receiving some benefits are eligible for a discount on those charges. This reinforces our commitment to equal opportunities.		rent notification letters.
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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Service usage statistics from internal databases such as NEC reports Benchmarking with other local authorities and other providers
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	The average price increase across the HRA fees is 3.13%, which is marginally lower than the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August.		
	In Specialist Support, where the most vulnerable individuals reside, price increases have been controlled in real terms. For the daily rental of guest bedrooms and flats, prices have risen between 40p to 80p, laundry prices by 10p, and room hire by 20p per hour. The most significant increase in this area is for a lock change, at an increase of £3, which is expected to be an infrequent service.		
	For private Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have increased between 10p and 30p per week after benchmarking against other councils. For HRA Support Services & HRA Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have increased between 10p and 55p per week.		
	Council	Monitor Only Weekly	Monitor + Response Weekly
	Stevenage	£4.00	£9.00
Haringey	£4.90	£8.20	
Kensington& Chelsea	£5.27	£8.69	

Doncaster	£4.50	£6.20
Manchester	£2.83	£4.68
Merton	£4.92	£8.51

For general needs tenants and leaseholders, the smallest fee increase is 5p for management fees, with the majority of fee increases being under 80p. The largest increase in this category is for the occasional call-out charge for a lock change, at £5.20.

Leaseholder charges pertain to residents with a mortgage, with most services related to solicitors' enquiries, deeds, notices, and lease extensions, which are unavoidable and one-off fees for legal work. The most substantial increase is £25.10 for legal fees when extending a lease, with most charges being less than £10.

Fees for leaseholder and tenant alterations apply to those who wish to carry out either major or minor changes to the property they live in. The amount charged varies depending on the type of alteration, with higher fees applied for major works. The highest fee in this section is the £31.90 increase for the reinstatement of any unauthorised major works carried out. The largest fee increase for Tenant's Retrospective Charges is the £13.50 increase for inspecting any work costing £5,000 or more.

Four new fees related to tenancy changes have been reviewed and introduced. Although these changes require significant officer time to process, legislation has capped each fee at £50. The changes include:

- Changing a joint tenancy to a sole tenancy
- Changing a sole tenancy to a joint tenancy
- Mutual exchange of properties – each party involved will be charged £25
- Non-statutory succession – where a social landlord (such as a council) allows a family member to take over a tenancy without a legal entitlement under current legislation

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

Negative impact

X

Unequal impact

The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.

Conversely however, the costs are currently subsidised for those in receipt of housing benefit or fairer charging by the wider tenant population, who have a younger age profile and do not benefit from the service.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

To inform the HRA fee increase decision, service usage/demand statistics from internal databases have been used. Benchmarking of service costs and prices from other councils have help to inform this decision.

For private Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have increased between 10p and 30p per week after benchmarking against competitors. For HRA Support Services & HRA Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have" If there are reduced charges for this category of residents, please add this in too. increased between 10p and 55p per week.

It is a requirement for residents living in older persons accommodation to receive support services, however there are disability and pension benefits that help with the additional cost of being disabled or older. Pension credit,

	Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance are available for older and/or disabled residents that require extra help with care needs or regular supervision. These benefits can support older and/or disabled residents to meet the costs of these charges.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The biggest fee increases will be for infrequent services such as lock changes and leaseholder services, whilst everyday services have had a nominal increase as mentioned in the above sections.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	To inform the HRA fee increase decision, service usage/demand statistics from internal databases have been used. Benchmarking of service costs and prices from other councils have help to inform this decision. For private Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have increased between 10p and 30p per week after benchmarking against competitors. For HRA Support Services & HRA Care Connect 24/7 services, prices have increased between 10p and 55p per week. As with Elder residents, disabled residents that require help with the additional cost of being disabled qualify for benefits such as the Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. These benefits can support disabled residents to meet the costs of these charges.		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The biggest fee increases will be for infrequently used services such as lock changes and leasehold services, whilst everyday services have had a nominal increase as mentioned in the above sections.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Pregnancy & Maternity					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Religion or Belief

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	No impacts identified.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic ¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	Any HRA fee increases could negatively affect residents in a lower socio-economic standing as they will have a lower amount of funds to pay for any price increases.	Unequal impact	

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.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

To inform the HRA fee increase decision, service usage/demand statistics from internal databases have been used. Benchmarking of service costs and prices from other councils have help to inform this decision. The average price increase across the HRA fees is 3.13%, which is below the inflation rate 3.8% in the year to August.

A large proportion of the HRA charges such as alternation charges and leaseholder charges should not affect those in lower socio-economic conditions, as tenants are less likely than freeholders to make larger investments and alterations to the property, they reside in. they will either not have a mortgage or enough funds to do alterations to properties. Where leaseholders are requesting a service from us, these charges cover our legal costs, and they would be paying a charge like any other homeowner would have to. These charges would be expected as part of owning a leasehold property.

In Specialist Support, where the most vulnerable individuals reside, price increases have been controlled in real terms. For the daily rental of guest bedrooms and flats, prices have risen between 40p to 80p, laundry prices by 10p, and room hire by 20p per hour. The most significant increase in this area is for a lock change, at an increase of £3, which is expected to be an infrequent service.

The same thought process used for specialist support has been applied to general needs tenants and leaseholders. For general needs tenants and leaseholders, the smallest fee increase is 5p for management fees, with most fee increases being under 80p. The largest increase in this category is again for the occasional call-out charge for a lock change, at £5.20.

For Care Connect 24/7 not all customers are necessarily socially disadvantaged. In addition to the benefits mentioned previously that are available for disabled and older residents, there are housing benefits and council tax reductions available to residents in a socio-economic standing that will help pay for the HRA fees should they use the relevant services.

In addition to the benefits mentioned previously that are available for disabled and older residents, there are housing benefits and council tax reductions available to residents in a socio-economic standing that will help pay for the HRA fees should they use the relevant services.

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The biggest fee increases will be for infrequent services such as lock changes and leaseholder services, whilst everyday services have had a nominal increase as mentioned in the above sections. For Care Connect 24/7 there are different levels of service with different fees available to use.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Discussions with the Housing and HRA Finance team when analysing usage / demand statistics as well as consideration	Residents?	
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	of future costs when considering HRA fee increases.		
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

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	The average price increase across the HRA fees is 3.13%, which is below the inflation rate of 3.8% in the year to August, Price rises are expected to be in line with income and benefit payment rises.	
	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?
Monitor the usage, demand and feedback of the services.	This is to ensure fair charging of service and users that require the services can still access and afford the services.	Simon Kiff	August 2026	Internal databases and reports will be monitored to review any changes and to inform any future decisions.

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Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Atif Iqbal

Date: 01/09/2025

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

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Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: ###

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Communities, Community Safety and Equalities
Date 8th October 2025



THE REVIEW OF THE TAXI & PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES.

Authors Julie Dwan| 2493
Lead Officers Rory Cosgrove| 2888 & Alex Robinson|2288
Contact Officer Julie Dwan | 2493

NON-KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

To consider the Council's proposal to increase the fees and charges relating to taxi and private hire licensing, whilst ensuring that the fees set by the Council remain fair, transparent and proportionate to the cost of administering the licensing service. This review has allowed the Council to assess whether current charges adequately cover operational expenses, comply with legal requirements, and support the delivery of a high-quality, safe and efficient licensing regime that meets the needs of the public and the licensed trade.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve 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.
- 2.2 That Cabinet support the advice of the Council's Climate Action Team and approve a reduced fee structure to incentivise the use of environmentally sustainable vehicles.
- 2.3 That Cabinet note that the discounted licensing structure remains 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.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This review has allowed the Council to assess whether current charges adequately cover operational expenses, comply with legal requirements, and support the delivery of a high-quality, safe and efficient licensing regime that meets the needs of the public and the licensed trade
- 3.2 Taxis and private hire vehicles provide a valuable transport service to residents and communities in Stevenage.
- 3.3 Public safety is the Council's priority when making decisions on taxi and private hire licences. Fees and charges paid to the Council for taxi and private hire licensing should cover the costs of this work.
- 3.4 The Licensing Team committed to doing a full review of the taxi licensing fees and charges in December 2024. This followed a period of over 15 years without a formal review of the fees and charges. The findings of the review indicate that the current fee structure does not fully recover the costs of delivering the Taxi Licensing service.
- 3.5 Government guidance is that taxi and private hire licensing should not operate at a cost to the wider taxpayer. Fees should be set at a level that fully recovers the cost of administering the service, without generating a profit. Any deficit or surplus should be considered when fees are next reviewed to ensure the service remains cost neutral.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Licensing Authority, in exercise of its powers under Sections 53 (2) and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, has determined that the fees charged for the licensing of Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Drivers, Vehicles and Private Hire Operators should vary as specified below:

Service	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Original Proposed Fees & Charges	2026/27 Revised Proposed Fees & Charges (phased)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Average number service utilised per year across last 2 years	Extra revenue generated (£) per full year
PH Operator licence applications							
1 year licence	£250	£275	£263	£13	5.00%	13	£163
5 year licence	£1,000	£1,009	£1,005	£5	0.45%	2	£9
Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Vehicles							
1 year licence/change of vehicle, vehicle compliance is included	£230	£327	£279	£49	21.09%	305	£14,793
Temporary vehicle	£110	£184	£147	£37	33.64%	14	£518
Transfer of vehicle and licence	£62	£103	£83	£21	33.06%	5	£103
Vehicle Compliance test	Currently stated as £55. This service to be removed as it is already included and priced accordingly as part of 1 year licence.						
Voluntary change of vehicle/grant of licence for replacement vehicle	Currently stated as £230. This service to be removed as it is not provided.						
Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Drivers Licence							
1 year licence	£105	£232	£169	£64	60.48%	70	£4,445
3 year licence	£300	£558	£429	£129	43.00%	43	£5,547
Enhanced D.B.S. check	£69	£99	£99	£30	43.48%	123	£3,690
English language test (moving from in-person to online)	£45	£91	£91	£46	102.22%	88	£4,048
Knowledge test (in-person to online and safeguarding & equality)	£75	£173	£173	£98	130.67%	41	£0
Once knowledge test is moved online, the test fee will be paid directly to the test provider, expected from January 2026.							
Miscellaneous - no increase in price as costs already covered							
Replacement paper licence	£10	£10	£10	£0	0.00%		£0
Replacement badge	£25	£25	£25	£0	0.00%		£0
Replacement plate	£50	£50	£50	£0	0.00%		£0
						Extra Revenue Total:	£33,314.50
Notes:							
(1) 2026/27 Revised Proposed Fees & Charges are based on 50% of the Original Proposed Charges. Remaining 50% to be implemented in 2027/28 plus any CPI related increases, if applicable.							
(2) Enhanced DBS check and English Language test increases are not phased implemented as based on fixed costs.							
(3) Replacement licence, badge and plate charges remain the same as cost already covered.							

- 4.2 Service costs and overheads have been reduced, where possible. It is proposed that fees for taxi and private hire licensing should increase. These fees should not be subsidised by the local taxpayer
- 4.3 The revised charges outlined above are proposed to come into effect from **1st January 2026**. These charges have been calculated with due consideration given to the cost of materials as well as the officer time required for the delivery of each individual taxi licensing service. Details on how the proposed fees have been calculated can be found in **Appendix A**.
- 4.4 The proposed fees were originally presented to the Council's Commercial and Investment Working Group in March 2025 and were supported by Members. The only changes to the proposed fees since then are an £18 increase for the one-year vehicle licence and a £1 decrease for the one- and three-year driver licences respectively. This is the result of the intention to move to a direct fulfilment which offers an improved service to applicants. A copy of the briefing paper which includes results of benchmarking against other authorities is available in background documents.

Subsidised fees for zero or ultra-low emission vehicles

- 4.5 In March 2024, during the review of the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy and Conditions of Licence, the Council resolved to actively promote the adoption of cleaner, low-emission vehicles within the licensed taxi and private hire fleet.

- 4.6 To support this initiative, **Paragraph 10.4** of the policy suggests a subsidised licence fee for electric and hybrid vehicles. This financial incentive aims to encourage vehicle owners to transition to cleaner fuel alternatives, thereby contributing to tackling climate change and to improved air quality and environmental sustainability in the borough. A copy of this policy can be found in the background documents.
- 4.7 To support the implementation of a fair and effective subsidised fee structure, the Council sought guidance from the Climate Action Team, who undertook a review of car emission standards. Based on the research and evidence gathered, the following recommendations were proposed. Two-tier discount structure for Zero and Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs):
- A 50% discount on the licence fee is recommended for zero-emission vehicles (e.g. fully electric vehicles).
 - A 25% discount is proposed for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, defined as vehicles with CO₂ emissions of 50g/km or lower.
 - It is recommended that the discounted fee structure remains in place until the end of 2030, aligning with both the Council's zero-emissions target and national policy to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by that date. A copy of the report is attached at **Appendix B**.
- 4.8 At present, the taxi and private hire fleet includes five electric vehicles, and four vehicles classified as Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, with CO₂ emissions of 50g/km or lower.
- 4.9 It is anticipated that the proposed discount will result in a potential loss of income of approximately £1,000 in year one (2026/27) based on the current number of vehicles that meet the eligibility criteria.

Consultation

- 4.10 In line with the statutory requirements set out in sections 53 and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council must undertake a 28-day public consultation on the proposal to amend taxi licensing fees and charges.
- 4.11 To ensure compliance with this statutory duty, the Licensing Authority conducted a 28-day public consultation on the proposed revisions to taxi and private hire licensing fees and charges. The consultation was held between **7th July and 4th August 2025**.
- 4.12 The Council published full details of the proposed fees and charges on the Council's website. The webpage included: a list of the proposed licensing fees, an explanation of the reasons for the changes, information about the consultation period and Instructions on how to submit representations

- 4.13 In addition to this, a Public Notice was displayed at the Customer Service Centre, Daneshill House, and published in the Comet newspaper on **10th July 2025**. An email notification was also circulated to all Stevenage-licensed taxi and private hire drivers, vehicle proprietors, and operators; and a taxi forum was held during the consultation period, where the Licensing team were available to discuss the proposals, answer queries and listen to any concerns raised by members of the trade.

Consultation Findings

- 4.14 A total of 41 responses were received during the public consultation, primarily from Stevenage-licensed drivers (85%), with additional input from operators (8%), vehicle licence holders (5%), and trade representatives (2%).

Demographic Profile:

68% of respondents identified as being from ethnic minority backgrounds, predominantly Asian-British, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi.

- 4.15 **Key Themes:**

- **Economic Hardship:**
Respondents referred to increasing fuel, insurance, and maintenance costs, loss of trade to app-based platforms (e.g., Uber), and unregulated competition from out-of-area drivers as major pressures on the trade.
- **Impact on Livelihoods:**
Many reported declining income, with proposed licensing fee increases considered unaffordable and likely to worsen financial strain.
- **Fairness and Equity:**
Concerns were raised over perceived inequities, with local licensees facing stricter regulation and higher costs than out-of-area drivers.
- **Suggestions:**
Respondents recommended scaling back proposed fee increases and phasing in changes gradually.

- 4.16 **Low Emission Vehicle Fee Proposal:**

Opinions were mixed: 43% supported a reduced licence fee for vehicles emitting less than 50g CO₂/km; 56% opposed.

- **Supporters** highlighted environmental benefits and incentives for cleaner vehicles.
- **Opponents** cited affordability issues, fairness concerns, and risk of cost burdens shifting to others.

- 4.17 **Taxpayer Funding of Licensing Service:**

Responses were divided:

- 26% agreed it is acceptable for taxpayers to subsidise the service.
- 13% disagreed.

- The remainder gave qualitative or neutral responses.

4.18 Common Themes:

- **Taxis as public transport:** Suggested eligibility for limited public support.
- **Fee concerns:** Resistance to sudden increases without service improvements.
- **Comparisons with other authorities:** Frustration over higher local fees.
- **Efficiency and innovation:** Calls for digital platforms and modernisation to reduce costs.
- **Balanced approach:** Preference for sustainable service funding with gradual adjustments.

4.19 Conclusion -

The consultation highlighted widespread concern about affordability, fairness, and efficiency. There is strong support for:

- Reviewing operational costs
- Exploring digital transformation
- Benchmarking fees regionally
- And adopting a phased approach to fee changes.

These findings will inform future decisions on the structure and funding of the taxi licensing service. Full responses are provided in **Appendix C**.

- 4.20 Following careful consideration of the feedback received during the consultation period, the following recommendations are submitted for members' approval:

Licence Fee Increase with phased implementation.

- 4.21 While there was a general acknowledgement of the need for a fee increase to ensure continued service provision and regulatory oversight, concerns were raised regarding the immediate financial impact on drivers and operators.
- 4.22 In response to these concerns, it is recommended that members approve the proposed fee increase with a phased implementation, whereby 50% of the proposed increase is applied in Year One (2026/27) with the full increase coming into effect in Year Two (2027/28) plus any normal inflation related increases.
- 4.23 This approach aims to balance the financial sustainability of licensing services with the economic realities faced by licence holders. However,

please note that a phased increase is not recommended for the fees pertaining to door signs, the English language test or the DBS check, since there are fixed costs associated with these which are passed onto the Council.

- 4.24 The proposed fee structure will help to generate £33k additional income which will contribute towards the cost recovery.

Risks associated with an increase in taxi and private hire licensing fees and charges.

- 4.25 Licensed drivers and Operators may experience financial strain as a result of increased fees, which could impact their ability to maintain the necessary licences. This may lead to a reduction in the number of licensed vehicles operating within the district, thereby limiting the availability of taxi and private hire services, particularly affecting those who rely on them most, such as the elderly and vulnerable. Furthermore, increased financial pressure could make it more difficult for drivers to afford essential vehicle maintenance, potentially resulting in public safety concerns.

Reduced Fees for Low and Zero Emission vehicles

- 4.26 Although Public responses on this matter were nearly evenly split, it is recommended that members support the advice of the Council's climate Action Team and approve a reduced fee structure to incentivise the use of environmentally sustainable vehicles, in line with local and national climate goals.
- 4.27 It is proposed that zero emission vehicles (e.g. fully electric vehicles) receive a 50% discount on the applicable licence fee, whilst Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs), defined as vehicles emitting 50g of CO₂/km or less, receive a 25% discount.
- 4.28 It is recommended that the above discounted licensing structure remains in place until the end of 2030, in alignment 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.
- 4.29 These proposals aim to balance environmental objectives with economic fairness and support a gradual, manageable transition for the licensed trade.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

All the Council Fees and Charges are set on the principle of recovering the full cost of delivering the service. As the charges have not been reviewed for the

last 15 years, phased implementation of increased charges will help to recover the full cost of the service over the two years (2026/27 and 2027/28).

- 5.1.2 The Council's published Medium Term Financial Strategy noted that the revisions would generate an additional £44k of income. Following further development and considering the phasing proposal the income uplift for 2026/27 will be £33k with a further £25k being secured in 2027/28 to cover the full cost
- 5.1.3 In the Council's Financial Security Group meeting on 4th September 2025, members have unanimously supported the new pricing structure and phased introduction over the two years

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Under Sections 53(2) and 70 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council has the power to demand and recover fees for the grant of licences to drive hackney carriages or private hire vehicles, as well as for the grant of vehicle and operator licences. These fees must be considered reasonable and are intended to enable the Council to recover the costs associated with the issue and administration of such licences. The legislation also provides discretion for the Council to remit the whole or part of the fee for a private hire vehicle where it considers it appropriate to do so.
- 5.2.2 However, the exercise of this power is subject to the procedural requirements set out in Section 70 of the Act. These procedures include requirements around public notice and consultation, which must be strictly followed to ensure that the process is lawful and to mitigate the risk of legal challenge.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out in August 2025, to assess and monitor the implications of the proposed changes. This has identified potential equalities and diversity considerations.

- 5.3.1 Many licensed taxi and private hire drivers come from ethnic minority backgrounds, and a significant proportion are self-employed individuals on relatively low incomes. This includes drivers who are semi-retired or working part-time, for whom increases in licensing fees may represent a more substantial financial burden.
- 5.3.2 As such, any increase in fees and charges may have a disproportionate socio-economic impact on these groups. The proposed changes could place additional pressure on individuals with limited earning capacity, potentially affecting their ability to remain in the trade. This may inadvertently affect workforce diversity within the sector, and careful consideration should be given to mitigating any adverse impacts where possible. A copy of the Equalities Impact Assessment can be found at **Appendix D**.

5.4 Community Safety Implications

- 5.4.1. The proposed increase in taxi and private hire licensing fees may place additional financial pressure on licensed drivers and operators. This could impact their ability to maintain the necessary licences, potentially leading to a

reduction in the number of licensed vehicles operating within the district. A decrease in the availability of licensed services may disproportionately affect those who rely on them most, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable members of the community, thereby limiting their access to safe and reliable transport.

- 5.4.2 Furthermore, increased financial strain may reduce drivers' capacity to invest in ongoing vehicle maintenance or safety improvements. This presents a potential risk to public safety, as poorly maintained vehicles may not meet the required safety standards. It is therefore essential that any changes to fees are carefully balanced to ensure that they support the sustainability of the licensing regime without unintentionally compromising public safety or access to essential transport services.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976](#)
- BD2 Consultation -Public Notice
- BD3 [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy \(V1\)](#)
- BD4 Briefing Paper including benchmarking exercise



Background Docs
-Item 6. Briefing Pap

APPENDICES

- A A copy of Taxi licensing fee review 2025
- B Car Emission Standards Review
- C Summary of Taxi Fees and Charges consultation Responses
- D EqlA – Taxi Licensing Fees

CONFIDENTIAL - TAXI LICENCES PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27

Service	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Original Proposed Fees & Charges	2026/27 Revised Proposed Fees & Charges (phased)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026/27 Proposed Increase (%)	Average number service utilised per year across last 2 years	Extra revenue generated (£) per full year
PH Operator licence applications							
1 year licence	£250	£275	£263	£13	5.00%	13	£163
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Vehicle Compliance test	Currently stated as £55. This service to be removed as it is already included and priced accordingly as part of 1 year licence.						
Voluntary change of vehicle/grant of licence for replacement vehicle	Currently stated as £230. This service to be removed as it is not provided.						
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Enhanced D.B.S. check	£69	£99	£99	£30	43.48%	123	£3,690
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Knowledge test (in-person to online and safeguarding & equality training to be provided)	£75	£173	£173	£98	130.67%	41	£0
	Once knowledge test is moved online, the test fee will be paid directly to the test provider, expected from January 2026.						
Miscellaneous - no increase in price as costs already covered							
Replacement paper licence	£10	£10	£10	£0	0.00%		£0
Replacement badge	£25	£25	£25	£0	0.00%		£0
Replacement plate	£50	£50	£50	£0	0.00%		£0
						Extra Revenue Total:	£33,314.50

Notes:

(1) 2026/27 Revised Proposed Fees & Charges are based on 50% of the Original Proposed Charges. Remaining 50% to be implemented in 2027/28 plus any CPI related increases, if applicable.

(2) Enhanced DBS check and English Language test increases are not phased implemented as based on fixed costs.

(3) Replacement licence, badge and plate charges remain the same as cost already covered.

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Responses Overview

Closed

Responses

41



Average Time

12:33



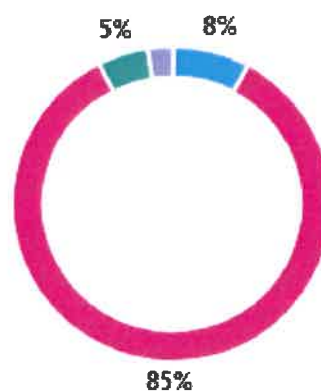
Duration

32 Days



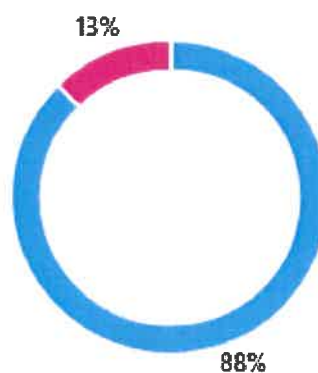
1. Which of the following describes your role in relation to the Taxi/Private Hire trade?

● Stevenage Licensed Operator	3
● Stevenage Licensed Driver	33
● Vehicle licence holder	2
● Trade representative	1
● Other	0

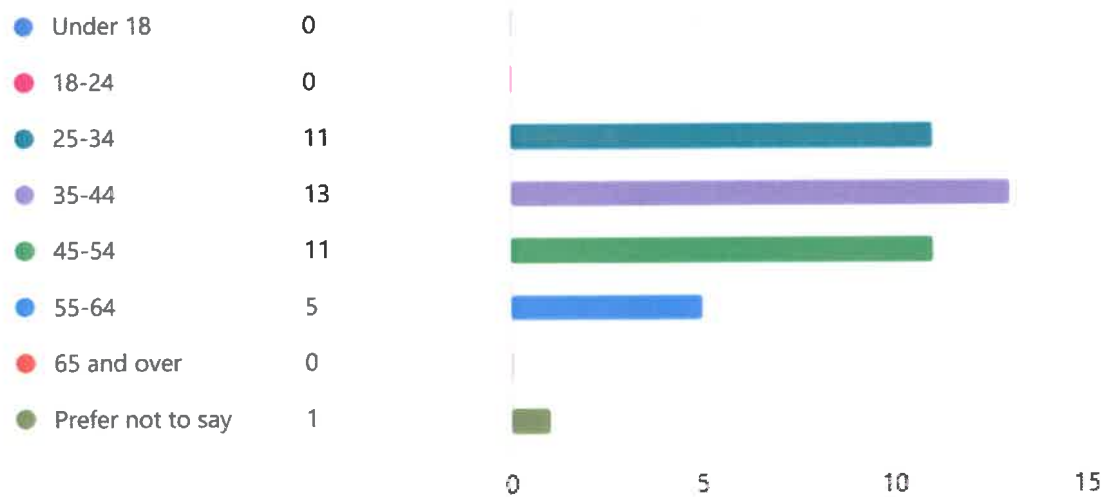


2. Are you responding to this consultation as an organisation or as an individual?

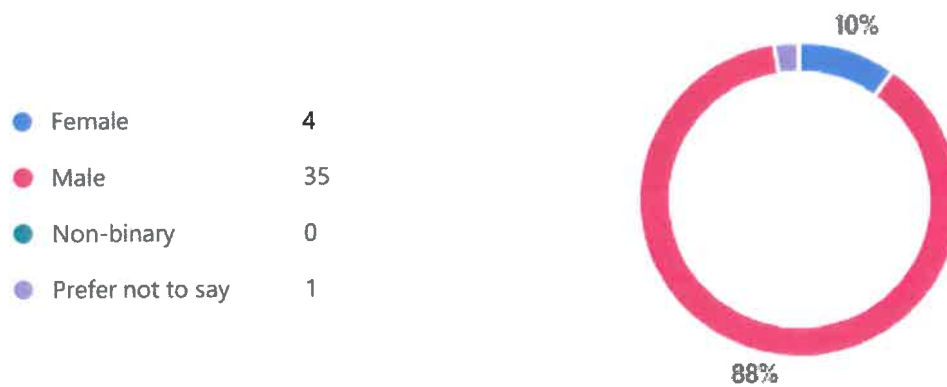
● As an Individual	35
● As an Organisation	5
● Other	0



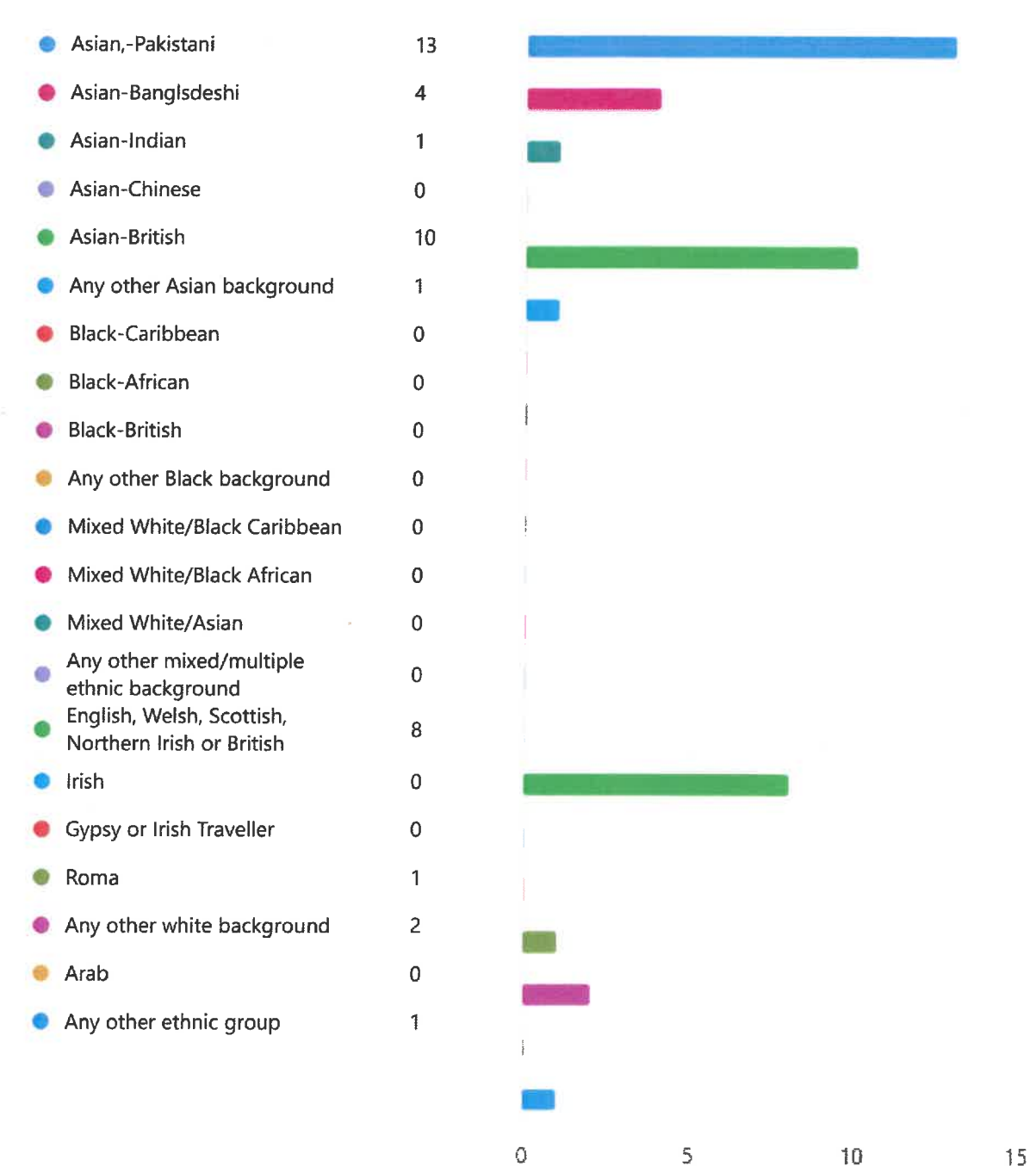
3. What age group do you belong to?



4. Please tell us which gender you most closely identify with?



5. How would you describe your ethnicity?

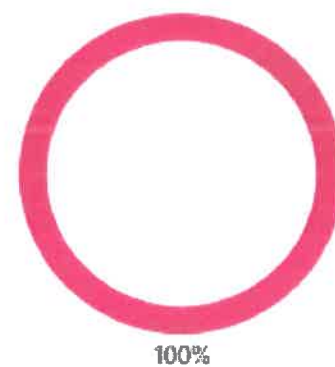


6. How did you find out about this survey?



7. Do you agree with or object to the new proposed fees?

Agree	0
Object	41



8. If you object to an increase in fees, please state your reasons for this below?

38

Responses

Latest Responses

"Because its too high I don't mind thirty forty percent incr... "

"I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the cu... "

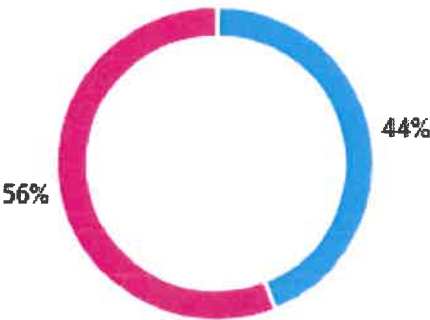
...

15 respondents (39%) answered UBER for this question.



9. Do you think there should be a reduced licence fee for vehicles with zero or low CO2 emissions (50g per km or lower)?

Yes	18
No	23



10. Please state the reason for your answer to question 9?

25
Responses

Latest Responses

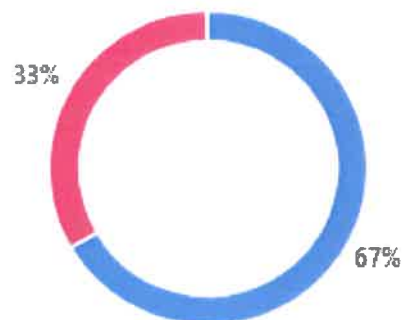
"Because cost to buy these cars is very expensive"
"This will encourage drivers to have environmental friendly..."
...

10 respondents (40%) answered vehicles for this question.



11. If taxi and private hire fees do not cover the cost of the taxi licensing service, these costs would need to be paid for by the taxpayer. Do you think this is acceptable?

● Yes 26
● No 13



12. Please state the reason for your answer to question 11?

28

Responses

Latest Responses

"My incom is already low and business is Slow already cou... "

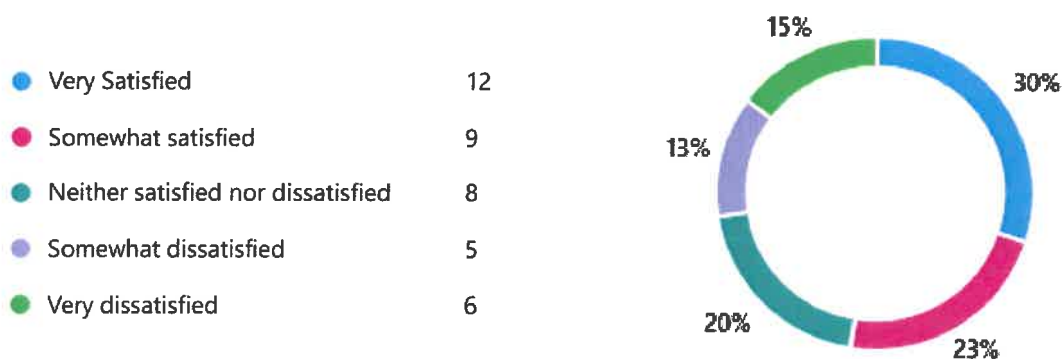
"I would like to share some thoughts on potential ways th... "

...

10 respondents (36%) answered Taxi for this question.



13. We aim to process all valid driver and vehicle licence applications within 15 working days of receiving all required documents. How satisfied are you with current processing times?





Taxi Licencing Fees

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

August 2025

Date created	August 2025
Approved by	Cabinet/SLT
Owner	Daud Latif - Commercial Business Partner
Version	1.0
Author	Rory Cosgrove
Business Unit and Team	Planning & Regulation (Environmental Health & Licensing)

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:	Taxi Licencing Fees	
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?	Yes	

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	No
Promote equal opportunities?	No
Encourage good relations?	No

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.

N/A

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the Review of Legal Service Charges.

Name of assessor: **Rory Cosgrove**

Decision approved by:

Role: **Head of Environmental Health & Licensing**

Role:

Date: 13/08/2025

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?		Taxi Licencing Fees			
Lead Assessor	Rory Cosgrove			Assessment team	Rory Cosgrove Julie Dwan Daud Latif
Start date	January 2026	End date	January 2027		
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		August 2026			

Page 93

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Taxi drivers, Taxi Businesses
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	To review the Council's current taxi licensing fees and charges with a view to increasing them in order to achieve full cost recovery based on the costs of providing the service. This will combat inflationary pressures and increased service costs by ensuring increased revenue generation from Taxi services thus assisting the Council with its financial security challenges.

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

Remove discrimination & harassment	N/A	Promote equal opportunities	N/A	Encourage good relations	Applicants will be informed of the fees in advance of application.
------------------------------------	-----	-----------------------------	-----	--------------------------	--

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Taxi fees were benchmarked against other local authorities and LGA guidance on local fee setting for regulators. Internal databases of fees currently charged to taxi drivers
---	---

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	Prices were benchmarked against other local authorities.
--	--

Evidence and Impact Assessment

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

Page 95

Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote			What do you still need to find out?		

equality and inclusion?		Include in actions (last page)	
-------------------------	--	--------------------------------	--

Gender Reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or Civil Partnership					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Pregnancy & Maternity					
-----------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Many licensed drivers are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Increases may disproportionately affect them financially.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Consider phasing increases i.e. only increase by 50% of the proposed fees in year one and then increase by the full amount in year two.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	N/A Impact not expected.				

you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sex					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	N/A Impact not expected.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Socio-economic ¹					
e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	X	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Drivers with lower incomes (often semi-retired) may be disproportionately affected by increased fees..				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Consider phasing increases i.e. only increase by 50% of the proposed fees in year one and then increase by the full amount in year two..		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A	

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	X	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information	As part of the review of taxi licensing fees and charges, there is a proposal to introduce a subsidised fee for zero or ultra-low emission vehicles. (Those with CO2				

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

you used to support this assessment			
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

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Rory Cosgrove & Julie Dwan - Commercial Businesses Partner	Residents?	Not consulted with
Voluntary & community sector?	Not consulted with	Partners?	Not consulted with
Other stakeholders?	Summary of Consultation Responses: A 28-day consultation was carried out with the Taxi and Private Hire trade regarding proposed changes to licensing fees. A total of responses were received, with the following breakdown of respondent types: • 84% from Stevenage-licensed drivers • 7% from Stevenage-licensed operators • 5% from vehicle licence holders • 2% from trade representatives Demographic Profile: • 68% of respondents identified as being from ethnic minority backgrounds. Key Findings: • 100% of respondents objected to the proposed fee increases.		

- There was a strong and consistent view across all respondent groups that the increases would have a **disproportionate and negative impact** on local drivers.

Main Themes Identified:

1. **Economic Hardship**
Respondents highlighted the cumulative financial pressures already facing the trade, including:
 - Increased fuel, insurance, and vehicle maintenance costs
 - Loss of business to app-based operators such as Uber
 - Unregulated competition from out-of-area drivers (e.g., licensed by Wolverhampton)
2. **Impact on Livelihoods**
Many described a **decline in work and earnings**, making it harder to sustain their livelihoods. The proposed fees were viewed as **excessive, unaffordable**, and likely to exacerbate existing financial strain.
3. **Equity and Fairness**
Concerns were raised around fairness, with local licensees subject to higher costs and tighter regulation, while others operate within the area with fewer restrictions.
4. **Suggestions for Consideration**
Respondents urged the Council to:
 - **Reconsider the scale of the proposed increases**, suggesting they be more **reasonable and proportionate**
 - **Phase in any increases gradually** rather than implement them all at once

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Page 102

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	Recommend to Cabinet that the taxi licensing fees and charges should be in the form of a phased increase i.e. only increase by 50% of the proposed fees in year one and then increase by the full amount in year two. This will help promote equality and inclusion for the aforementioned groups that could be negatively affected. It is also evidenced by the consultation responses, many of whom have alluded to this option being more favourable to them financially.
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Monitor council cost of providing the service to ensure Council costs are covered and the service is not subsidised thus assisting the Council with its financial security challenges.	Promote equal opportunities	Rory Cosgrove	August 2026	Monitor every year during the fees and charges process.

Approved by Assistant Director:

Date: 12.08.25

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

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Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: **##**

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change
Date 08 of October 2025



CLIMATE CHANGE – ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2025

KEY DECISION

Author Alex Robinson
Lead Officers Alex Robinson, Fabian Oyarzun, Veronica Chan
Contact Officer Alex Robinson

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy.
- 1.2 The report also highlights 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.
- 1.3 To note that while Stevenage continues to make progress towards the national net zero target, achieving this by 2030 will require ongoing legislative and financial support from central Government.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS – CABINET:

- 2.1 Welcomes the progress made in delivering the 2020 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy over the past year across the eight strategic areas. 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.

- 2.2 Endorses work to secure ongoing external funding, partnerships, and income-generating opportunities, particularly in terms of renewable energy generation, to support delivery of the 2030 net-zero target and build long-term resilience.
- 2.3 Delegates authority 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.

3 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Tackling climate change is a global issue. The hierarchy of impact and levels of responsibility for action used in this report is illustrated in the framework below.



Figure 1. The Council's Climate Action Approach: the 9 levels for Climate Change Strategy.

- 3.2 This report highlights the current global and UK position, with a primary focus on the actions taken over the previous year to deliver Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy¹ and action plan.
- 3.3 Climate action in Stevenage is cutting emissions while improving residents' lives by lowering energy bills, tackling fuel poverty, and making homes warmer and more comfortable. Cleaner air, healthier travel choices, enhanced green spaces, and greater resilience to extreme weather also contribute to better wellbeing and a more sustainable town.
- 3.4 In February 2024, the Council launched the Stevenage Action Plan Tracker² on the Kausal platform. This supports effective delivery of the Strategy and

¹ Available at: [Stevenage Climate Change Strategy](#)

² Available at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

Action Plan by capturing detailed progress on the 50+ priority actions linked to the Strategy and its priorities. The following sections provide further detail on these actions.

- 3.5 Appendix 1 provides a detailed update on Stevenage's Climate Change Strategy and action plan delivery.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

Level 1 – Global Climate Action

- 4.1 The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 (2015) enshrines the established, legally binding obligations, alongside mechanisms for finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, transparency, and a system of progressively stronger Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reviewed every five years. COP29 in Baku (2024), built on this including increasing climate finance from US\$100 billion to US\$300 billion pa by 2035 with an aspirational annual target up to US\$1.3 trillion via public and private sources.

Level 2 – UK National Climate Action

- 4.2 In acknowledging the need to accelerate both mitigation and adaptation climate change responses worldwide, as part of COP29 in 2024 the UK reaffirmed its existing 68% reduction target on GHG emissions by 2030 and pledged to an ambitious target to increase this to 81% by 2035. Nationally, the continuing downward trend is positive. Provisional figures for 2024 estimate a 4% decrease from 2023, which is 54% lower than in 1990 as shown in the figure below

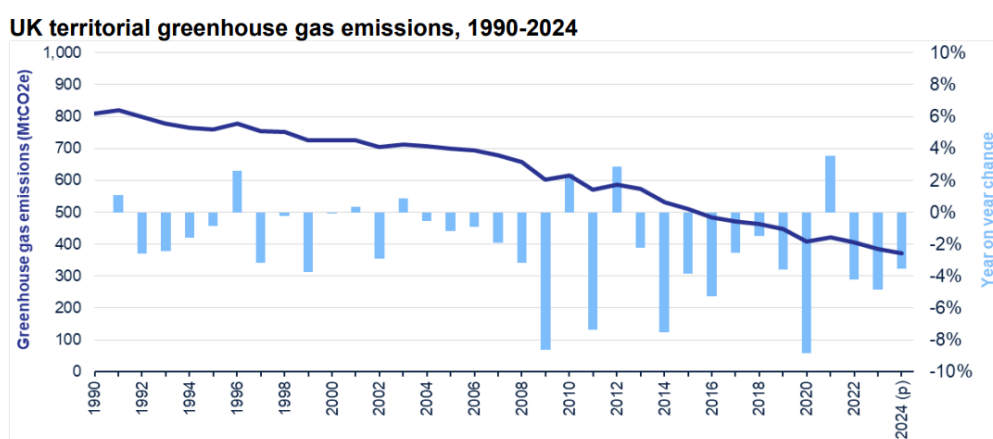


Figure 2. UK territorial GHG emissions, 1990-2024 (provisional figure for 2024).
Source: DESNZ, National Statistics.

- 4.3 The long-term decrease is largely due to a shift from coal to gas and renewables, energy efficiency, and a decline in energy-intensive industries. In 2023, emissions fell mainly due to lower gas and coal use in electricity generation and industry.

- 4.4 Since 2024, the Government has strengthened its climate agenda, reinstating the 2030 petrol and diesel car ban, scaling up heat pumps, and raising building standards. Great British Energy has been established to decarbonise the power grid and new green obligations have been set within the national planning system. The £6.6 billion Warm Homes Plan will retrofit five million homes, while the Local Power Plan will deliver 8 GW of community-led renewables. Its new approach aims at providing more stable funding for Local Authorities' long-term climate action.
- 4.5 While noting progress the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has cautioned that the UK is not yet on track for its net-zero target. Further action to scale low-carbon electricity in transport, heating and industry plus a significant increase in heat pump adoption and industrial electrification is required.

Level 3 – Large Businesses

- 4.6 Net zero targets now cover over 90% of global GDP, representing up to £1 trillion in UK market opportunities and 480,000 new jobs by 2030.
- 4.7 Stevenage hosts global leading companies in aerospace, biotech, technology and defence, such as GSK, Airbus, Fujitsu, MBDA, and the Bioscience Catalyst, driving innovation and advancing ambitious corporate net-zero targets. Details on the targets and progress by these firms are included in the **Appendix 1, “Level 3 – Large Businesses”**.
- 4.8 The Council continues to collaborate with these major employers to share best practice and accelerate local climate action.

Levels 4 & 5 – Regional and Countywide Climate Action

- 4.9 Collective work at countywide and regional levels is crucial in bringing together resources for the greatest impact, effectiveness, and efficiency. Local Government Re-Organisation (LGR) offers opportunities to further strengthen cross-boundary collaboration and partnerships on climate, including potential devolved powers and funding to support net-zero targets, resilience, and green growth. Such initiatives could play a vital role in aligning local and regional priorities and emerging governance structures.
- 4.10 The Council continues to actively participate in the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), contributing to joint programmes on carbon mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity, retrofit, including Solar Together, “Your Tree Our Future” planting initiative, LEVI EV-charging rollout, the recently adopted Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy, and a new carbon offsetting boilerplate. HCCSP is also working with the Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) to deliver the Sustainable County Mission.
- 4.11 The East of England Regional Climate Change Forum (RCCF) has also been supporting the Council through regional collaboration opportunities, including work on sustainable procurement practices.

Levels 6 – Stevenage Level

- 4.12 In 2023, Stevenage recorded its lowest historical GHG emissions (under the influence of LAs³) at 282.3 ktCO_{2e}, a 7.2% decrease from 2022 levels, and 22.6% lower than in the baseline year (2018). GHG emissions have consistently decreased across all sectors since 2005, with the residential sector as the main emitting sector, followed by transport. Stevenage's per capita emissions in 2023 were lower than county, regional, and national averages. The territorial GHG emissions trajectory for Stevenage is shown below.

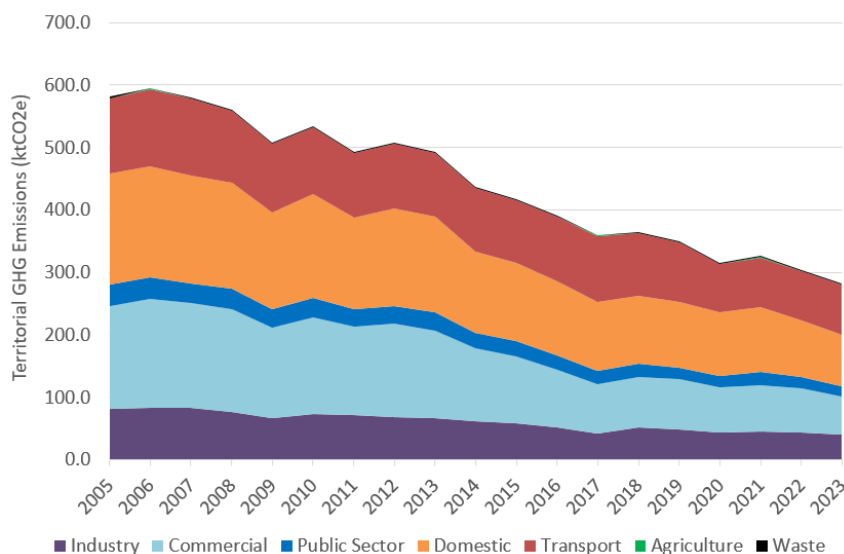


Figure 3. Stevenage territorial GHG emissions within the scope of influence of LAs, estimates 2005-2023 (ktCO_{2e}). Source: Based on DESNZ data.

- 4.13 The Council's own GHG emissions have fallen by c.61% from 2018 levels, following the switch to a zero-carbon electricity tariff and the transition of fleet fuel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). These figures are now being reviewed to ensure greater accuracy, with a proposed shift of the baseline year to 2021–22 and the development of a comprehensive GHG accounting strategy. A dedicated officer is leading this work to produce consistent, transparent, and verified accounts across GHG emissions.
- 4.14 The Council's new online tracker referenced above showcases over 50 actions across eight strategic themes, with headlines set out below:
- 4.15 **Businesses:** The Council supports local businesses, particularly micro businesses and SMEs on actions towards net-zero and since 2022 has funded 200 Gold Memberships for Wenta's Action Zero Programme⁴, providing tailored carbon reduction, action plans, monitoring and reporting for 147+ SMEs. In addition, the UKSPF-funded Sustainable Business Programme⁵ has provided workshops, 1:1 consultancy for Carbon Reduction

³ 5.3 Emissions within LA's scope of influence represent a subset of emissions over which councils have realistic control or influence, excluding sectors such as national-level industry and regional infrastructure. This subset provides a clearer picture of emissions the Council the Council can meaningfully impact

⁴ Further information at: [Action: BU1 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

⁵ Further information at: [Action: BU2 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

Plans (CRPs), guidance, and Meet-the-Buyer events to help businesses cut costs, adopt low-carbon technologies, and improve competitiveness. In 2024, the Council launched the Stevenage Green Business Grant, offering £70,000 to support SMEs and charities in reducing energy use, water consumption, waste, and emissions, with eight organisations funded. Alongside these initiatives, the Council is embedding sustainability in procurement⁶ through its updated Social Value TOMs framework and the new Council's Co-operative Procurement Strategy (2025-2028).

- 4.16 **Homes:** The Council is committed to achieving at least EPC Band C on all 8,000 Council homes by 2030⁷. Through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1, 240 of the least efficient homes are being retrofitted with a fabric-first approach, including insulation, new windows and doors, ventilation, solar panels, and energy-efficient lighting. In 2025, the Council secured £3.9m from Warm Homes Social Housing (WHSN) to upgrade 379 homes by 2029. Other schemes, including the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) and Energy Company Obligation (ECO4), have extended support to private households⁸. The Council also secured £1.5m through the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG) to retrofit 100 low-income private homes. Alongside retrofit works, the Council is also delivering new sustainable housing developments⁹, while the partial review of the Local Plan is strengthening policies for sustainable, low- and zero-carbon homes, energy efficiency, and climate resilience.
- 4.17 **Construction and Regeneration:** This sector is key to meeting climate goals and the Council's regeneration plans are rooted in delivering sustainable, climate-resilient buildings and spaces. The new all-electric Sports and Leisure Centre, due for completion in late 2027, will replace two of the Council's most energy-intensive facilities with an efficient, low-carbon building powered by solar panels, heat pumps, and smart energy systems. Other projects include the new low-carbon Public Services Hub and the relocation of the Indoor Market to an all-electric site at Boston House. The Local Plan is an important tool for the Council to lead climate action. When adopted, the updated Plan will boost existing climate policies and add new ones on energy efficiency, emissions targets, offsetting, overheating and cooling, water management, and green infrastructure.
- 4.18 **Waste and Recycling:** This sector has a major impact on climate change. The Council continues to work through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP) on campaigns and long-term strategies for waste reduction and recycling, including Recycle Your Cycle and the Herts Sustainable Families initiatives¹⁰. Since mid-2024, new waste treatment contracts have supported the 2030 zero-landfill target via mandatory use of EfW facilities, and the Council has also upgraded neighbourhood recycling banks. A key constraint on improving Stevenage's currently relatively low recycling rate of 38.1% is being proactively addressed via new solutions to introduce recycling facilities

⁶ Further information at: [Action: BU3 | Stevenage Climate Action Plan](#)

⁷ Further information at: [Action: HO1 | Decarbonisation of SBC Social Housing](#)

⁸ Further information at: [Action: HO5 | Decarbonisation of existing private domestic housing](#)

⁹ Further information at: [Action: HO3 | Development of new sustainable Social Housing](#)

¹⁰ Further information at: [Action: WR3 | Promote the reusing, repairing and avoidance of waste](#)

at 74 new difficult to access flat blocks (funded by £719k from EPR funding) and preparing the Council for the 2026 mandate requiring separate weekly residential food waste collection.

- 4.19 **People:** Stevenage can only achieve net-zero if everyone plays their part. In terms of organisational change, a Staff Climate Champions Group has been established to drive engagement, awareness, and behavioural change on themes such as commuting and recycling¹¹. In 2024/25, regular knowledge-sharing sessions and new sub-groups were launched, focusing on sustainable events¹² and greener workplaces. Staff engagement has also been strengthened through Carbon Literacy Training. In parallel, the Council updated its Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), which now identifies 46 risks across five sectors and two climate scenarios, embedding adaptation and resilience into service planning¹³. Looking ahead, a 5-year Climate Adaptation Plan is being developed to prepare the Council for future climate impacts.
- 4.20 **Biodiversity:** Biodiversity loss is a key issue, and the Council is committed to protecting and enhancing natural spaces, including a commitment to planting over 4,000 trees by 2030¹⁴, currently being supported by annual plantation of around 100 individual mature trees, the “Your Tree, Our Future” scheme, and the new highly successful Miyawaki micro-woods. A 2024 i-Tree Canopy assessment found Stevenage’s overall canopy cover to be healthy at 22%, though uneven across wards. The Council is also reviewing its tree replacement policies for new developments¹⁵ and has recently adopted a Trees & Woodland Strategy¹⁶, a Green Spaces Strategy¹⁷, a Biodiversity Action Plan¹⁸, long-term management frameworks supporting biodiversity enhancement. The Council is looking at innovative ways of speeding up the delivery of projects included in these strategies. This could include utilising currently unallocated monies collected from developers. Furthermore, the Council is also delivering and monitoring Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)¹⁹ works. Many of these initiatives are supported by the valuable contributions of Green Space Volunteers.
- 4.21 **Transport:** Transport is one of Stevenage’s largest sources of GHG emissions, and the Council aims to decarbonise its fleet by 2030. In October 2024, the entire diesel fleet switched to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), cutting net emissions by 84%²⁰, while new electric vans are being procured as part of the fleet replacement schedule. Active travel is also being promoted through the Cycle Hire Scheme with Beryl Bikes, launched in 2024, comprising 45 bays and 150 e-bikes, alongside dedicated staff

¹¹ Further information at: [Action: PA9 | Establish an internal Staff Climate Champions Group](#)

¹² Further information at: [Action: PA5 | Promote event sustainability across the town](#)

¹³ Further information at: [Action: PA3 | Develop a Council's Climate Change Risk Assessment and Action Plan](#)

¹⁴ Further information at: [Action: BI3 | Plant 4,000 trees in Stevenage by 2030](#)

¹⁵ Further information at: [Action: BI2 | Implement and update tree replacement policies and strategies](#)

¹⁶ Further information at: [Action: BI10 | Develop and implement a Tree & Woodland Strategy](#)

¹⁷ Further information at: [Action: BI9 | Develop and implement a Green Spaces Strategy](#)

¹⁸ Further information at: [Action: BI4 | Update, deliver, and monitor the Biodiversity Action Plan \(BAP\)](#)

¹⁹ Further information at: [Action: BI8 | Implement and monitor Biodiversity Net Gain \(BNG\)](#)

²⁰ Further information at: [Action: TR1 | Decarbonising the Council's fleet and fuel](#)

incentives/benefits²¹. A new induction pack to encourage sustainable commuting²² and business travel²³ is being prepared. Infrastructure upgrades include new cycle hangars and additional EV charging points funded through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) scheme²⁴. The Council has also introduced a new taxi licensing policy with reduced fees for low-emission vehicles²⁵, supporting the wider transition to cleaner transport.

- 4.22 **Energy and Water:** This sector produces over two-thirds of global emissions, and while the UK aims to decarbonise its power system by 2035, natural gas for heating remains Stevenage's biggest challenge. Since 2022, the Council has procured all corporate electricity under a zero-carbon tariff²⁶ and continues to monitor usage across 27 sites through Grid Edge digital meters. Energy upgrades have been delivered across leisure facilities under the Everyone Active contract, the pool cover at the Swimming Centre, LED replacements at the Town Centre Clocktower, and lighting upgrades at St George's and Westgate MSCPs, plus Daneshill House²⁷. However, cutting gas use will require significant investment, and the withdrawal of PSDS and LCSF funding in 2025/26 risks slowing progress unless new mechanisms are secured. Water is also critical in one of the UK's driest regions: the Council has appointed Telex Water to improve monitoring, leakage detection, and data quality, while the Local Plan review reinforces water efficiency and management policies.

Level 7-9 – Local Engagement

- 4.23 Local community engagement remained a key focus in 2024/25. Initiatives included an updated Climate Change Communications and Marketing Plan, a dedicated Climate Action Plan tracker portal for resident feedback and educational stalls/giveaways at local events. The Council also provided additional educational online resources, such as an Environmental Days Calendar and a Sustainability Newsletter for Schools and Colleges²⁸.
- 4.24 Neighbourhood and street-level work continued via the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)²⁹, now in its third year, with nine new projects awarded £37,654 across the town in 2024/25, including a community garden, recycling improvements, and energy-efficiency upgrades at local facilities. Three earlier projects were also completed, including orchard and tree planting and garden improvements. The fund, worth £7,500pa per ward, continues to empower schools, charities, residents, and community groups to deliver local green projects that enhance biodiversity, cut waste, and support

²¹ Further information at: [Action: TR3 | Implement a borough-wide cycle hire scheme](#)

²² Further information at: [Action: TR2 | Incentives for Council's staff sustainable commuting](#)

²³ Further information at: [Action: TR12 | Decarbonise SBC's business travel & grey fleet](#)

²⁴ Further information at: [Action: TR5 | Deployment of public Electric Charging Infrastructure across Stevenage](#)

²⁵ Further information at: [Action: TR6 | Create and implement a low and zero emissions taxi strategy](#)

²⁶ Further information at: [Action: EW5 | Zero carbon tariff for SBC electricity corporate contract](#)

²⁷ Further information at: [Action: EW4 | Decarbonise energy supply at Council's sites and buildings](#)

²⁸ Further information at: [Action: PA1 | Implement Climate Emergency education for residents & visitors](#)

²⁹ Further information at: [Action: PA4 | Develop and implement a Climate Change Community Fund \(CCCF\)](#)

climate resilience, highlighting the value of local action and partnerships in building a more sustainable Stevenage.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council has secured external funding from UK Government sources, Section 106 agreements, CIL, and UKSPF to support pilots, home retrofits, transport upgrades, and energy projects. Local CIL may also fund climate measures like tree planting and lighting improvements.
- 5.2 Significant Government funding has been secured for retrofitting social housing: £2.62m from SHDF Wave 2.1, with £3.97m match from the HRA, and £3.85m from WHSH (Wave 3), with £3.15m Council co-funding - supporting energy upgrades to over 600 homes.
- 5.3 To support fleet decarbonisation, the Council is funding the use of HVO across its fleet, at an extra annual cost of c.£132,000. It has also incorporated six EVs, acquired at an estimated total cost of around £144,700.
- 5.4 The Council is also covering the premium for EDF's Zero Carbon Tariff for Businesses, ensuring carbon-free electricity across its estate, at an estimated cost of c.£18,000 pa, based on the current premium of £3/MWh.
- 5.5 Beyond UKSPF programmes, the Council has supported SME climate action, funding 200 Wenta Gold Memberships (c. £20,000) and launching the Stevenage Green Business Grant (£70,000).
- 5.6 Recycling improvements include eight upgraded bring-bank sites using UKSPF and CCCF grants (c. £25,900). Phase 1 of the flat-block recycling pilot covered six sites, at a cost of c. £12,800. Phase 2, funded by £719,000 from EPR, expanded facilities to 74 blocks. Simpler Recycling rollout is backed by £199,000 for weekly food waste collections, plus £52,000 for project management.
- 5.7 The Council has secured c. £200,000 in BNG contributions from planning applications, with a further c. £2.45m expected from west of Stevenage development. These funds are being used to deliver and monitor biodiversity enhancement projects.
- 5.8 The Council allocates £97,500 per year through the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF), supporting ward-level sustainability projects led by community organisations.
- 5.9 However, the end of PSDS and LCSF from 2025/26 presents a major financial risk for its estate decarbonisation strategy. Without new funding, decarbonising gas use will require investment beyond current budgets. Alternative sources must be explored, including new Government schemes, countywide strategies, and public-private partnerships.
- 5.10 Climate action offers income opportunities, such as leasing assets for solar PV, hosting community energy schemes, and joint ventures via the Local Power Plan. These could generate revenue through PPAs, reduce energy

costs, and improve resilience, helping offset reduced income from traditional sources and support the transition to net zero. Additional options include EV charging, energy-as-a-service, and BNG contributions.

- 5.11 Achieving net zero by 2030 will require strong business cases. If Government support falls short, existing projects may need reprioritisation to manage financial pressures.

Legal Implications

- 5.12 There are no direct legal implications associated with updating or delivering the Climate Change Strategy, however it is likely the UK Government will begin introducing stricter targets with legal implications for those Councils that are not meeting GHG reductions.

Risk Implications

- 5.13 The biggest risk is failing to secure enough external funding and support, especially with schemes like PSDS and LCSF ending—widening the financial gap and straining Council resources.
- 5.14 Delivery is challenged by internal capacity limits, supply chain issues, and reliance on external partners—potentially delaying progress and raising costs.
- 5.15 Missing the 2030 net-zero target could damage the Council's reputation amid growing public scrutiny and national benchmarking. National policy shifts or delays may disrupt local plans, while stricter regulations could increase compliance burdens and expenses.

Policy Implications

- 5.16 The annual update on Climate Change supports the Council's own Climate Change Strategy and wider corporate ambitions for a low carbon future across the town.
- 5.17 The actions outlined are consistent with wider corporate priorities, including the Medium-Term Financial Plan, Housing and Regeneration strategies, the Local Plan (currently under partial review), and the Co-operative Procurement Strategy.
- 5.18 At the county level, the report aligns with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) priorities and the Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy, ensuring local delivery contributes to regional objectives.
- 5.19 Nationally, the report supports Government strategies such as the Warm Homes Plan, the Local Power Plan, and the UK's commitment to carbon budgets under the Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended).

Climate Change Implications

- 5.20 This report highlights the risks, challenges, and opportunities that the Council must address, not only GHG emissions but its wider climate action aspirations. Actions outlined contribute directly to reducing GHG emissions across housing, transport, procurement, energy, and biodiversity.

- 5.21 The proposals also support climate adaptation and resilience. Workstreams such as the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) strengthen the town's ability to cope with flooding, heatwaves, and other extreme weather impacts.
- 5.22 Failure to progress climate action would increase local vulnerability to climate risks, undermine national and countywide net-zero objectives, and expose the Council to higher long-term costs.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.23 Climate change affects those in most need both in the UK and around the world. Those in deprivation, hunger or unwell are both most affected by climate change and least able to address it. Therefore, the Council is duty bound as one of those in the world that are more able to act, to act now.

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APPENDIX 1

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CLIMATE CHANGE ANNUAL
UPDATE 2025**



OCTOBER 2025

APPENDIX 1

DETAILED CLIMATE CHANGE ANNUAL UPDATE 2025

1 LEVEL 1: GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

- 1.1 The Paris Agreement, adopted by 196 countries at COP21 (2015), remains the cornerstone of global climate action. It legally commits signatories to limit global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to cap it at 1.5°C. Achieving the 1.5°C target requires a 43% reduction in global emissions by 2030 (relative to 2019)¹.
- 1.2 The Agreement has catalysed substantial global mechanisms, including climate finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, and transparency frameworks.
- 1.3 It also established a ratchet mechanism, requiring progressively more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)² for signatories on five-year cycles.
- 1.4 At COP29 (Baku, Azerbaijan, 2024), parties agreed to triple climate finance, raising the annual target from US\$100 billion to US\$300 billion by 2035 to support developing countries' mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts³. An aspirational goal of mobilising up to US\$1.3 trillion annually from public and private sources by 2035 was also set⁴.
- 1.5 Also at COP29, the UK Prime Minister announced a new national target to cut all GHG emissions by at least 81% by 2035 (relative to 1990), excluding international aviation and shipping. This represents an upgrade from the previous pledge of a 68% cut by 2030⁵.

2 LEVEL 2: UK NATIONAL CLIMATE ACTION

- 2.1 The UK has committed to reducing GHG emissions by at least 68% by 2030 and strengthened its ambition with an 81% reduction target by 2035 (both relative to 1990 levels), one of the most ambitious among major economies. The UK also maintains its net-zero target by 2050⁶.

¹ Further information at: [The Paris Agreement \(UNFCCC\)](#)

² Further information at: [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#)

³ Further information at: [COP29 Agrees to Triple Finance to Developing Countries](#)

⁴ Further information at: [COP29 Key outcomes \(Climate Change Committee\)](#)

⁵ Further information at: [UK shows international leadership in tackling climate crisis \(GOV.UK\)](#)

⁶ As outlined in its Net Zero Strategy, available at: [UK Net Zero Strategy](#)

- 2.2 Provisional figures for UK territorial GHG emissions up to 2024⁷ estimate national net territorial GHG emissions at 371 MtCO_{2e}. This is 4% below 2023 levels and 54% lower than in 1990.
- 2.3 The long-term trend in UK territorial GHG emissions from 1990 to 2024 is shown in Figure 1.

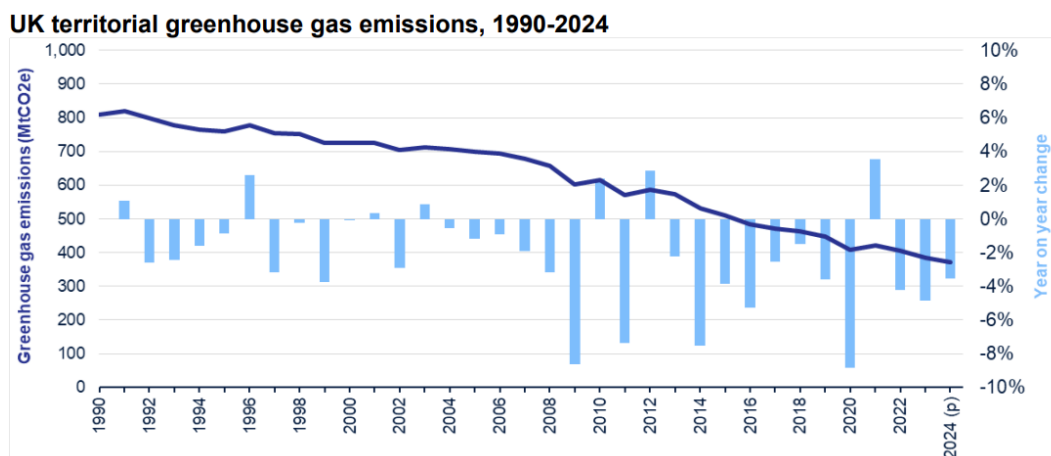


Figure 1. UK territorial GHG emissions, 1990-2024 (provisional figure for 2024).
Source: DESNZ, National Statistics.

- 2.4 The long-term emissions decline has been driven primarily by the shift from coal to gas and renewables for electricity generation, improved energy efficiency, and the contraction of energy-intensive industries.
- 2.5 In 2024, emissions fell mainly due to lower gas and coal use in electricity generation and industry.
- 2.6 Electricity supply emissions dropped by 6 MtCO_{2e} (15%) in 2024, due to record-high electricity imports, increased renewable generation, and the closure of the UK's last coal-fired power station in September 2024⁸. Industry emissions fell by 9% (5 MtCO_{2e}) due to blast furnace closures in the iron and steel sector and reduced coal use.
- 2.7 In contrast, emissions from buildings and product uses rose by 1 MtCO_{2e} (2%), likely due to higher residential gas consumption as energy and cost pressures eased.
- 2.8 Domestic transport remained the UK's largest emitting sector in 2024, accounting for 30% of total GHG emissions. Its emissions fell by 2 MtCO_{2e} (2%) from 2023 (12% below 2019), mainly due to reduced diesel consumption in road transport.
- 2.9 Net UK territorial GHG emissions by sector in 2024 are shown in Figure 2.

⁷ Further information at: [2024 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions \(Provisional Figures\)](#).

⁸ Further information at: [UK to close last coal power station after 142 years \(BBC News\)](#)

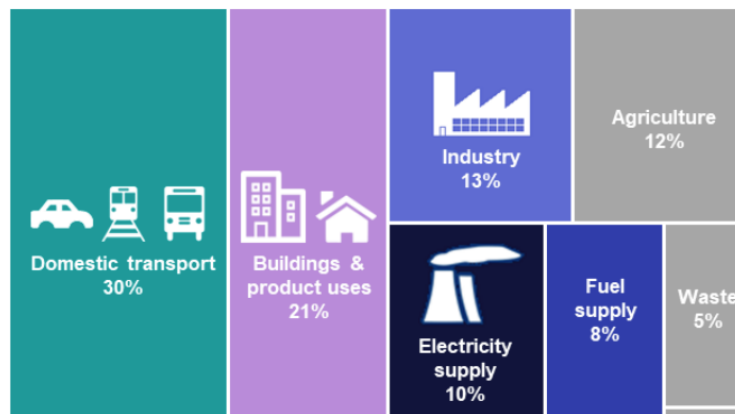


Figure 2. UK net territorial GHG emissions by sector, 2024 (provisional figures).

Source: DESNZ, National Statistics

- 2.10 Continued monitoring is essential to ensure emissions reductions are sustainable and equitable, without worsening energy poverty or limiting access to employment and quality housing.
- 2.11 Rising energy prices could suppress short-term energy demand and drive behavioural and production shifts in the medium term. This underscores the urgency of government measures to expand insulation, retrofitting, energy efficiency, and the transition to low-carbon energy.
- 2.12 Although emissions fell in 2024, the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) 2025 Progress Report⁹ warns the UK remains off track for net-zero. Achieving 2030 and 2050 targets is still feasible with urgent action, particularly scaling up low-carbon electricity in transport, heating, and industry, alongside nature-based solutions. While 61% of the 2030 target is underpinned by credible plans, major gaps remain in heat pump deployment and industrial electrification. These require rapid delivery of the Warm Homes Plan¹⁰ and Industrial Strategy¹¹. Making electricity cheaper by removing legacy policy costs remains the top priority to speed electrification and cut bills.
- 2.13 Following its 2024 election, the UK Government committed to an accelerated climate agenda, reversing regulatory delays introduced by the previous administration. This includes reinstating the 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel cars¹², accelerating heat pump adoption, and restoring higher energy efficiency standards for properties.
- 2.14 Core priorities¹³ have included establishing Great British Energy (GBE)¹⁴, decarbonising the power grid¹⁵, upgrading planning to fast-track low-carbon

⁹ Further information at: [CCC - 2025 Report to Parliament](#)

¹⁰ Further information at: [Help to save households money and deliver cleaner heat to homes](#)

¹¹ Further information at: [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025](#)

¹² Further information at: [Phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 and support for zero emission vehicle \(ZEV\) transition](#)

¹³ Further information at: [Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower](#)

¹⁴ Great British Energy was formally established by the Great British Energy Act 2025, creating a publicly owned company with independence, tasked with investing in and operating clean energy infrastructure across the UK. Further information at: [Great British Energy](#).

¹⁵ The de facto ban on onshore wind in the UK was scrapped in 2024, by eliminating two restrictive footnotes in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

infrastructure, scaling up energy efficiency measures, and supporting green growth.

- 2.15 The Warm Homes Plan will invest £6.6 billion over the current parliament to upgrade 5 million homes, tackling fuel poverty and reducing emissions.
- 2.16 Another key policy, the Local Power Plan (LPP), seeks to decentralise clean energy by partnering GBE with energy companies, local authorities (LAs), and communities to deliver 8 GW of new small- and medium-scale renewable projects. It provides funding and support to LAs and community energy groups for project development.
- 2.17 Overall, to enable local delivery, the Government has committed to award LAs with multi-year funding and end competitive bidding, ensuring stable, predictable support for long-term climate action.

3 LEVEL 3: LARGE BUSINESSES

- 3.1 Powering Up Britain: Net Zero Growth Plan¹⁶ (2023) positions net-zero as a defining economic driver of the 21st century, with over 90% of global GDP covered by net-zero targets. For the UK, this represents £1 trillion in market opportunities and 480,000 new jobs by 2030.
- 3.2 Building on this, the UK Government's Modern Industrial Strategy¹⁷ (2025) identifies eight high-growth sectors, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and batteries technologies, and commits to doubling low-carbon investment by 2035. It also introduces measures to lower electricity costs for energy-intensive industries to maintain competitiveness during the net-zero transition.
- 3.3 UK large enterprises are increasingly aligning with net-zero goals by investing in renewables, energy efficiency, and circular economy, while embedding sustainability in supply chains. Regulations, such as mandatory carbon reporting and carbon-reduction plans in public procurement, are reinforcing these efforts. Despite wider economic pressures, major firms remain committed to net-zero¹⁸.
- 3.4 Stevenage hosts several global corporations at the forefront of sustainability and net-zero innovation, particularly in aerospace, biotechnology, digital technology, and defence. Located in the UK's "Golden Triangle" of high-growth innovation, companies such as GSK, Airbus, Fujitsu, MBDA, and the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst are advancing R&D and investing in climate action.
- 3.5 GSK targets net-zero emissions across its full value chain by 2045, with interim goals of an 80% reduction (from a 2020 baseline) and 100%

¹⁶ Available at: [Powering Up Britain: Net Zero Growth Plan](#)

¹⁷ Available at: [UK Government - Modern Industrial Strategy 2025](#)

¹⁸ Further information at: [BSI Group - Businesses committed to net zero but progress slows](#)

renewable electricity use by 2030¹⁹. Its Sustainable Procurement Programme²⁰ also encourages suppliers to align with 1.5°C targets.

- 3.6 MBDA has invested in energy-efficient infrastructure, contributes to industry-wide decarbonisation in manufacturing and logistics, and supporting local STEM²¹ and sustainability education²².
- 3.7 Airbus's Stevenage site, a hub for satellite production, focuses on low-emission manufacturing and space-based climate monitoring technologies. It has pledged net-zero operational emissions by 2030²³.
- 3.8 Fujitsu has committed to net-zero across its global operations by 2040. Its UK sites, including Stevenage, lead on green IT solutions, energy-efficient data centres, and employee-driven sustainability programmes²⁴. Local initiatives include renewable energy, tree planting, composting, and biodiversity projects.
- 3.9 Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst promotes sustainable biotech innovation through high-efficiency buildings, green technologies, biodiversity measures, and low-carbon transport²⁵.
- 3.10 The Council continues to collaborate with these major employers and institutions to share best practice and accelerate GHG reductions.

4 LEVELS 4 & 5: REGIONAL (EELGA-RCCF) / COUNTYWIDE (HCCSP)

- 4.1 A key aspect of the Council's climate action is collaboration with local government partners to attract investment, build strong business cases, and jointly reduce emissions while advancing sustainability. This approach maximises the impact of shared resources.
- 4.2 As local authorities develop proposals for reorganisation there is a need for strong cross-boundary collaboration on climate and sustainability. These reforms present both opportunities and challenges for climate governance, including the potential for devolved powers and funding to support net zero ambitions, resilience, and green economic growth. In this evolving landscape, strategic partnerships could play a vital role in aligning local action with regional priorities and emerging governance structures.
- 4.3 Alignment across local, county, and regional initiatives is essential to ensure climate action is both effective and efficient.

¹⁹ Further information at: [Climate - GSK](#)

²⁰ Further information at: [GSK launches Sustainable Procurement Programme for suppliers](#)

²¹ STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

²² Further information at: [MBDA Systems Sustainability Report 2024](#).

²³ Further information at: [Airbus in the United Kingdom](#)

²⁴ Further information at: [Fujitsu's Sustainability, ESG Initiatives & Reports](#)

²⁵ Further information at: [Sustainability - Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst](#)

Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)

- 4.4 Launched in January 2020, HCCSP²⁶ is a member-led partnership delivering joint climate and sustainability initiatives across Hertfordshire. Members include all 10 districts, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), and Hertfordshire Futures²⁷ (the former LEP²⁸).
- 4.5 The Council has actively participated in HCCSP, supporting its priorities, particularly on carbon reduction, adaptation, biodiversity and retrofit, focusing strategic work at county level to maximise impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- 4.6 Key initiatives undertaken via HCCSP include:
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)²⁹ – A county-wide framework led by the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership³⁰, supported by HCCSP through shared communications and coordinated officer feedback to shape evidence-based priorities.
 - Solar Together³¹ – A group-buying scheme for domestic PV panels and batteries. According to the Round 3 End of Project Report (September 2024), 46 Stevenage residents had accepted PV offers, and 2 accepted battery offers. In the installation phase, 30 installations delivered 333 solar panels (130 kW capacity), £286,959 investment, and 21.8 tCO_{2e} annual savings, plus 28 batteries (200 kWh). Round 4 launched in January 2025 and closed in June. According to the 2025 End of Decision Phase Report, 143 interested registrations were received in Stevenage (138 for PV, 5 for batteries) from homeowners and businesses. Of these, 24 accepted their offers for installation later in 2025.
 - Your Tree, Our Future³² – A scheme enabling thousands of trees to be distributed to residents for planting. In 2024, Stevenage residents planted 5,831 trees, exceeding the original 3,169 allocation thanks to reallocation of unclaimed trees from other districts. For the upcoming 2025 distribution, 4,525 trees have already been claimed by Stevenage residents for planting in December.
 - LEVI³³ Funding - In September 2023, HCC secured funding to expand EV charging across the county. Under a collaboration agreement with HCC, the Council is supporting this deployment across the town. The Council identified up to 50 potential sites across the borough based on layout, land ownership, and grid capacity. The Charge Point Operator (CPO) contract is currently out to tender, with the Council assisting in bid

²⁶ Further information at: [Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#)

²⁷ Further information at: [Hertfordshire Futures](#)

²⁸ Local Enterprise Partnership

²⁹ Further information at: [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

³⁰ Further information at: [Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership \(HCC\)](#)

³¹ Further information at: [Group-Buying for Solar - Solar Together](#)

³² Further information at: [Your Tree, Our Future](#)

³³ Low Emission Vehicle Infrastructure – further information at: [Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding](#).

evaluation, and appointment expected by September 2025 via a concession contract³⁴.

- Carbon Offsetting and Insetting Boilerplate – Adopted in July 2025 and developed with input from HCCSP partners and the University of Hertfordshire, it provides guidance for LAs on offsetting their own emissions. While not intended for development proposals, it may also inform future planning policy. Key principles include:
 - Prioritise mitigation over offsetting.
 - Favour local projects.
 - Strategic use to maximise mitigation and create revenues and investments opportunities.
 - Co-benefits delivery (social, economic, environmental).
 - Additionality³⁵, long-term storage, and leakage prevention.
 - Avoidance of double-counting.
 - Robust verification, governance, and management.
 - Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy³⁶ – In July 2025, the Council endorsed this strategy, developed through the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) led by HCCSP. While there were no direct financial implications at that stage, future delivery phases may require identifying and securing funding. Designed as a three-year, evidence-based roadmap, the Strategy seeks to accelerate domestic retrofit by fostering cross-sector collaboration, strengthening supply chains, ensuring equitable access, and coordinating delivery. Its vision is supported by key goals: increasing uptake and demand for retrofit measures; maximising social, economic, and environmental co-benefits; boosting local supply chain capacity and quality; and establishing a trusted delivery model and governance. To move from strategy to implementation, the following steps have been recommended:
 - Establish a governance and delivery structure.
 - Develop a financial roadmap aligning funding with priorities.
 - Launch targeted pilot projects to test delivery models and scale successful approaches.
 - Continue cross-sector stakeholder coordination.
- 4.7 Through HCCSP, the Council has also delivered training and capacity-building for councillors and officers on sustainability, adaptation, political awareness, and planning.
- 4.8 Finally, HCCSP has helped members navigate a complex policy landscape while fostering networking, joint funding, officer development, and best-practice exchange.

³⁴ A contract where the operator also owns the equipment.

³⁵ Showing that the GHG reductions from the offset activity would not have happened without the funding provided

³⁶ Further information at: [Cabinet Report - Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy](#) and [Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy Appendix](#). Final version of the strategy, as adopted by HCCSP, available at: [Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy 2025 to 2028](#).

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB): Sustainable County Mission

- 4.9 The Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB)³⁷ is a collaborative initiative driving sustainable growth across the county, enhancing the economy, infrastructure, and quality of life.
- 4.10 Its Sustainable County Mission³⁸ aims to transform Hertfordshire into a prosperous low-carbon economy with a thriving natural environment, maximising the benefits of sustainable growth while meeting net-zero by 2050.
- 4.11 HCCSP has been identified as the key partner for this mission, ensuring climate change and sustainable growth are addressed jointly and effectively.
- 4.12 In July 2024, HCCSP presented its plan for the mission, highlighting shared priorities, resource gaps, and opportunities for joint action. HGB endorsed the approach and appointed HCCSP as lead on carbon reduction, climate adaptation, and behavioural change.
- 4.13 In its May 2025 Annual Progress Report³⁹, HGB highlighted key achievements in this regard, including Hertfordshire selected as a pilot area for the LARA project, stakeholder engagement on a Strategic Action Plan for Adaptation, a county-wide energy baseline and map (via Herts Insight⁴⁰), and drafting of the LNRS.

East of England Regional Climate Change Forum (RCCF)

- 4.14 The Council and HCCSP also contribute to the Regional Climate Change Forum (RCCF)⁴¹, led by the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA). RCCF brings together eight climate partnerships across the region, covering over 50 local authorities.
- 4.15 The RCCF action plan is structured around eight priorities as shown in Figure 3.
- 4.16 Hertfordshire leads the adaptation workstream (Priority 5) and collaborates with Suffolk and Cambridgeshire on Priority 7. In addition, under Priority 6, The Council contributed to the Sustainable Procurement Sub-Group 2024/25, supporting peer collaboration on climate-focused procurement.
- 4.17 EELGA-RCCF also organises the East of England Net Zero and Climate Resilience Conference, a key annual event advancing the region's climate agenda. The 2025 conference⁴², held on 16 July in Chelmsford, was

³⁷ Further information at: [Hertfordshire Growth Board](#)

³⁸ Further information at: [HGB - Vision and Missions](#) under the section "Sustainable County".

³⁹ Available at: [Annual HGB Progress Report 2024/25](#)

⁴⁰ Available at: [Herts Insight](#)

⁴¹ Further information at: [East of England Climate Change Forum \(RCCF\)](#)

⁴² Further information at: [East of England Net Zero and Climate Change Conference](#)

attended by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change, members and officers.



Figure 3. RCCF Action Plan: Eight Priorities.

5 LEVEL 6: STEVENAGE LEVEL

- 5.1 Central government data for Stevenage's 2023 territorial emissions⁴³ has been released⁴⁴. These figures, based on detailed energy and resource use, are typically published with a two-year lag at borough level. Data for 2024 will be available in the next 8-9 months.
- 5.2 The latest DESNZ update (3 July 2025) shows the trajectory of the territorial GHG emissions within the scope of influence of the local authority (see Figure 4).

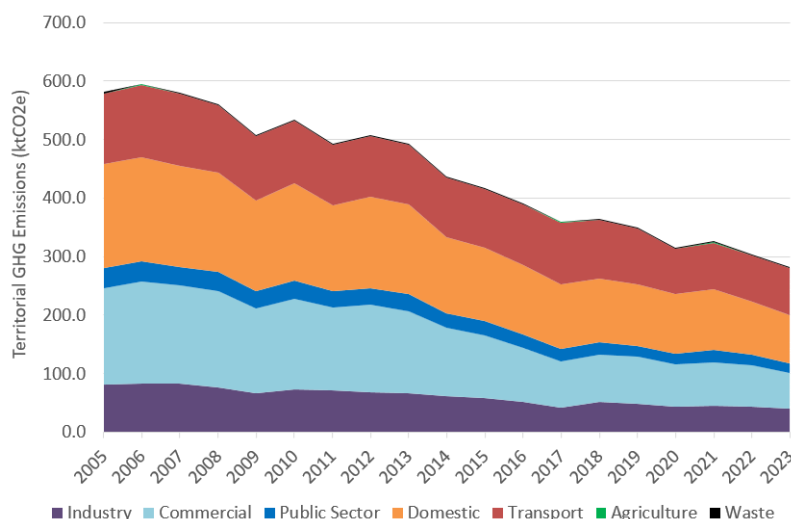


Figure 4. Stevenage territorial GHG emissions within the scope of influence of LAs, estimates 2005-2023 (ktCO_{2e}). Source: Based on DESNZ data⁴⁵.

⁴³ Territorial GHG emissions are those that occur within Stevenage's geographical borders, including all our residents, businesses, and activities.

⁴⁴ The full dataset can be consulted at: [UK local authority and regional GHG emissions statistics](#).

⁴⁵ Available at: [UK local authority and regional GHG emissions](#).

- 5.3 Emissions within LA’s scope of influence represent a subset of emissions over which councils have realistic control or influence, excluding sectors such as national-level industry and regional infrastructure. This subset provides a clearer picture of emissions the Council can meaningfully impact.
- 5.4 In 2023, Stevenage recorded its lowest emissions within LA influence at 282.3 ktCO_{2e}, a 7.2% drop from 2022 (304.1 ktCO_{2e}), 22.6% lower than the 2018 baseline (364.6 ktCO_{2e}), and 51.4% lower than in 2005 (581.2 ktCO_{2e}).
- 5.5 The reduction from 2022 to 2023 was mainly due to decreases in commercial (-13.6%), industrial (-9.5%), public (-9.1%), and domestic (-8.1%) emissions, with a slight increase in transport (+0.9%).
- 5.6 Since 2005, most sectoral emissions have consistently decreased. Residential emissions dropped by 53.8%, from 178.3 ktCO_{2e} in 2005 to 82.3 ktCO_{2e} in 2023. The public sector, including the Council, reduced its emissions by 51.2% over the same period, whereas commercial and industrial emissions decreased by 63.2% and 51.2%, respectively. Transport emissions also decreased by 33.0%, from 119.6 ktCO_{2e} in 2005 to 80.2 ktCO_{2e} in 2023.
- 5.7 Continued monitoring is essential to ensure reductions are sustained and not simply a by-product of high energy costs affecting households or businesses.
- 5.8 Stevenage’s 2023 per capita emissions within LA influence (3.1 tCO_{2e}) were below Hertfordshire (3.2 tCO_{2e}), the East of England (3.6 tCO_{2e}) and England (3.3 tCO_{2e}).
- 5.9 Stevenage’s total territorial GHG emissions within LA influence by sector in 2023 are presented in Figure 5.

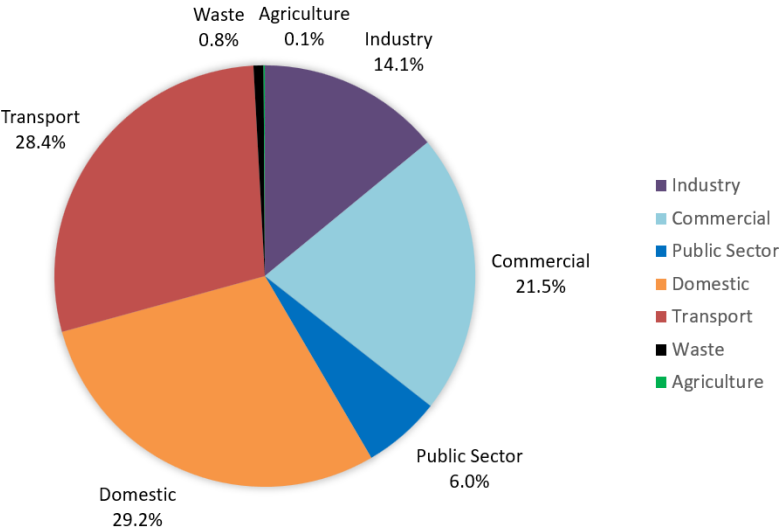


Figure 5. Stevenage territorial GHG emissions within LA influence, estimates in 2023 by economic sector. Source: Based on DESNZ data⁴⁶.

- 5.10 In 2023, domestic emissions were highest (82.3 ktCO_{2e}, primarily from gas heating), followed by transport (80.2 ktCO_{2e}), commercial (60.7 ktCO_{2e}), and

⁴⁶ Available at: [UK local authority and regional GHG emissions](#).

industry (39.7 ktCO_{2e}). The public sector, including the Council, accounted for just 6.0%.

- 5.11 In June 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency, setting a net-zero target by 2030. Tackling climate change and embedding sustainability must therefore be central to all Council, business, and community activities.
- 5.12 Scope 1 emissions come from sources directly owned or controlled by the Council, like fuel burned in the fleet vehicles or gas used for heating buildings. Scope 2 emissions are indirect, from the production of energy that the Council purchases and uses, like electricity generation. Scope 3 emissions are not produced by the Council itself or its controlled assets, but from activities up and down its value chain for which it is indirectly responsible. A summary of GHG emissions scopes is shown below.

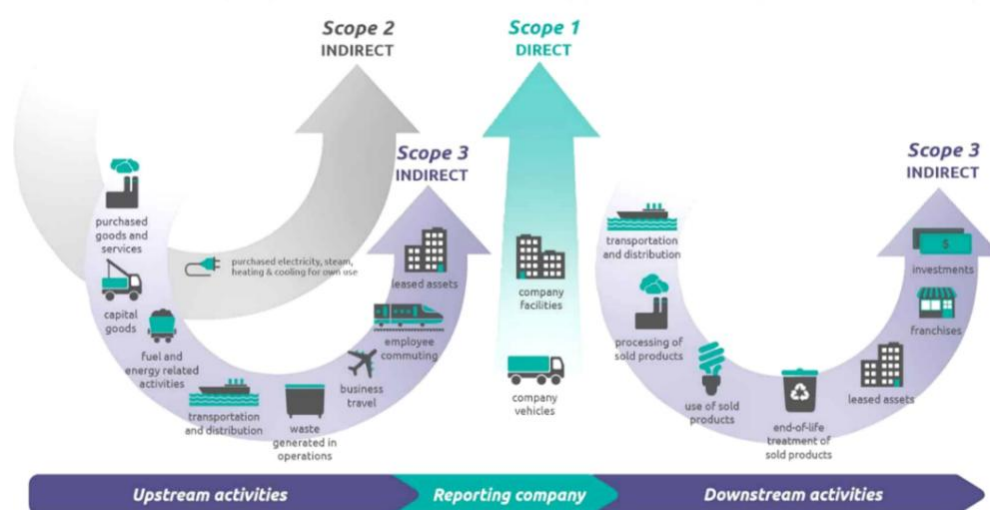


Figure 6. GHG emissions scopes for a reporting company/organisation.
Source: GHG Protocol, Corporate Value Chain Accounting and Reporting Standard

- 5.13 In July 2020, CLS Energy established a 2018 emissions baseline for the Council (primarily covering Scope 1 and 2 emissions, with limited Scope 3 considered), estimating the total annual emissions for the Council at 3,399 tCO_{2e}.
- 5.14 Previous reports tracked progress against this 2018 baseline and noted that emissions had reduced by 39%, with projections suggesting a 61% reduction by October 2024 following the adoption of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as the primary fuel for the Council's fleet, as shown in the figure below. While these figures reflected the best available data at the time, they are currently being re-evaluated as part of a more comprehensive approach to GHG accounting.

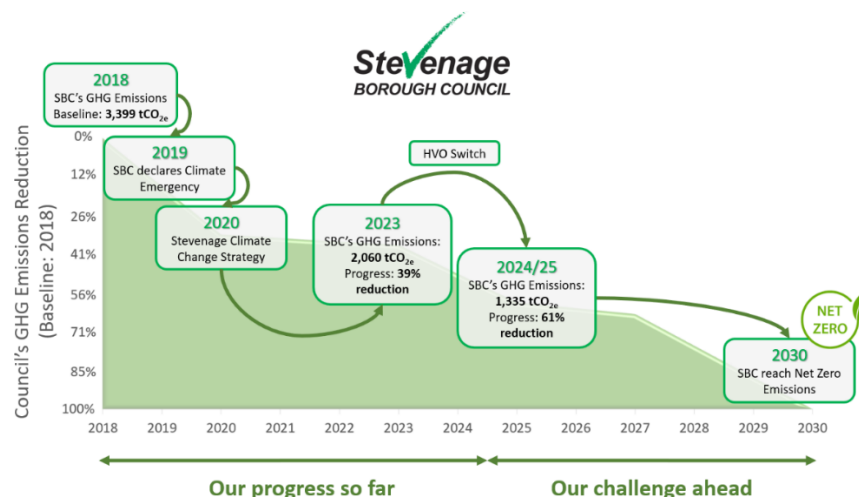


Figure 7. Council's emissions trajectory so far and expected challenge ahead.

- 5.15 The Council anticipates an amendment to our baseline year, in line with more accurate available data. This will ensure that progress is measured consistently and transparently across Scopes 1–3.
- 5.16 At present, figures for the current financial year are in development, as part of a structured programme of work to finalise a GHG accounting strategy and compile verified data for recent years. A dedicated officer is now leading this work to ensure reliable and comprehensive accounting.
- 5.17 In September 2020, the Council released its Stevenage Climate Change Strategy⁴⁷, built around eight strategic themes guiding the action plan to net-zero.



Figure 8. Stevenage Climate Change Strategy's 8 strategic themes leading the action plan.

- 5.18 In February 2024, the Council, in partnership with Kausal⁴⁸, launched the Stevenage Climate Action Plan Tracker⁴⁹: an online portal showcasing over 50 actions across the eight strategic themes.
- 5.19 In 2025, officers continued refining the tracker structure and contents to align with the Climate Scorecards⁵⁰ assessment by Climate Emergency UK. In the 2025 scores (released in June), the Council achieved a score of 35%, an increase of 8 percentage points from its 2023 score of 27%. Notable improvements were seen in Waste Reduction & Food (+19%), and

⁴⁷ Available at: [Stevenage Climate Change Strategy](#)

⁴⁸ Further information at: [Kausal - Turn Climate Goals into Actions](#)

⁴⁹ Available at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan Tracker](#)

⁵⁰ Further information at: [Council Climate Action Scorecards - Climate Emergency UK](#)

Governance and Finance (+23%). The highest-scoring categories were Buildings & Heating (55%) and Collaboration & Engagement (52%). The full scores can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Climate Scorecards 2025 – Stevenage Borough Council Results⁵¹.

Questions	Stevenage Borough Council	
Category	2025 score	Versus 2023
Buildings & Heating	55%	--
Transport	13%	▲ 4
Planning & Land Use	14%	▼ -2
Governance & Finance	39%	▲ 23
Biodiversity	18%	▲ 3
Collaboration & Engagement	52%	▲ 7
Waste Reduction & Food	42%	▲ 19
Total score	35%	▲ 8

- 5.20 Work will continue in 2025/26 to improve scores in weaker areas (Transport, Planning & Land Use, and Biodiversity), and to review and address specific penalties related to Air Quality Management, with the aim of improving future scores.
- 5.21 The following sections highlight the main actions taken by the Council during 2024/25 across the eight strategic themes.

6 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – BUSINESSES

- 6.1 Businesses are seeking the Council's guidance and support to meet climate obligations and achieve their own climate targets.
- 6.2 Since 2022, the Council has funded 200 Gold Memberships for Wenta's Action Zero Programme⁵², helping local SMEs⁵³ tackle climate change, identify risks and opportunities, recognise the benefits of net-zero, and reduce their carbon footprint. The service offers advice on setting reduction targets, developing Carbon Reduction Plans (CRPs), monitoring and reporting progress, and achieving environmental accreditation. To date, more than 147 businesses have joined.
- 6.3 Since 2023, the Council's Sustainable Business Programme⁵⁴, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)⁵⁵, has supported local businesses and stimulated private investment in growth-enhancing activities such as innovation and the adoption of energy-efficient, low-carbon technologies. Delivered through Sustainable X⁵⁶, it has offered workshops, bespoke one-to-one consultancy for CRPs, sustainability audits, guides, and tools, and Meet-the-Buyer events. These initiatives have helped businesses embed

⁵¹ Further information at: [Stevenage Borough Council - Climate Action Scorecards](#)

⁵² Further information at: [Wenta Action Zero Programme](#)

⁵³ Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

⁵⁴ Further information at: [Sustainable Business Programme](#)

⁵⁵ UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Further information at: [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Prospectus](#)

⁵⁶ Further information at: [Sustainability Programmes by SBC and Sustainable X](#)

sustainable practices, boost competitiveness, cut costs, ensure compliance, and strengthen their appeal to customers and employees.

- 6.4 From September 2025, SMEs in Stevenage will have access to a fully funded, personalised support programme, including two hours of tailored one-to-one consultancy with specialist advisors. Support will cover tendering, operational efficiency, cost reduction, access to finance, communications, supply chains, social value, and certification preparation. Businesses will also benefit from practical tools and templates, plus a business-strengthening review using the “Sustainable Xplorer” tool to identify quick wins and long-term opportunities.
- 6.5 In addition, the Council has recently launched an online Sustainability Support Survey to gather feedback from local businesses, ensuring future support is practical, targeted, and responsive to business needs.
- 6.6 In November 2024, the Council also introduced the Stevenage Green Business Grant⁵⁷, offering £70,000 in total (up to £10,000 per organisation) to help SMEs and charities implement greener solutions to reduce carbon footprint, water usage, and waste, improve energy efficiency, and lower energy costs. Eligible applicants had to have received support from the Sustainable Business Programme, Wenta’s Action Zero Programme, or another accredited scheme providing an independent CRP. Eight organisations (seven businesses and one charity) secured funding to reduce energy costs, progress towards net-zero, and build climate resilience.
- 6.7 One recipient, SPS Training Solutions Limited, a locally based independent training provider, received £10,000 in co-funding for a battery storage system alongside PV panels, supporting its transition to EVs.



Figure 9. SPS Training Solutions’ Solar PV installation funded by the Green Business Grant.

- 6.8 In 2023, the council acknowledged the “*Pathway 3 – People and Processes*” report to address some of its main Scope 3 emissions, recognising that up to

⁵⁷ Further information at: [Stevenage Green Business Grants Summary](#)

96% of LAs⁵⁸ emissions come from supply chain, and highlighting sustainable procurement as essential.

- 6.9 The Council continues to implement Social Value⁵⁹, as required by the Social Value Act, through the Social Value Portal⁶⁰. It is underpinned by the national TOMs framework⁶¹, which identifies themes, outcomes, and measures for implementation. The Council updated its selected set of TOMs in May 2025⁶², reflecting the growing importance of sustainability. Measures include reducing Scope 1 & 2 emissions, increasing use of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs), supporting certified carbon offset funds, and cutting plastic use.
- 6.10 An updated Co-operative Procurement Strategy⁶³ (2025-2028) was adopted by the Council in March 2025. Following public consultation, it came into effect in June 2025. The strategy makes sustainability one of its five core foundations, supporting net-zero goals by reducing GHG emissions, waste, and plastics while promoting biodiversity and clean air. It also embeds circular economy principles, favouring reusable, recyclable, durable, and energy-efficient products, while supporting SMEs, social enterprises, and community businesses that deliver social and environmental value.

7 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – HOMES

- 7.1 The Council has committed to achieving a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)⁶⁴ band C for all 8,000 its homes by 2030⁶⁵. This is essential to achieving net-zero status.
- 7.2 Central government funding and co-funding are critical for the Council to address retrofitting challenges across both private and social housing.
- 7.3 The Council has delivered UK Government-funded and co-funded initiatives to decarbonise its housing stock, including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)⁶⁶ and, more recently, Warm Homes: Social Housing (WHSH)⁶⁷.
- 7.4 The current distribution of Council's housing stock by EPC band is shown in Figure 10.

⁵⁸ Local Authorities

⁵⁹ Social Value is the UK's statutory approach to embedding sustainable procurement. Further information at: [LGA District Councils Social Value Toolkit](#)

⁶⁰ Further information at: [Social Value Portal](#)

⁶¹ Further information at: [Measurement - Social Value TOM System™ - Social Value Portal](#)

⁶² These are applied to procurements over £175,000 for services, and £250,000 for works that last 6 months or more. The Council is also exploring proportionate ways of embedding social value for mid-value procurements.

⁶³ Available at: [Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-28](#)

⁶⁴ Further information at: [Energy Performance of Buildings Certificates in England and Wales](#)

⁶⁵ While it is essential for the Council to continue investing in decarbonising its social housing stock and achieving an EPC standard that ensures safe, warm, and quality homes, this is subject to affordability within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), given the broader pressures currently faced by all social landlords.

⁶⁶ Further information at: [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund](#)

⁶⁷ Further information at: [Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3](#)

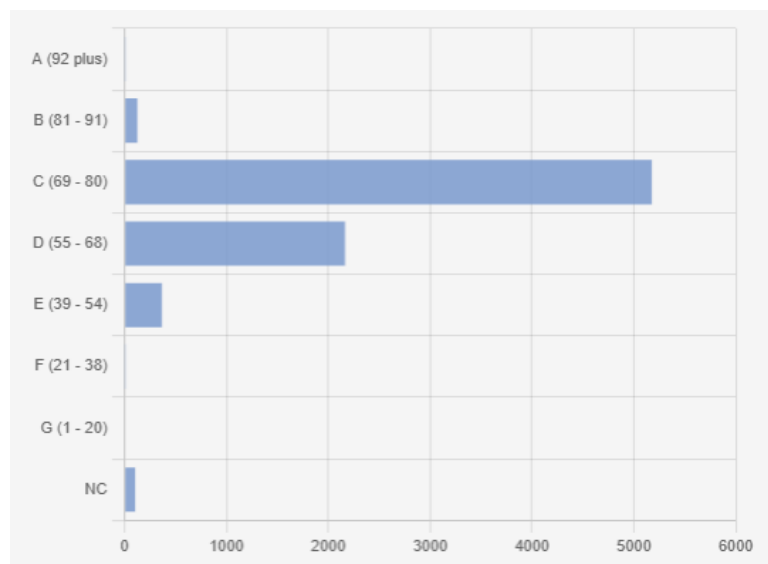


Figure 10. Distribution of the Council's housing stock by EPC band.

- 7.5 The SHDF was a national scheme providing warmer, energy-efficient social homes, reducing GHG emissions, and tackling fuel poverty. The Council used this fund to upgrade properties below EPC band C, reducing tenants' bills, improving comfort, and lowering emissions. Measures included wall and loft insulation, double glazing, energy-efficient lighting, and solar panels.
- 7.6 The Council secured funding through SHDF Wave 1 (completed in December 2023) and Wave 2.1. Wave 2.1⁶⁸ provided a £2.6m grant with a £3.9m Council's contribution, and ran from March 2023 to April 2025, retrofitting about 240 homes, including 16 flat blocks and 100 houses, targeting the least energy-efficient properties. The upgrades aimed to achieve EPC Band C, with some reaching EPC Band B, following a fabric-first approach, and measures such as wall and loft insulation, energy-efficient lighting, solar panels, and ventilation.
- 7.7 Works on town centre flats blocks were combined with MRC⁶⁹ works for a whole-block approach, as part of the Council's major five-year refurbishment programme⁷⁰ across social housing, including insulation, energy-efficient lighting, windows, and doors.

⁶⁸ The SHDF Wave 2.1 figures have been predicted in the bid for funding but could change slightly over the project.

⁶⁹ MRC, the Major Refurbishment Contract is taking place to all of Council's low and mid-rise flat blocks and includes a programme of refurbishment works to communal areas such as new roofs, windows, doors, decoration to internal and external areas, structural works, fire safety works, and electrical works.

⁷⁰ Further information at: [SBC Current Major Works](#)



Figure 11. SHDF Wave 2.1 retrofitting works (top) and external appearance post-works (bottom).

- 7.8 The Council also installed Aico Environmental Sensors in some Wave 2.1 homes to monitor humidity, temperature, heat loss, and damp/mould risk, helping assess SHDF benefits.
- 7.9 WSHS fund is the successor to the SHDF, rebranded during the 2024 Autumn Budget, with initial £1.29bn for 2025-2028. It continues SHDF objectives: upgrading social housing to at least EPC Band C, reducing emissions, tackling fuel poverty, improving tenant well-being, and supporting the retrofit sector.
- 7.10 The Council has been awarded a £3.86m WSHS (Wave 3) grant. Alongside Council co-funding, this will upgrade 379 homes in three years, with measures such as wall and loft insulation, ventilation upgrades, windows, doors, and solar panels. Procurement for a contractor is underway.
- 7.11 Additionally, the Decent Homes windows and doors programme will improve energy efficiency in around 300 Council-owned homes in 2025/26, by reducing heat loss and improving thermal comfort.
- 7.12 The Council is also promoting schemes to decarbonise private homes, supporting energy efficiency and emissions reduction.
- 7.13 One such scheme is Solar Together, detailed in paragraph 4.6.
- 7.14 The Council also supported the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2)⁷¹, a government scheme offering free efficiency upgrades⁷² to low-income, off-

⁷¹ Further information at: [Home Upgrade Grant: Phase 2](#)

⁷² Including insulation and ventilation upgrades, low-carbon heating and hot water systems, and solar PV installations, among others.

gas households (privately owned or rented). Over its two-year duration, until March 2025, it funded measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation, electric heating, solar PV, and ventilation. The Council promoted HUG2 to eligible residents through a consortium.

- 7.15 Through partnership with the National Energy Foundation (NEF), the Council is helping eligible homeowners and private tenants access funding for energy efficiency measures under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)⁷³ and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS)⁷⁴. Since August 2024, 16 referrals have been approved. The arrangement with NEF runs until March 2026, when ECO4 and GBIS end.
- 7.16 More recently, the Council secured £1.5m from the Government-funded Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG) to provide energy upgrades and low-carbon heating for low-income privately owned households, from 2025 to 2028. Delivered in partnership with NEF, the grant funds insulation, solar panels, Air-Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs), and low-carbon heating systems for EPC Band D-G properties (privately owned or rented). Eligible households include those with an income below £36,000, those in receipt of means-tested benefits, or those living in areas of high economic need. The Council expects to retrofit around 100 properties over three years.
- 7.17 All previous retrofit schemes are complemented by the Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy described in paragraph 4.6.
- 7.18 The Council is also committed to greener developments, ensuring all new housing projects follow a 5-star quality approach⁷⁵, with sustainability as a key criterion. This must be balanced against housing demand, with 2,000 families currently on the waiting list for Council housing.
- 7.19 Demand for housing is at record levels. Through the MSEB Corporate Plan⁷⁶, the Council has strived to build a range of new and sustainable homes.
- 7.20 Following the award-winning Helston House⁷⁷, Phase 1 of Kenilworth Close has been completed, comprising 31 houses, 57 flats, 88 independent living homes, seven shops, and a community space. Sustainability features include hybrid heating with ASHPs providing most of the heat, solar panels and batteries, Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR), and green roofs.

⁷³ Further information at: [Help from your energy supplier: the Energy Company Obligation](#)

⁷⁴ Further information at: [Apply for support from the Great British Insulation Scheme](#)

⁷⁵ Further information at: [Housing Development – On the Right Road](#)

⁷⁶ Available at: [Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Even Better \(2024-2027\)](#)

⁷⁷ Further information at: [Helston House, Scarborough Avenue](#)



Figure 12. Council-led Kenilworth Close residential development.

- 7.21 The Dunn Close scheme (27 homes) also benefits from ASHPs, solar panels, and heat recovery systems. A fabric-first approach ensures enhanced insulation and lower heating costs.
- 7.22 Finally, the partial review of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP)⁷⁸, recently submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination on 15 August 2025, strengthens policies for sustainable, low-carbon, and zero-carbon homes. These cover energy efficiency, emissions targets, overheating prevention, green infrastructure, digital connectivity, water management, and circular economy principles.

8 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – CONSTRUCTION & REGENERATION

- 8.1 The building and construction sector is a major contributor to GHG emissions, making its transformation essential for tackling climate change.
- 8.2 Stevenage's regeneration programme seeks to create a vibrant, mixed-use town centre that reflects the aspirations of residents and businesses while respecting its New Town heritage.
- 8.3 As a leader in regeneration, the Council has significant influence to deliver sustainably designed, climate-resilient buildings and public spaces.
- 8.4 The Council continues to work with regeneration partners committed to zero-carbon operations and responsible development, promoting energy-efficient designs, sustainable construction practices, and materials reuse and recycling.
- 8.5 A key regeneration project is the new Sports & Leisure Centre, which will replace the Arts & Leisure Centre and Swimming Centre, two of the Council's highest energy-consuming buildings. The planning application has been submitted following three phases of engagement with residents and sports clubs. Completion is expected in late 2027. The centre will co-locate wet and dry leisure facilities for the first time and is designed as a fully electric, low-carbon building, avoiding reliance on fossil fuels. Estimated annual energy

⁷⁸ Further information at: [Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update](#)

use is 1,246 MWh (182.5 kWh/m²), far more efficient than traditional leisure facilities of this scale. On-site solar PV will generate 14.8 MWh annually, saving roughly 3.4 tCO₂ per year and reducing operating costs. ASHPs will provide heating, cooling, hot water, and pool heating without gas, delivering more energy per unit of electricity than conventional boilers and chillers. High insulation levels, LED lighting, and smart energy management systems will further minimise consumption. Together, these measures ensure the centre will support both energy efficiency and the Council's net-zero ambitions.



Figure 13. New Sports & Leisure Centre proposal.

- 8.6 The Public Services Hub is another major regeneration project, aiming to create a modern, multifunctional space for public services and community facilities. Still in early design stages, the Council is working with future partners to ensure a low-carbon, cost-efficient, and adaptable building.
- 8.7 Furthermore, the current Stevenage Indoor Market will relocate to Boston House, Park Place, offering a more visible, accessible, and vibrant space. The new market will be light, modern, and compact, with an all-electric energy supply.
- 8.8 One of the crucial tools the Council uses to lead climate action is the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP)⁷⁹, which integrates strategies that translate climate goals into practical mitigation and adaptation measures.
- 8.9 The current SBLP 2021-2031, adopted in May 2019, provides the strategic framework for sustainable development, ensuring new developments align with Stevenage's climate goals.
- 8.10 The Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁸⁰, adopted in February 2025, sets out key sustainability and climate policies, serving as material consideration in planning decisions. These policies cover energy

⁷⁹ Further information at: [Stevenage Borough Local Plan](#)

⁸⁰ Available here: [Design Guide SPD - February 2025](#)

efficiency, low-carbon design, locally sourced and durable materials, sustainable construction, water management and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), green infrastructure, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

- 8.11 The Council is currently undertaking a partial review of the SBLP to update existing climate policies and introduce new ones. The partial review⁸¹ was submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination on 15 August 2025, following several rounds of public consultation.
- 8.12 The partial review prioritises climate policies within the SBLP's strategic approach, seeking to balance low-carbon housing and development with the provision of new jobs and infrastructure, and the protection of green and cultural assets.
- 8.13 In terms of construction, the partial review incorporates upgraded policies on energy efficiency and emissions reduction targets. It also addresses overheating, water efficiency, and green infrastructure, among others. Under these climate-specific policies:
- Major developments⁸² must demonstrate net-zero regulated operational emissions, supported by an energy statement and assessment.
 - Large-scale major developments⁸³ must demonstrate whole-life carbon net-zero, including construction emissions, also supported by an energy statement and assessment.
- 8.14 Furthermore, all new developments must show how they will reduce GHG emissions, embedding sustainable design and construction principles throughout.
- 8.15 Adoption of these policies is expected to make a significant contribution toward achieving the town's net-zero targets.

9 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – WASTE & RECYCLING

- 9.1 The waste sector significantly impacts climate change. Reducing, reusing, repairing, recycling, and recovering must remain central to the Council's waste management approach.
- 9.2 The Council is a member of the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership⁸⁴ (HWP), a collaborative initiative bringing together all 10 district and borough councils alongside HCC.
- 9.3 HWP supports residents in reducing, reusing, and recycling waste through awareness campaigns and long-term strategies. Through it, the Council has launched various initiatives to cut waste and boost recycling.

⁸¹ Further information at: [Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update](#)

⁸² Defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 as: Residential: Development of 10 or more dwellings, or a site area of 0.5 hectares. Other uses: Where the floor space is 1,000 m² or more or the site area is 1 hectare or more.

⁸³ Those involving more than 150 dwellings or 15,000 m² of non-residential floor space.

⁸⁴ Further information at: [Waste Aware Hertfordshire Partnership](#)

- 9.4 HWP aims for 100% of Hertfordshire's residual waste to be processed at energy-from-waste (EfW) facilities, achieving zero waste to landfill by 2030. Since April 2024, HCC has implemented 10-year contracts directing all residual waste to EfW. While this ends direct landfill disposal, some rejected recycling may still reach landfill indirectly⁸⁵.
- 9.5 The Council handles regular bin and bulky waste collections⁸⁶. Besides kerbside recycling, the Council also provides recycling banks across the town⁸⁷. Recently, eight neighbourhood recycling bring-bank sites were upgraded with new signage, bins, and infrastructure, funded through the UKSPF (four sites) and the Council's Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)⁸⁸ (four sites).



Figure 14. Recently improved recycling banks across Stevenage.

- 9.6 The Council operates an in-house recycling collection service, separating materials into paper & card, glass, plastics, and cans, with private arrangements for their onwards journeys.
- 9.7 In 2024/25, the Council collected over 30,773 tonnes of household waste: 11,722 tonnes recycled or composted, and 19,000 tonnes as residual waste. On average, each Stevenage resident produced about 340 kg of waste (recycled and residual) per year⁸⁹, compared to the UK average of 377 kg⁹⁰. The Council has set a target to increase recycling rates to 60% by 2035⁹¹. However, according to the HWP 2024-25 Annual Report⁹², Stevenage's recycling rate of 38.1% is still the lowest in Hertfordshire.
- 9.8 The Council continues to promote recycling across its corporate sites, housing, and commercial buildings. Following Cabinet approval in July 2025⁹³, the second phase of a flat-block recycling pilot is underway, due for completion in 2025-26. Phase 1 introduced enhanced recycling infrastructure

⁸⁵ Further information at: [HCC - New contracts to end landfill for Hertfordshire waste](#)

⁸⁶ Further information at: [Stevenage Household Waste Management Policy](#)

⁸⁷ Further information at: [Stevenage Recycling Banks](#)

⁸⁸ As described in paragraph 14.4.

⁸⁹ Based on a population estimate of 90,508 inhabitants in Stevenage.

⁹⁰ Further information at: [Local Authority Collected Waste Management - Annual Results 2022/23](#)

⁹¹ Further information at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan – Action WR 1. Increase Recycling Rates](#)

⁹² Currently in draft version. The previous report is available at: [HWP Annual Report 2023-24](#)

⁹³ Further information at: [SBC Items at Meetings - Flat Block Recycling Improvements](#)

and signage at six flat-blocks, increasing recycling by 185%. It also included resident engagement, surveys and educational. Phase 2 will build on this approach at additional sites, supported by £719k of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding. It will deliver upgraded infrastructure and signage at around 74 flat blocks, many of which previously lacked facilities or level access, providing the necessary opportunities for residents to recycle plastics, glass, cardboard and food.

- 9.9 The Council provides free recycling services for glass, tins, and plastic to local schools, and paid collections for paper recycling. The Council also offers educational opportunities on recycling and sustainability.
- 9.10 The Council is preparing for a UK Government mandate requiring separate weekly food waste collections for all households, including flats, from March 2026⁹⁴, under Simpler Recycling⁹⁵ legislation. Procurement of new vehicles and food waste containers for the service has been completed. The service is expected to increase recycling rates by around 5% while reducing GHG emissions. Additionally, the Council has also launched a commercial food waste collection service for businesses and schools across Stevenage, as required by Simpler Recycling.
- 9.11 Moreover, the Council continues to work with HWP on campaigns to reduce edible food waste by 20%, saving 10,000 tonnes of food⁹⁶.
- 9.12 As part of the Council's Climate Champions Officers, a Reusing & Recycling working group has been established, to enhance recycling practices within the Council by providing training, toolkits, and new infrastructure. Actions taken by the group include designing and updating new leaflets, relocating bins within offices, adding extra recycling information, and posting intranet guidance.
- 9.13 As part of Recycle Your Cycle⁹⁷, the Council has collected unwanted, abandoned or fly-tipped bikes for refurbishment and reuse. 133 bikes were collected and donated to this scheme in 2024/25.
- 9.14 Working with HWP, the Council continues to promote the Herts Sustainable Families⁹⁸ initiative, which includes Herts Reusable Nappies, Herts Sustainable Periods, and Herts Confident Continence, aiming to stimulate reusable alternatives to single-use products. In partnership with Hey Girls⁹⁹, HCC provides free reusable period products, with Stevenage among the top districts for uptake.
- 9.15 The Council also organised Great British Spring Clean litter picks with seven schools, where 28 bags of rubbish were collected by 127 students and 23 adults. The top three waste items collected were disposable vapes, cigarette ends, and sweet and chocolate wrappers.

⁹⁴ Further information at: [New £295m for Councils to introduce weekly Food Waste Collections](#)

⁹⁵ Further information at: [Simpler Recycling in England: Policy Update](#)

⁹⁶ Further information at: [#WorthSaving – Save Food, Save Money](#)

⁹⁷ Further information at: [Recycle Your Cycle](#)

⁹⁸ Further information at: [Herts Sustainable Families - Hertfordshire County Council](#)

⁹⁹ Further information at: [Hey Girls - Period Product Social Enterprise](#)



Figure 15. Great British Spring Clean activities in Stevenage, March 2025.

- 9.16 Finally, the Council continues to support the Stevenage Repair Café project in Bedwell, through the CCCF (see Levels 7-9 of this report).

10 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – PEOPLE

- 10.1 Stevenage can only achieve its net-zero targets if everyone plays their part. By educating, engaging, supporting, listening to, and communicating with residents from all backgrounds, the Council can encourage the behavioural changes needed.
- 10.2 Most resident-focused actions are outlined in Levels 7-9 of this report. Some internal awareness and governance actions are highlighted below to emphasise fostering a sustainable culture within the Council.
- 10.3 In November 2023, the council acknowledged the *“Pathway 3 – People and Processes”* report, which identified that Council’s people-related emissions mostly arise from ways of working: commuting, business travel, waste production, water use, and resource consumption. Addressing these requires behavioural change. To support this, a Staff Climate Champions Group (SCCG) of 24 members from across departments¹⁰⁰ was established to raise awareness, strengthen engagement, and drive positive change. In 2024-25, the group delivered regular sessions to share knowledge and generate ideas on climate action, including external guests presentations, covering the following topics:

¹⁰⁰ Teams represented are: Estates & Facilities; Technology; Digital & Transformation; Finances; Human Resources; Communications; Planning; Engineering Services; Climate Action; Environmental Health; Housing Development; Regeneration; Community Advice & Support; Corporate Policy & Performance; Direct Services (Operations, Environmental Policy, Green Spaces, Waste Management, Wellbeing & Leisure); Housing Investment; Democratic Services; and Community Development.



Figure 16. Stevenage Climate Champions Group – Topics prioritised during 2024-25.

- 10.4 From this programme, five priority topics (as shown below) were selected for 2025-26 (and potentially beyond). To address them, working sub-groups have been established to focus on challenges and opportunities, mainly linked to ways of working and organisational emissions.



Figure 17. Stevenage Climate Champions – Topic-specific working sub-groups for 2025-26.

- 10.5 The outcomes and progress of some of these sub-groups are referenced throughout the eight strategic priorities sections of this report.
- 10.6 Following the launch of the Council’s Events Sustainability Guidelines (July 2024)¹⁰¹, developed to provide advice on incorporating sustainable practices into event planning and delivery, one of the working sub-groups was established on “Events Sustainability”. Its focus is on enhancing the sustainability of Council-led events, both public and internal. Work so far has included mapping stakeholders involved in different types of events to improve coordination and shared learning. An in-depth sustainability review of Stevenage Day 2025 has also been carried out, covering energy, waste, transport, food, and water management.
- 10.7 Another working sub-group has been established on “Greening the Workplace”, aiming to design sustainable greening projects for Daneshill House and Cavendish. Early work has included staff surveys and selecting low-maintenance, low-allergy, air-purifying plant species. The initiative will support staff wellbeing while acting as a visible tool for sustainability engagement.
- 10.8 Climate literacy is critical to raising awareness, building understanding of environmental challenges, and enabling informed decision-making. In September 2024, the Council organised Carbon Literacy Training (via APSE) for 40 officers, followed in October by training on Sustainable Buildings Certifications. Over the past year, further training has been provided through HCCSP and LGA, including free Sustainability Masterclasses for members¹⁰².

¹⁰¹ Available at: [SBC Sustainable Events Guide - Summer 2024](#)

¹⁰² Further information at: [Sustainability Masterclasses - Local Government Association](#)

Climate Adaptation

- 10.9 Climate adaptation is a vital part of building awareness and behavioural change. The Global Centre on Adaptation¹⁰³ defines it as the “*means to act to prepare for and adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change*”.
- 10.10 Adaptation aims to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience and is a critical aspect of climate response to ensure that Council’s operations and policies can withstand climate impacts.
- 10.11 Council’s first Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA)¹⁰⁴, completed in July 2024, has since been updated in line with DEFRA¹⁰⁵ guidelines. Key changes include categorising risks by affected sectors rather than climate factors and assessing impacts under two future climate scenarios: 2°C and 4°C warming. The updated CCRA identifies 46 climate-related risks across five key sectors: natural environment, infrastructure, health and communities, business and industry, and international dimensions. While most risks are currently rated low to medium, several require further investigation, and the medium-to-high risks increase under the 4°C scenario.
- 10.12 The CCRA improves adaptation awareness, helping the Council understand and plan for potential climate-related risks. It also aims to increase the Council services’ resilience by embedding climate risks into pre-existing Operational Risk Registers (ORRs), reviewed annually.
- 10.13 The Council acknowledges the importance of climate adaptation and is committed to becoming resilient and responsive to climate change risks
- 10.14 Looking ahead, the Council is also developing a Five-Year Climate Adaptation Plan to further strengthen resilience. The Plan will prioritise monitoring impacts, safeguarding vulnerable infrastructure, enhancing emergency preparedness, broadening stakeholder engagement, and supporting residents in sustainable living.

11 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – BIODIVERSITY

- 11.1 Biodiversity loss and climate change are closely linked. Climate change accelerates biodiversity loss, undermining nature’s ability to regulate GHG emissions, while ecosystems like woodlands and wetlands are significant carbon sinks. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is crucial to tackling climate change.
- 11.2 Tree planting plays a key role in Stevenage’s in this context, reducing GHGs, mitigating climate impacts, improving air quality, providing wildlife habitats, cooling urban areas, lowering energy demand, and fostering healthier, more sustainable communities.

¹⁰³ Further information at: [Global Center on Adaptation](#)

¹⁰⁴ A Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) for local authorities involves evaluating the potential impacts of climate change on the local area and the services provided by the authority.

¹⁰⁵ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

- 11.3 The Council has committed to planting over 4,000 trees by 2030 ¹⁰⁶ and to increasing the town's canopy cover to 19%, in line with the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Plan (2020)¹⁰⁷ and its Amenity Tree Management Policy¹⁰⁸. In 2024, an i-Tree Canopy¹⁰⁹ assessment found existing canopy cover at 22%, though ward-levels cover varies, with the lowest at 13% ¹¹⁰.
- 11.4 As part of its ongoing commitment, the Council plants around 100 mature trees annually.
- 11.5 In addition, three new Miyawaki micro-woods¹¹¹ were created in 2024-25 using DEFRA's Coronation Living Heritage Fund, at St Nicholas Park, Hampson Park and Shephalbury Park with support from residents and local schools. During winter, schools, residents and Green Space Volunteers helped plant 5,000 saplings to create the micro-woods (2000 at St Nicholas Park, 1500 at Hampson Park, and 1500 at Shephalbury Park). Species included beech, cherry, elder, hawthorn, hazel, holly, hornbeam, lime, field maple, and oak. This planting extended existing small woodland parcels and improved wildlife corridors by linking them with other wooded areas and grassland meadows. Monitoring shows the Miyawaki technique has been successful in Stevenage.



Figure 18. Stevenage's Miyawaki Microwood at Hampson Park.

- 11.6 These initiatives complement the "Your Tree, Our Future" scheme detailed in 4.6.
- 11.7 Currently, under the Amenity Tree Management Policy, trees removed from Council land or protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) must be replaced at a 1:3 ratio, whereas trees removed for health and safety reasons must be replaced with twice the number of trees.

¹⁰⁶ Further information at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan – Action BI3: Plant 4,000 Trees in Stevenage by 2030](#)

¹⁰⁷ Available at: [Emergency Tree Plan - Woodland Trust](#)

¹⁰⁸ Available at: [Stevenage Amenity Tree Management Policy](#)

¹⁰⁹ i-Tree Canopy is an online canopy cover assessment tool, which provides a scientifically robust and consistent approach to estimating canopy cover. Further information at: [i-Tree Canopy](#).

¹¹⁰ Further information at: [Stevenage Tree and Woodland Strategy](#)

¹¹¹ Further information at: [Council secures funding to plant new trees in Stevenage](#)

- 11.8 The Council is currently updating its tree replacement policies for new developments. Through the Local Plan Partial Review, it is proposing a revised policy aimed at reducing net tree loss by setting clear standards for tree replacement, ensuring no net loss of tree cover, and supporting increases in canopy cover. Under this policy, replacement requirements will range from 2 to 21 trees per tree removed, depending on trunk diameter.
- 11.9 Following public consultation, the Council adopted the Trees & Woodland Strategy (2025-2035)¹¹² in June 2025. This comprehensive strategy sets out how Stevenage will manage, protect, and enhance trees, woodlands, and hedgerows. It highlights the role of trees in carbon capture, air quality, and reducing urban heat, and provides guidance on tree planting, maintenance, replacement, and biodiversity promotion. Specific actions include incorporating tree species with high carbon storage potential and prioritising tree planting in areas with low canopy coverage.
- 11.10 While tree planting is vital, supporting biodiversity also requires a diverse range of habitats, including woodlands, grasslands, wetlands, and hedgerows.
- 11.11 After public consultation, the Green Space Strategy (2025–2035)¹¹³ was adopted by Cabinet in June 2025, emphasising the role of green spaces in health, biodiversity, climate resilience, and community well-being. It provides a policy framework for protecting, managing, and enhancing these spaces to preserve ecology, meet residents’ needs, and advance sustainability goals. With a 10-year vision for parks, gardens, and open spaces, it guides actions for carbon sequestration, urban cooling, flood mitigation, and habitat connectivity, making it key for biodiversity conservation and climate action. Early initiatives, including ecological surveys, are underway to balance development, ecology, and community needs.
- 11.12 The Council also adopted a new Biodiversity Action Plan (2024-2028) as a strategic framework to guide local efforts in protecting and enhancing biodiversity through targeted actions across the borough. The plan identifies a wide range of projects, including habitat restoration, woodland management, and volunteer initiatives. Though there is currently no dedicated budget for full delivery, ongoing coordination, seasonal work, and volunteer engagement are helping implement key actions. By strengthening ecosystems, increasing habitat connectivity, and supporting species diversity, the BAP contributes directly to climate resilience, carbon sequestration, and sustainability.
- 11.13 The Council is looking at innovative ways of speeding up the delivery of projects included in the BAP, Trees & Woodland, and Green Spaces strategies. This could include utilising currently unallocated monies collected from developers.
- 11.14 The Council is implementing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)¹¹⁴, now mandatory for all developments and requiring at least 10% biodiversity increase. Priority

¹¹² Available at: [Stevenage Tree and Woodland Strategy](#)

¹¹³ Available at: [Stevenage Green Space Strategy](#)

¹¹⁴ Further information at: [Biodiversity Net Gain](#)

sites for delivery have been identified, such as Chells Park, Canterbury Way Playing Fields, and Fishers Green sound barrier, with works already underway and management plans in place. Officers are also integrating Exacom¹¹⁵, the BNG monitoring system, with Uniform¹¹⁶, the planning applications system, to track BNG data, compliance, and effective delivery.



Figure 19. Delivery of BNG works at Chells and Canterbury Way Playing Fields.

- 11.15 Several of the above-mentioned initiatives rely on volunteers. In 2024-25, Green Space Volunteers¹¹⁷ contributed over 1,600 hours to improving open spaces in Stevenage, carrying out woodland coppicing, pond improvements, tree planting, and butterfly surveys. A new training programme now also supports volunteers in managing Community Orchards.
- 11.16 The Council also supports community-led projects, including Friends of Hampson Park events, new benches at Millennium Gardens, and volunteer work at Town Centre Gardens.
- 11.17 In addition, work is underway to develop a town-wide network of grassland meadows, with ongoing identification of new sites to expand coverage and ecological value.
- 11.18 Finally, as part of a wider allotment strategy, the Council is updating allotment terms and conditions, following a recent survey. This strategy also includes digital transformation objectives.

12 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – TRANSPORT

- 12.1 Transport is one of the largest sources of GHG emissions in Stevenage, making action in this sector critical to achieving overall reductions.

¹¹⁵ Further information at: [Exacom - Products \(Biodiversity Net Gain Module\)](#)

¹¹⁶ Further information at: [Uniform - Local Authority Case Management Software](#)

¹¹⁷ Further information at: [Stevenage Green Space Volunteers](#)

- 12.2 In the Climate Change Strategy, the Council committed to decarbonising its fleet by 2030. Noticeably, in 2018, the fleet accounted for about 23% of the Council's baseline emissions.
- 12.3 Following SLT's endorsement of "*Pathway 1 – Fuel and Fleet*" in 2023, the Council switched from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)¹¹⁸ in 2024 as a low-carbon transitional solution. The switch for the entire diesel fleet was approved on 21 February 2024¹¹⁹ and implemented on 1 October 2024, covering all road and non-road vehicles as well as machinery. HVO, a biofuel produced from waste vegetable oil, required no modifications to the existing vehicles. Looking ahead, the Council plans to explore definitive low-emissions alternatives, including electric vehicles (EVs) for cars and small vans from 2025, and for light-duty vehicles from 2027.
- 12.4 According to the Renewable Fuel Declaration (Oct-Dec 2024), issued on 30 April 2025 as part of the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme by Zemo Partnership¹²⁰, the HVO supplied by New Era Fuels Ltd had a GHG emissions intensity of 14.82 gCO_{2e}/MJ for the fuel supply chain. This represents an 84% reduction in emissions compared to conventional diesel (as shown in Figure 20). Regarding the renewable fuel feedstock, the supply chain is certified under the voluntary ISCC¹²¹ sustainability scheme.

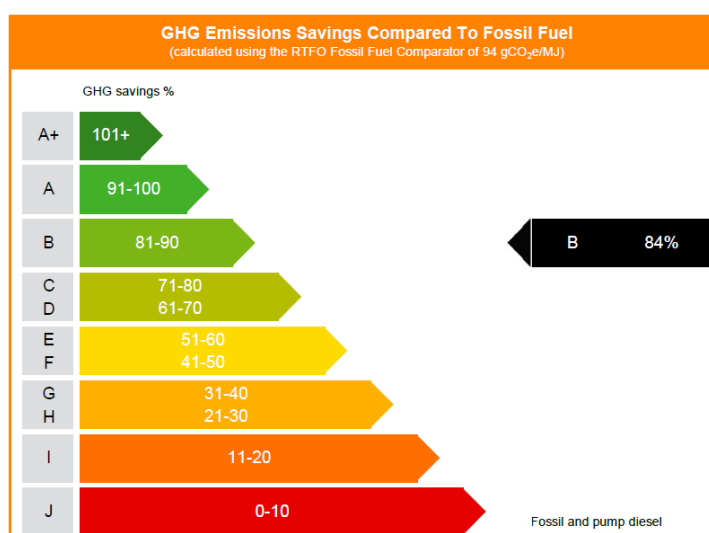


Figure 20. HVO's GHG emissions savings compared to fossil fuels (Zemo Partnership).

- 12.5 In line with Pathway 1, since August 2023, the Council has procured and incorporated the first six electric vans to its fleet, with more to follow through the fleet replacement plan. This rollout is supported by assessments of charging infrastructure and parking requirements for an electrified fleet.

¹¹⁸ HVO is a synthetic, second-generation paraffinic biofuel produced from vegetable oil waste. Due to its production process, HVO has a longer shelf life than regular biodiesel. It is produced to conform to EN15940 & ASTM D975 standards for paraffinic & diesel fuels, and the EU Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) 2009/30/EC Annex 2. It was identified as a direct, drop-in replacement for diesel. It can be stored in the same fuel tank and be used in the same way as diesel, without modifications to the Council's fleet or machinery.

¹¹⁹ Further information at: [GF - Appendix E - HVO Switch Executive Report February 2024](#)

¹²⁰ Further information at: [Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme | Fuels | Zemo Partnership](#)

¹²¹ Further information at: [ISCC PLUS - ISCC System](#)

- 12.6 The Council is cognisant of the importance of active travel to meeting climate targets. Encouraging walking, cycling, and public transport reduces emissions, supports healthier lifestyles, and eases congestion.
- 12.7 In October 2024, in partnership with Beryl Bikes¹²², the Council launched a Cycle Hire Scheme¹²³ across the town, featuring 45 bays and 150 e-bikes. The scheme aims to promote active travel and reduce transport-related GHG emissions¹²⁴. It was partially funded by the UK Government's Towns Fund, awarded to Stevenage via the Stevenage Development Board, and Section 106 contributions from developers. In June 2025, the scheme was re-launched after a temporary pause to address vandalism. It initially resumed with a reduced fleet focused on the town centre, but the goal of reaching full operating capacity, including an expanded fleet and service area, is planned for autumn.

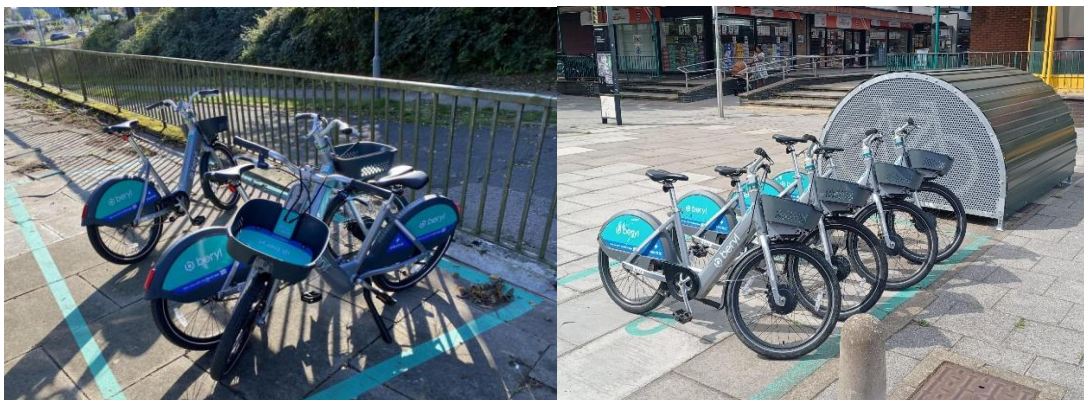


Figure 21. Stevenage's Cycle Hire Scheme in partnership with Beryl Bikes.

- 12.8 Importantly, the Council also partnered with Beryl Bikes to allow staff to use the bikes Monday to Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM, with individual journeys capped at 30 minutes, but unlimited journeys per day, providing an incentive for active and sustainable business travel.
- 12.9 Another Climate Champions working sub-group has been established to promote active and sustainable travel among staff. Its objectives include developing an induction pack for new officers, reviewing existing travel incentives, and proposing new ones to encourage sustainable commuting and business travel. The induction pack, now in its final review, outlines the benefits and incentives available to staff for commuting and business travel, including the Enterprise EV Car Club¹²⁵, SmartGo Stevenage¹²⁶, and the Green Commute Initiative¹²⁷, among others.
- 12.10 The Council has installed four cycle hangars¹²⁸ across the town to provide a bike storage alternative for residents living in flats or small houses with

¹²² Further information at: [Stevenage Bike Share - Beryl](#)

¹²³ Further information at: [Cycle Hire Scheme - Part I Report & Cycle Hire Scheme - Report and Public Consultation Feedback](#)

¹²⁴ GHG savings are tracked and reported to Council members and officers by Beryl.

¹²⁵ Further information at: [Enterprise Car Club Launches in Stevenage](#)

¹²⁶ Further information at: [SmartGo Stevenage](#)

¹²⁷ Further information at: [Cycle to Work Scheme - Green Commute Initiative](#)

¹²⁸ Cycle hangar locations available at: [Lockable Bike Shelters](#)

limited or no space to store their bikes. Recently, the Council completed the installation of one hangar in the Daneshill House courtyard, and another at South Gate in the Town Centre. More installations are planned.



Figure 22. Cycle hangar at South Gate, Town Centre, Stevenage.

- 12.11 Six maintenance stands have also been installed in the town, providing cyclists with tools for on-the-go bike repairs.
- 12.12 While private cars will remain crucial for transportation, they must also transition. The Council is therefore committed to expanding public EV charging infrastructure across the town.
- 12.13 Following the installation of EV chargers at various locations funded by the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS)¹²⁹ from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), the Council now plans to expand provision through LEVI funding, as detailed in 4.6.
- 12.14 Furthermore, the Council continues to work with InPost to install parcel lockers across the town¹³⁰, reducing delivery van journeys and last-mile GHG emissions by up to 75%, while improving local air quality.
- 12.15 Finally, in April 2024, the Council adopted a new Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, introducing stricter emissions standards and subsidised license fees for low-emission vehicles. The Council is currently exploring the best ways to implement these subsidised fees.

13 LEVEL 6: STRATEGIC THEMES – ENERGY & WATER

Energy

- 13.1 The energy sector accounts for over two-thirds of global GHG emissions. Both the source and level of energy use present opportunities to significantly reduce Council's emissions.

¹²⁹ Further information at: [On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

¹³⁰ Further information at: [Stevenage Climate Action Plan – TR11 – Installation of Parcel Lockers in the Town](#)

- 13.2 The UK aims to decarbonise its power grid by 2035. Heating, however, remains difficult to decarbonise and is still largely reliant on natural gas.
- 13.3 Different actions have been undertaken by the Council to monitor and better understand the electricity and gas consumption across its sites, aiming to introduce decarbonisation measures and reduce dependency on natural gas.
- 13.4 In early 2022, the Council switched to a Zero Carbon for Business (ZCB)¹³¹ tariff with EDF Energy for its corporate electricity supply. This guarantees zero-carbon electricity, enabling it to report zero emissions for its electricity supply in line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol best practice.
- 13.5 The Council continues to monitor its electricity use across 27 Council sites¹³² using Grid Edge's¹³³ digital meter explorer, which identifies out-of-hours use and unusual consumption patterns, supporting further operational analysis.
- 13.6 Leisure facilities, managed by Everyone Active (EA), are among Council's top energy users and GHG emitters. Under the current leisure contract, since April 2023, EA has introduced energy efficiency measures across the facilities, including LED lighting, Building Management Systems (BMS) upgrades, and insulation works.
- 13.7 Furthermore, in 2024, the Council secured £36,000 from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund to help decarbonise the Swimming Centre public pool. Works included lagging key pool plant equipment and installing a pool cover. Over 3 years, these measures are expected to cut emissions by over 292 tCO_{2e} and decrease water use by 3,699 m³. The payback period for this investment is just over 3 years.



Figure 23. New pool cover at Stevenage's Swimming Centre funded by the Swimming Pool Support Fund.

¹³¹ Further information at: [EDF Zero Carbon for Business](#)

¹³² The sites being monitored through the Grid Edge meter explorer are: Railway North MSCP; Arts & Leisure Centre & Gordon Craig Theatre; Daneshill House; Swimming Centre; Business & Technology Centre (BTC); St George's Way MSCP; Cavendish Road Depot; Indoor Market; Harrow Court; Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre; Highfield Court; Brent Court; Golf & Conference Centre; New Bus Interchange; Westgate MSCP; Silkin Court; Shaftesbury Court; Wellfield Court; Grosvenor Court; Gladstone Court; Walpole Court; Pinewoods Lodge; Fred Millard Court; Hobbs Court; Ridlins Athletic Tracks; Truro Court; Fairlands Valley Aqua Park.

¹³³ Further information at: [Grid Edge](#)

- 13.8 In 2025, the Town Centre Clocktower lighting system was replaced with an LED system, reducing energy consumption and maintenance costs while allowing multi-colour displays to mark days of national significance by lighting it in specific colours.

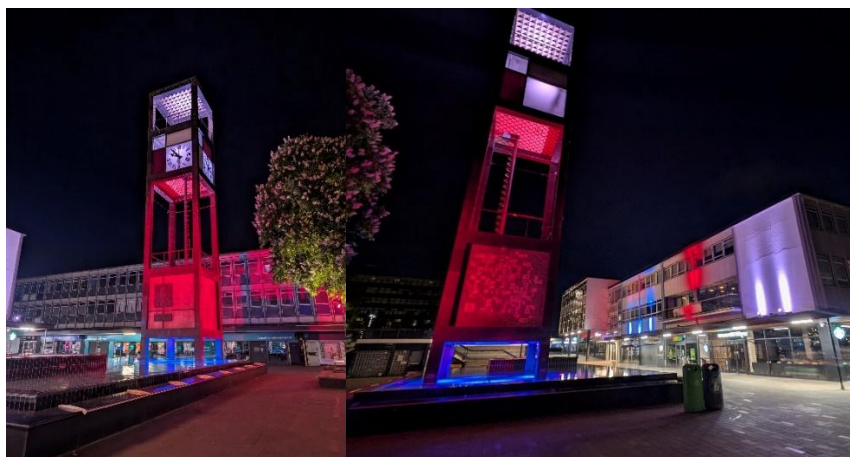


Figure 24. New Town Centre Clocktower LED lighting system.

- 13.9 Recent improvements and closures at Daneshill House have also been undertaken to enhance efficiency. These works included relocating the former CSC¹³⁴ to the ground floor and replacing uplighters on the ground floor and first-floor atrium with LED lighting. LED lights have also been installed in all staircases, the 6th floor Citizens Advice office, 50% of the 5th floor, the 4th floor new block, and the Civic Suite. Short-term measures were prioritised ahead of the building's planned replacement by the new Public Services Hub, as described in 8.6.
- 13.10 The Council has also upgraded St George's and Westgate Multi-Storey Car Parks (MSCPs) lighting. St. George's now features full efficient LED lighting and motion sensors to reduce electricity consumption, while approximately 80% of the lighting in Westgate MSCP has also been upgraded to LED.



Figure 25. St George's MSCP new efficient LED lighting system.

- 13.11 The main challenge for Council buildings' energy decarbonisation remains phasing out natural gas, primarily used for heating and hot water.

¹³⁴ Customer Service Centre

- 13.12 The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)¹³⁵, and the Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF)¹³⁶, which previously supported energy efficiency and low-carbon projects in public buildings, no longer have UK Government funding for 2025/26¹³⁷¹³⁸. If the situation persists, it will limit the Council's ability to phase out natural gas and reduce emissions, requiring alternative financing options to implement decarbonisation initiatives. The Government has suggested that other support mechanisms, through the Local Net Zero Hubs, may be available to public sector organisations.
- 13.13 Decarbonising Council buildings can drive wider town decarbonisation by setting an example and directly supporting emissions reductions across residential, commercial, and public sectors, as shown below.



Figure 26. SBS's building decarbonisation challenge and its synergies with broader town's targets.

- 13.14 The Council is currently developing a GHG Accounting Strategy, as described in 5.14, with a primary focus on understanding building emissions to help prioritise projects and future interventions. In addition, the Council is improving energy billing and payment processes to reduce inefficiencies, costs, and emissions.
- 13.15 Finally, a Climate Champions Community Energy working sub-group has been established in 2025. Still in its early stages, it aims to enhance understanding of the Community Energy landscape through training, experts' insights, and collaboration, while surveying residents and businesses to identify interest, challenges, and opportunities for energy projects.

Water

- 13.16 Alongside energy, water is also central to Stevenage's sustainability and climate resilience. As the UK summers are getting hotter and drier, Stevenage's water supply is increasingly constrained. Hertfordshire is among the driest parts of the UK.

¹³⁵ Further information at: [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme](#)

¹³⁶ Further information at: [Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund](#)

¹³⁷ Further information at: [Low Carbon Skills Fund - Salix Finance](#)

¹³⁸ Further information at: [Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme - Salix Finance](#)

- 13.17 In 2025, the Council began working with Telex Water¹³⁹ as its new portfolio manager, moving all sites from Castle Water to Source for Business¹⁴⁰, which provide competitive rates. Beyond cost savings, Telex Water offers a data insights portal to track site-level consumption and identify potential leakages or inefficiencies. To simplify management and improve monitoring, the aim is to transfer all Council sites to the new supplier. As part of the partnership, the Council will also benefit from a free 15-month Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) trial at a high-usage site, enabling it to gather more precise data and inform future water efficiency initiatives.
- 13.18 Additionally, the Local Plan partial review¹⁴¹ includes strengthened policies on water use, flood prevention, and wastewater management.
- 13.19 Specific policies for Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) promote their use to manage surface water runoff, reduce flood risk, and protect water quality. By enhancing water infiltration and incorporating rainwater harvesting, these measures can also reduce mains water demand.
- 13.20 Updated flood management policies aim to ensure new developments are designed to withstand flooding and avoid transferring risk elsewhere, thereby protecting the wider water system.
- 13.21 The SBLP partial review also encourages water-saving technologies in new developments to reduce consumption and improve efficiency, with a water use target of 110 litres per person per day in new developments. This addresses the area's severe water stress while encouraging sustainable practices.
- 13.22 Finally, wastewater policies ensure adequate infrastructure for new developments while protecting water quality. Together with the promotion of greywater recycling, these measures will strengthen the town's resilience and support sustainable water management.

14 LEVEL 7-9: LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 14.1 Engaging communities at the neighbourhoods and ward level remained a priority in 2024/25. This section highlights efforts to raise awareness, foster participation, and strengthen relationships with residents.
- 14.2 Each year, the Council updates its Climate Change Communications and Marketing Plan, outlining objectives, target audiences, key messages, strategies, and specific campaigns.
- 14.3 The Climate Action Plan Tracker, described in 5.18, allows residents and viewers to provide direct feedback to the Council, enabling further engagement and participation.
- 14.4 Events provide excellent opportunities for resident engagement. In June 2025, Climate Action officers participated in Stevenage Day for the third

¹³⁹ Further information at: [Water supplier for businesses - Telex Water](#)

¹⁴⁰ Further information at: [Source for Business](#)

¹⁴¹ Further information at: [Local Plan Partial Review - Examination Library](#)

consecutive year, hosting a Climate Action Stall in the STEM Village. The stall featured educational displays and interactive games, helping residents learn about incorporating sustainability in daily life and understand different types of renewable energy. The event also provided an opportunity to promote the Council's climate change initiatives, including the CCCF and the WHLG. Residents also learned about the carbon footprint of everyday items and discovered no- and low-cost energy-saving measures they could apply in their homes.



Figure 27. 2025 Stevenage Day's Climate Action stall.

- 14.5 In terms of the sustainability of Stevenage Day 2025 itself, numbers of sustainable measures had been incorporated into the event planning and delivery: encouraging sustainable transport through the provision of free secure cycling parking and reducing energy consumption by using energy efficient generations and stage equipped with LED lighting.
- 14.6 The Council continues to promote awareness through online resources. These resources include the annually updated Environmental Days Calendar¹⁴² for 2025, serving as a quick go-to resource for identifying important international and national environmental dates throughout the year, facilitating community awareness activities around these.

¹⁴² Available at: [2025 Environmental Days Calendar](#)



Figure 28. 2025 Environmental Days Calendar.

- 14.1 Additionally, the Council offers a Sustainable Event Handbook¹⁴³ that guides residents on organising eco-friendly events, including using renewable energy, reducing energy use, waste management, and sourcing local food.
- 14.2 The Council continues to engage in youth strategy group meetings with external partners. The Youth Mayor and Youth Council collaborate with the Council to ensure the voices of the borough's younger residents are heard and empowered.
- 14.3 Engaging with school-aged children on climate change and sustainability is essential to fostering long-term environmental awareness and responsibility. To support environmental education, the Council is producing a Stevenage Sustainability Newsletter for Schools and Colleges, shared at the start of each term. It provides information on funding opportunities, upcoming events, and available sustainability-related resources for educational institutions.

¹⁴³ Available at: [Stevenage Events Sustainability Guide](#)

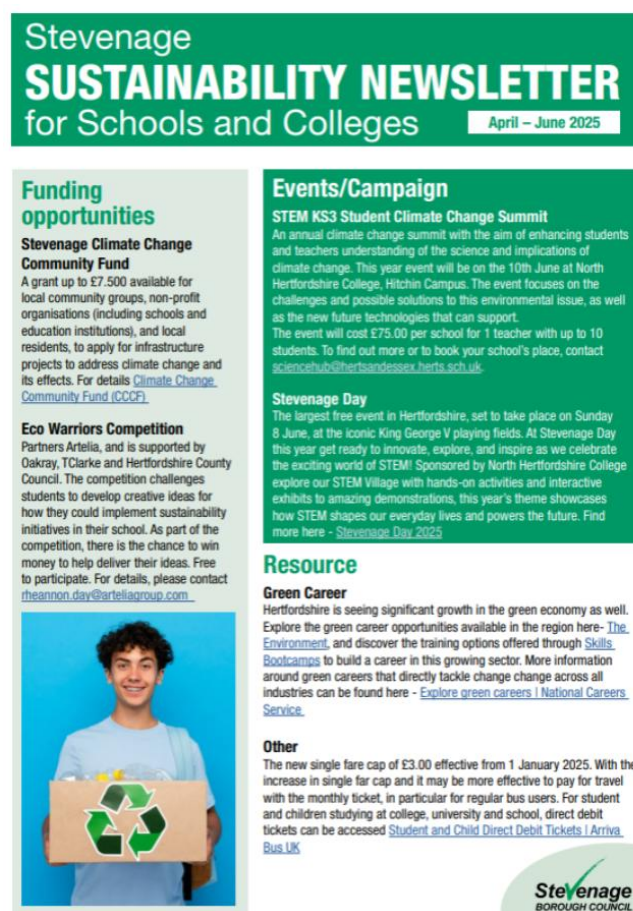


Figure 29. Stevenage Sustainability Newsletter for Schools and Colleges (April – June 2025).

Neighbourhood and Street Level Work

- 14.4 The Council continues to deliver the Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)¹⁴⁴, now in its third year of implementation during 2025/26.
- 14.5 The CCCF aims to provide financial and technical support to community groups in Stevenage wishing to develop and implement 'green projects'. These projects must positively impact the local natural environment, aiding climate change mitigation or adaptation within Stevenage.
- 14.6 Funded by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), £7,500 is available per ward, per year for potential CCCF projects, totalling £97,500 to support environmental initiatives across the borough.
- 14.7 The CCCF accepts applications on a rolling basis and is open to various groups and individuals within the community, including schools, charities, clubs and societies, faith groups, and local businesses. The Council aims to empower these groups to act against climate change and create local value.
- 14.8 Successful applications must meet a few requirements, including endorsement by a local Councillor, being infrastructure-based, and being designed to maximise sustainability and environmental benefits.

¹⁴⁴ Further information at: [Climate Change Community Fund \(CCCF\)](#)

14.9 The application process for the CCCF can be seen in the figure below.

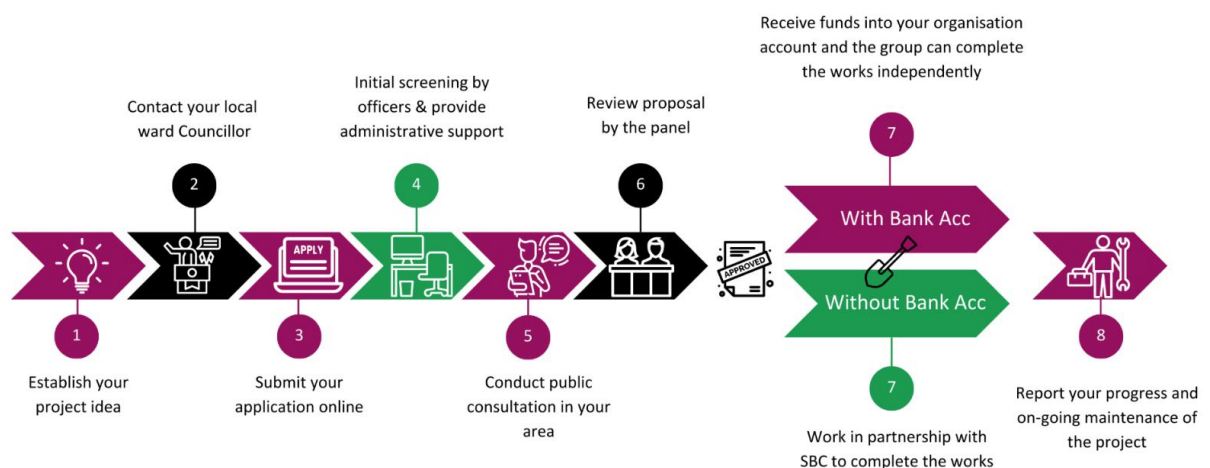


Figure 30. CCCF application process.

14.10 In its second year of CCCF implementation (FY 2024/25), 9 projects were approved across different Stevenage wards, totalling £ 37,652.

Table 2. CCCF approved projects in 2024/25.

Project Name	Stevenage Ward	Applicant
Repair Cafe	Bedwell	Bedwell Community Association
Woodfield Defibrillator Solar Cabinet	Woodfield	Individual resident
St Nicholas Bring Bank	St Nicholas	Local Community Group
Crossroad Community Hub Energy Efficiency Upgrade	Roebuck	Crossroads Caring for Life Ltd
Blenheim Way Community Garden	Longmeadow	The Longmeadow & Bragbury End Gardening Club
Filey Close Bring Bank	Symonds Green	Beaver & Cubs Club
Mobbsbury Way Bring Bank	Chells	Chells Community Association Time
Primett Road Bring Bank	Old Town	Stevenage Old Town Business and Community Partnership
Roundmead Cycle Hanger	Bandley Hill	Cycling UK

14.11 Additionally, three projects were completed during the 2024/25 financial year, having been approved in 2023/24. These include:

- Improvements to Silkin Court Garden (Bandley Hill & Poplars), led by Waste Not Want Not (WNWN) in collaboration with residents.
- The Hampson Park Orchard Extension and Tree Planting project (Almond Hill), led by Friends of Hampson Park.
- The installation of a new Old Town Christmas Tree, led by the Stevenage Old Town Business and Community Partnership.



Figure 31. Silkin Court Garden project funded by CCCF.

- 14.1 Two featured projects are detailed in the following paragraphs as example of recent projects approved and funded through CCCF
- 14.2 The Crossroads Community Hub provides day services for individuals with care needs, including those living with dementia. To enhance the comfort and sustainability of the building, a series of energy efficiency upgrades have been carried out. These include the installation of LED lighting with motion sensors, draft-proof doors, and cavity wall insulation. The new lighting system ensures that lights are only activated when a space is occupied, helping to reduce energy demand. LED lights also offer greater durability and lower maintenance costs. Cavity wall insulation has been installed to address heat loss, improving thermal retention, and contributing to an energy-efficient environment. The replacement of two external doors with draft-proof alternatives further enhances the building's insulation. These new doors help prevent cold air from entering, particularly during the winter months, making it easier and more cost-effective to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature. Although the exact savings in energy and cost have yet to be determined, as the upgrades were recently implemented, the improvements are expected to create a warmer, more comfortable setting for users and contribute to the long-term affordability and sustainability of the service. These improvements also demonstrate a commitment to leading by example in sustainable building practices and aim to inspire other organisations to adopt similar energy-saving measures.



Figure 32. Crossroad Community Hub project funded by CCCF.

- 14.1 The Hampson Park Community Orchard extension and tree-planting project, led by the Friends of Hampson Park, involved the planting of fifteen (15) additional fruit trees, including six apple, six plum, and three pear trees. The project enhanced the existing orchard, creating an improved green space for residents and strengthening opportunities for community connection, outdoor activity, and access to locally grown seasonal fruit. The expansion also delivered measurable environmental benefits, most notably through increased carbon sequestration, improved air quality, and the promotion of greater biodiversity. The additional trees provide vital habitats for pollinators and other wildlife, while also contributing to climate resilience by helping to mitigate urban heat effects.



Figure 33. Hampson Park Community Orchard extension and tree planting project funded by CCCF.

List of Acronyms

AMR:	Automatic Meter Reading.
APSE:	Association for Public Service Excellence.
ASHP:	Air Source Heat Pump.
BAP:	Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan.
BMS:	Building Management System.
BNG:	Biodiversity Net Gain.
CCC:	Climate Change Committee.
CCCF:	Climate Change Community Fund.
CCRA:	Climate Change Risk Assessment.
CIL:	Community Infrastructure Levy.
COP:	UNFCC Conference of the Parties.
COP21:	21 st UNFCC Conference of the Parties, Paris, France, 2015.
COP29:	29 th UNFCC Conference of the Parties, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2024.
Council:	Stevenage Borough Council.
CPO:	Charge Point Operator.
CRP:	Carbon Reduction Plan.
CSC:	Customer Service Centre.
DEFRA:	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
DESNZ:	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.
EA:	Everyone Active.
ECO:	Energy Company Obligation.
EELGA:	East of England Local Government Association.
EfW:	Energy from Waste.
EPC:	Energy Performance Certificate.
EPR:	Extended Producer Responsibility.
EV:	Electric Vehicle.
GBE:	Great British Energy.
GBIS:	Great British Insulation Scheme.
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product.
GHG:	Greenhouse Gas.
HCC:	Hertfordshire County Council.
HCCSP:	Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
HGB:	Hertfordshire Growth Board.

HP:	Heat Pump.
HRA:	Housing Revenues Account.
HUG2:	Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2
HVO:	Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil.
HWP:	Hertfordshire Waste Partnership.
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology.
IT:	Information Technologies.
ktCO2e:	Thousands of tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent.
LA:	Local Authority.
LARA:	Local Area Retrofit Accelerator.
LCSF:	Low Carbon Skills Fund.
LED:	Light-Emitting Diode.
LEP:	Local Enterprise Partnership.
LEVI:	Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure.
LGA:	Local Government Association.
LGR:	Local Government Reform.
LNRS:	Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
LP:	Local Plan.
LPP:	UK Government's Local Power Plan.
LULUCF:	Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry.
MRC:	Major Refurbishment Contract.
MSCP:	Multi-Storey Car Park.
MSEB:	Make Stevenage Even Better.
MtCO2e:	Millions of tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent.
MVHR:	Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery.
NDC:	Nationally Determined Contribution.
NEF:	National Energy Foundation.
Net-Zero:	Balance in the amount of GHG emitted with the amount removed from the atmosphere, resulting in no net increase in these gases.
ORCS:	On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.
ORR:	Operational Risk Register.
OZEV:	Office for Zero Emission Vehicles.
PSDS:	Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.
PPA:	Power Purchase Agreement.
PV:	Photovoltaic.

R&D:	Research and Development.
RCCF:	East of England Regional Climate Change Forum.
SBC:	Stevenage Borough Council.
SBLP:	Stevenage Borough Local Plan.
SCCG:	Staff Climate Champions Group.
SHDF:	Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
SLT:	Senior Leadership Team.
SME:	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise.
SPD:	Supplementary Planning Document.
STEM:	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.
SuDS:	Sustainable Drainage System.
tCO₂:	Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide.
tCO₂e:	Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent, a standard unit used to measure the impact of different greenhouse gases on global warming.
The Council: Stevenage Borough Council	
TOMs:	Themes, Outcomes and Measures (Social Value).
TPO:	Tree Preservation Order.
UK:	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
UKSPF:	UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
UNFCC:	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
WHLG:	Warm Homes Local Grant.
WHSH:	Warm Homes Social Housing.
WNWN:	Waste Not Want Not.
ZCB:	Zero Carbon for Business Tariff.
ZEV:	Zero Emission Vehicle.

Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: ###

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development
Date 8th October 2025



RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY 2025-2027

AUTHORS: KERRY CLIFFORD/SIMON KIFF

LEAD OFFICER: KERRY CLIFFORD,

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present a new Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027. It is good practice to regularly review policies relating to housing management and the current Rent Setting & Service Charge Policy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve a new Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 (Appendix A).
- 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 arising from new legislation.

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 dwellings.
- 3.2 The Council's social and affordable rented housing properties are allocated from Stevenage Borough Council's Housing Register, via a choice-based lettings scheme. All properties are managed by the Council's Housing service and funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), for which rents & services are charged. As a Registered Provider and Landlord of Social Housing, the Council is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).
- 3.3 Changes to rents charged to social housing tenants is governed by the Rent Standard and the Rent Standard Guidance, outlined by the RSH. In addition, the Social Housing Rents (Exceptions and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2016 must also be applied.
- 3.4 The proposed Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 outlines the Council's position on dealing with rent and service charge setting across all its stock and the purpose of the policy is to ensure that SBC:
- Adheres to government legislation when setting rents and service charges
 - Ensures that charges remain affordable to tenants whilst supporting long-term financial viability of the HRA
 - Applies rent setting practices in line with the national Rent Standard
 - Enables transparency and fairness in rent and service charge calculations
 - Provides tenants with clear and timely communication and statutory notice
 - Promotes equality, accessibility and value for money
- 3.5 Since the 2012 self-financing regime was introduced, several legislative changes have impacted HRA finances, the most significant of which has been the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. This put in place a 1% annual rent reduction over a four-year period, estimated to have reduced SBC's HRA rental income by £225M over 30 years.
- 3.6 Following the implementation of rent reductions, The Regulator of Social Housing set a new Rent Standard effective from 1 April 2020, setting out that social housing rent could increase but would be limited to the September Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% for five years, giving housing providers certainty of rent policy and the ability to plan effectively. However, due to high inflation in September 2022, the increase for 23/24 was capped at 7% from 11.1%, reducing the rent that the Council could charge by 4.1%. Whilst rents were capped, the cost of providing services continued to rise at the rate of inflation.

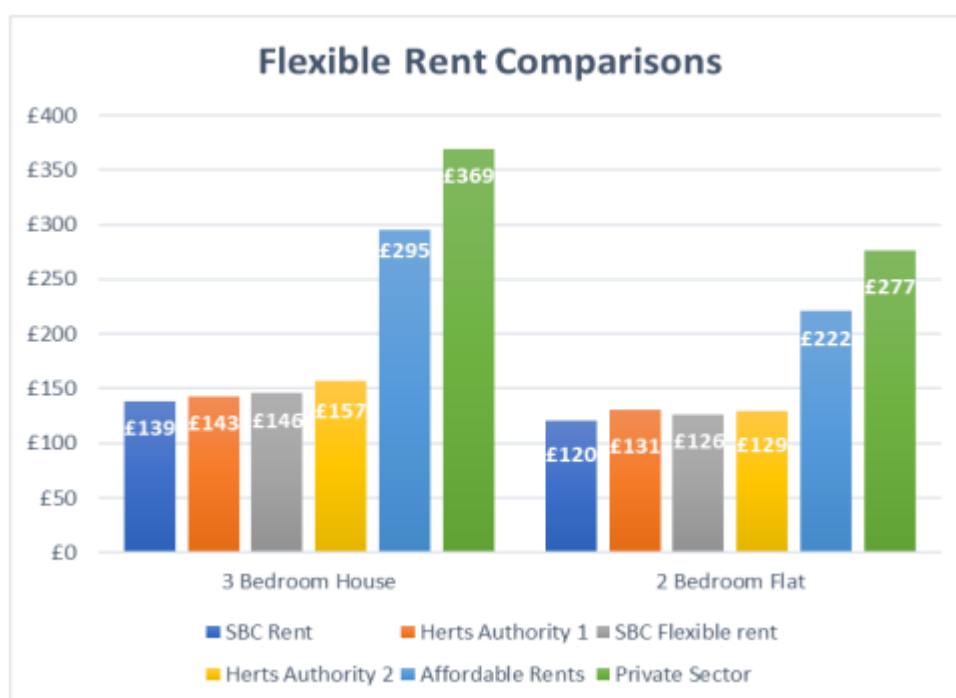
- 3.7 For 2024/25, the rent policy reverted to CPI plus 1%. However, the September 2024 CPI was only 1.7%, significantly lower than forecasted. This reduction impacted projected rent levels within the HRA Business Plan and was a key factor in the challenge of balancing the HRA while meeting regulatory requirements. Despite the lower CPI, expenditure on building safety, energy efficiency, voids, and repairs has continued to rise. Demand for repairs has also increased, and when factoring in the implications of Awaab's Law and wider building safety reforms, the pressure on the HRA has intensified, further complicating efforts to maintain a balanced budget.
- 3.8 Rent reform since 2012, including rent reductions and rent capping has contributed to the destabilisation of HRA's nationally. The current Government has set out a new ten-year rent settlement of September CPI plus 1% to help social landlords budget more effectively but the Local Government Association warns this may still leave Councils with an estimated £7B shortfall.
- 3.9 The Government received clear feedback in response to previous rent consultation that the level of investment in new and existing social housing that is needed to deliver the Government's ambitions will not be unlocked unless social rent convergence was re-introduced.
- 3.10 Rent convergence was a mechanism originally introduced in 2002 but was ended in 2015. Reintroducing convergence would allow social rent properties that are currently below 'formula rent' to increase by an additional amount each year, over and above the CPI+1% limit, until they 'converge' with formula rent.
- 3.11 Formula rent refers to the formula that is used to calculate rent that may be charged for a given property when it is let to a new tenant. Formula rent is based on the property value from valuations in 1999, the number of bedrooms and national and average earnings.
- 3.12 The Government has recently undertaken a consultation on rent convergence of £1 or £2 per week, which closed on the 26th August 2025 and the details of whether and how this will be implemented will be confirmed at the Autumn Budget in November 2025.
- 3.13 The Council currently has over 6900 tenancies below formula rent and it is projected that it will take over 14 years based on a £1 per week increase for rents to be fully converged.
- 3.14 The HRA is reliant on rent and service charge income from tenants and leaseholders to provide appropriate housing management services and to meet the regulatory requirements of the service. These services are wholly funded by the HRA and the HRA is ringfenced to deliver these services, for the benefit of tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.15 The HRA must be financially viable and hold reserves and cannot run on a deficit and therefore the Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 is essential to ensuring that the Council can continue to provide services and maintain safe and warm homes that meet new and emerging regulatory requirements, as well as build new homes.

- 3.16 As well as the further demands on the HRA recently introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the Building Safety Act 2022, the Government will be implementing enhanced requirements thorough Awaab's Law in October 2025 and is currently consulting with Social Landlords on a revised Decent Homes Standard and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) which will further impact the Council's ability to meet regulatory requirements and achieve a balanced HRA.
- 3.17 Even without factoring in future regulatory and compliance requirements, the Council must deliver savings of £2 million annually over the next three years to ensure the HRA remains financially viable.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The proposed Policy will support the Council in maintaining compliance with both current and emerging legislation, including the Rent Standard, Social Housing Regulation Act, and revised Consumer Standards—and will enable the continued delivery of new housing and statutory services. This is particularly vital in a climate of increasing demand, financial pressure, and regulatory reform, where the Council must demonstrate resilience, transparency, and a commitment to safe, high-quality housing.
- 4.2 As outlined in the proposed policy, there are two main charges for tenants.
- Rent – money paid by tenants to landlords in return for living in their property. Rent charges are set on a yearly basis and are agreed as part of the annual HRA budget setting process, up to the maximum as defined by the Rent Standard. In the case of affordable rents, these are inclusive of service charges.
 - Service Charges – money paid by tenants and leaseholders to landlords in return for additional services provided by the Council or other parties to manage buildings, estates and shared facilities.
- 4.3 The new Policy reflects legislative changes to the Rent Policy and Rent Standard introduced since the adoption of the 2020–2025 Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy. It also brings forward rent flexibility, enabling the Council to respond to local financial and housing pressures. Under the updated Rent Standard, local authorities may apply discretionary uplifts of up to 5% above formula rent for general needs housing and up to 10% for supported housing. This flexibility will be embedded within the Council's Rent Flexibility Statement and forms part of the approved framework to support the financial viability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) amid rising cost pressures and regulatory reform. Rent flexibility is seen by Government as a necessary tool that enables social landlords to respond to increasing service and financial demands.
- 4.4 Rent flexibility can only be applied to properties which have been relet following a void period and does not affect existing tenants, unless they wish to move/transfer to a new Council home via choice-based lettings.
- 4.5 In summary the proposed policy will mean:

- Rents on all new lettings for general needs properties will be set at formula rent plus 5%, or affordable rent where this applies.
 - Rents on all new lettings of sheltered accommodation will be set at formula rent plus 10% or affordable rent if this applies.
 - If a mutual exchange takes place, the rent on the new tenancy will remain unchanged and this may be less than formula rent.
- 4.6 The proposed Policy will allow consistency of approach to the Rent Setting and Service Charge process and ensure that changes are implemented effectively.
- 4.7 In November 2024, as part of the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25–2028/29, Cabinet approved the recommendation for Stevenage Borough Council to adopt rent flexibility, subject to consultation with tenants, as one of the key measures to support the financial viability of the HRA.
- 4.8 The proposed Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 was consulted upon with residents during the period of 19th August 2025 to 26th September 2025.
- 4.9 The consultation was published on the Councils website and was shared regularly via social media channels. There was an option to comment via the online form or to contact the Income Services team to share feedback. The income team regularly reviewed responses and due to limited feedback, the consultation was extended by a further week, however only two tenants and nil non-tenants responded to the consultation.
- 4.10 Both respondents told us that they understood what services were included in their service charges but only one out of the two felt that services were reflective of the charges. This will be recognised by a wider review of service charges coming forward during this financial year and related comments regarding caretaking will be addressed via wider tenant and leaseholder consultation and feedback as part of the Caretaking Service Review that is currently underway.
- 4.11 The consultation feedback received included concerns from one respondent about the policy's introduction and opposition from another due to the potential for higher rents.
- 4.12 SBC remains committed to ensuring that social housing remains genuinely affordable for all residents and will state the rent set when the property is advertised through the choice-based lettings process to ensure that charges are affordable to prospective tenants at the bidding stage.
- 4.13 As outlined in this report, rent flexibility is a necessary measure to support the financial viability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Importantly, it applies only to new tenants or those transferring between properties, meaning existing tenancies remain unaffected. Comparative analysis demonstrates that even with rent flexibility applied, Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) rents remain favourably positioned, significantly below private sector rents and broadly comparable with other local stock-holding authorities and affordable rent benchmarks.



- 4.14 Members should also note that approximately 60% of households are in receipt of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit and rent flexibility will only apply to newly let properties.
- 4.15 SBC also provides a breadth of tenancy support, Welfare and Debt Advisors and Citizens Advice referrals to support tenants that may need additional help to meet their rent obligations.
- 4.16 The proposed policy changes are projected to increase HRA balances by £2.75 million over the duration of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), making a substantial contribution towards the savings required to maintain the stability and long-term viability of the HRA. Based on void trends and the time required for consultation, the MTFS has forecasted 50% of additional income in the first year (2025/26), representing approximately £50K extra income, and £100K in each subsequent year.
- 4.17 Subject to the Policy being approved, rent flexibility can be introduced as soon as the housing management system changes have been completed, this is expected to be towards the end of November 2025.
- 4.18 The Executive Housing Working Group has reviewed the proposed Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 and endorse the recommendations to Cabinet.
- 4.19 The HRA MTFS considered various assumptions around income and expenditure, including rent increases and the use of rent flexibility and it is considered that the adoption of the Policy is a key component to the success of the 30-year Business Plan and the viability of the HRA.
- 4.20 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.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to maintain a ring-fenced account for its housing stock income and expenditure, known as the HRA.
- 5.2.2 The Council is a provider of social housing and has a duty to have regard to the relevant standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing under s.193 of the Housing Regeneration Act 2008. The Council must therefore take into account government guidance and the Rent Standard when applying rent and service charges.
- 5.2.3 The proposed policy will ensure the Council meets the requirements set out in legislation and provides a fair and transparent process.

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

[Rent Standard and Guidance](#)

[The Direction on the Rent Standard 2025](#)

[Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy \(2024/25-2027/28\)](#)

[Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy Consultation documents](#)

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Draft Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy

Appendix B – EQIA – draft Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy

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Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025/27

Stevenage Borough Council

Date created	June 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Head of Service
Version	2
Author	Simon Kiff Head of Housing Operations
Business Unit and Team	Housing and Neighbourhoods
Policy Review Date	June 2027 (All policies should be reviewed every 2 years or earlier if there is a change in legislation)
Equality Impact Assessment Date	July 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 This policy outlines the principles and approach by which Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) will set rent levels and service charges for residential properties.
- 1.2 It ensures compliance with government legislation while supporting the financial viability of SBC's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the delivery of affordable, well-maintained homes.
- 1.3 SBC will provide tenants and leaseholders with clear information which explains how rents and service charges are set and, if applicable, what changes have been included.
- 1.4 This policy is to replace the current Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy that was agreed and implemented from the 1st April 2020, for a period of five years.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
 - All secure and introductory tenants of SBC
 - Leaseholders (for service charge purposes)
 - New tenancies and re-lets
 - Shared ownership properties (where applicable)
 - HRA properties used for Temporary Accommodation

Garage rents and Housing Related Support Charges are excluded unless otherwise stated.

- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that SBC:
 - Adheres to government legislation when setting rents.
 - Ensure rents remain affordable to tenants while supporting long-term financial viability.
 - For rent-setting practices to be in line with national Rent Standard guidance.
 - Enable transparency and fairness in rent and service charge calculations.
 - Support new housing development, improvements, and environmental upgrades.
 - Provide clear and timely tenant communication and statutory notice.
 - Promote equality, accessibility, and value for money.
- 2.3 This policy will be owned and managed by the Income Service and the Finance Service.

3. Legal Framework

3.1 This policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the requirements of the following:

- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing (2020)
- Rent Standard Guidance 2020 (RSH)
- Housing Act 1985, Section 24
- Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 76
- Social Housing Rents (Exceptions and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2016
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018

4. Equalities

4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 SBC 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, SBC

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
- 4.2 Further information on SBC'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 SBC regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as very important to delivery of services.
- 5.2 SBC 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 SBC's approach to handling information please see Data Protection Act (stevenage.gov.uk)

6. Policy

Background

- 6.1 The government introduced new rent setting measures under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, for social housing landlords to reduce the rent payable by tenants by

1% each year starting April 2016 and ending in April 2019. This superseded the government's previous 10-year rent increase policy implemented in April 2015.

- 6.2 The Regulator of Social Housing set a new Rent Standard for registered providers of social housing with effect from 1 April 2020. It is accompanied by a policy statement which sets out the government's policy on rents for social housing from 1 April 2020 onwards.
- 6.3 A new Rent Standard was introduced for 2020/21, advising rent charges can increase by up to CPI (as of September the previous year) plus 1%, for a period of at least five years. Due to high inflation in September 2022 the increase for 23/24 was capped at 7% from 11.1%.
- 6.4 As per the June 2025 Spending Review, a ten-year rent settlement was announced with annual increases capped at CPI plus 1% continuing from April 2026.
- 6.5 Annual increases in rent charges are approved as part of the budget setting process with final approval by Full Council each year.
- 6.6 Future annual rent changes will be in line with the Rent Standard or other relevant legislation at the time when the process of setting future rent charges starts.

Rent Flexibility

- 6.7 The government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing recognises that local authorities may need flexibility in rent setting to respond to local financial and housing pressures. As such, Councils may apply discretionary uplifts:
- Up to 5% above formula rent for general needs housing
 - Up to 10% above formula rent for supported housing

SBC's Rent Flexibility Statement provides the framework for such discretion. (See Appendix 1).

New Tenants

- 6.8 Rents on all new lettings for general needs properties will be set at either formula rent plus 5% or affordable rent.
- 6.9 Rents on all new lettings of Independent Living Accommodation will be set at formula rent plus 10% or affordable rent.
- 6.10 If a mutual exchange takes place, the rent on the new tenancy will remain unchanged. This may be less than formula rent.

Exceptions and Special Tenures

- 6.11 Where properties fall outside the Rent Standard (e.g. shared ownership and current tenanted HRA temporary accommodation), rents will typically increase by CPI + 1%, unless statutory regulation or valid business reasons dictate otherwise.

- 6.12 Where Affordable Rent tenures are applied, rents will be set in line with Schedule 2 of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 and related guidance.
- 6.13 Rents for new SBC-owned Temporary Accommodation (TA) are set with regard to relevant government rules on housing benefit (HB) subsidy and what would be considered to be a “reasonable” rent to charge.
- 6.14 The charge to a household for their use and occupation of TA is in accordance with the maximum HB payable as detailed in the subsidy rules for TA. For SBC-owned properties, rents are set at what SBC determines is a “reasonable” rent for the accommodation that is being provided. This will be determined on a scheme-by-scheme basis with reference to current market rental values.

Adaptations

- 6.15 Where a tenant is in situ and an adaptation or extension has resulted in the property being either increased or reduced in size (for example an additional bedroom), a new 1999 valuation will be requested due to the change, we will then set the new rent charge in accordance with the formula rent guidelines, with the appropriate rent increase or decrease being applied.

New homes

- 6.16 Rents for new social housing, whether through the purchasing of properties or new developments, will be set at either affordable rent or at formula rent plus rent flexibility.

Rent charge periods

- 6.17 Annual rent changes take place on the first Monday of April.
- 6.18 Rent is charged weekly every Monday, except in instances where a new tenancy starts on a different weekday, this is referred to as ‘any day start’.
- 6.19 Where a tenancy starts on ‘any day’ other than a Monday, the first weeks’ rent is calculated pro-rata for the initial number of days within the first week of a new tenancy (any day start). The weekly rent charge period will revert to every Monday thereafter.
- 6.20 SBC will issue a rent change letter to all tenants giving at least 28 days’ notice of the new rent charge taking effect. If 28 days’ notice is not given, the new rent will not be able to be charged.

Service Charges

- 6.21 Any service charges will be set annually and aim to recover the costs incurred in providing the services. SBC will consult with tenants and leaseholders regarding the setting of service charges, including what services are provided and why charges are incurred.
- 6.22 Service charges are collected in addition to rent to recover the costs incurred in providing services to a property or estate. Service charges are set with the intention of covering costs, not delivering surplus. This is in addition to the rent which is payable, directly or indirectly, for services, repairs, maintenance, improvements or insurance or the landlord’s costs of management.

- 6.23 The overall aim of the policy is to ensure that service charges are set based on the projected costs of the services provided, and that the method of calculation is transparent and can be easily understood.
- 6.23 SBC recognises that increased service charges based on actual costs could cause financial hardship for some tenants. Furthermore, in future years factors such as high inflation could result in cost-based service charge increases being unaffordable for some tenants. Through its annual budget and rent setting process, SBC may decide to place a maximum limit on the service charge increase in a particular year, based on an assessment of the affordability of the charge.
- 6.24 SBC will aim to ensure its tenants are not disadvantaged by the effect on services charges and will show transparency in all its service charge accounting.
- 6.25 Other charges that payers of service charges may also be liable for:
- management fees; these are charged in line with the provisions made for such charges in the relevant tenancy agreement or lease.
 - administrative fees; these cover Council's costs associated with managing properties, administering service charge and rent accounts, income collection and providing customer services where these are not covered by rent.
- 6.26 In general, service charges will be reviewed annually and tenants will be given at least one month's notice prior to the implementation of any changes to service charges. These changes will usually become effective on the first Monday of April in any given year.

Housing Related Support Charges are not included in the scope of this policy.

- 6.27 For leaseholders we will comply with the terms of Section 153 of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, providing clear and transparent information to leaseholders regarding service charges and management fees.

Definitions

- 6.28 **Formula Rent** - A weekly rent set in accordance with the formula set out in the Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2018 where 30% of the rent is based on relative property values (as at January 1999), 70% based on relative local earnings (as at January 1999) with a bedroom factor applied. The capital values are used to calculate the formula rents set by SBC. The Regulator's rent standard provides for a 5% tolerance (flexibility level) in individual rents (this is increased to 10% for supported housing) but subject to maximum published Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. LHA rates are normally published once a year however, the Head of Housing Operations will be responsible for checking if there are amendments.
- 6.29 **Affordable Rent** – A rent that is no more than 80% of the market rent for an equivalent property for that size and location (inclusive of any service charge).

SBC is committed to ensuring that social housing remains genuinely affordable for all residents. While rents for Council-owned homes are set in accordance with the national Rent Standard and may exceed Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in some cases, we will ensure that rent levels are fair, transparent, and sustainable.

Where rents exceed LHA rates, SBC will:

- Assess the impact on tenants who rely on Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- Provide targeted support and advice to mitigate the risk of rent arrears
- Work with partners to ensure discretionary housing payments (DHP) are accessible to those in need
- Regularly review rent levels to ensure they reflect local incomes and housing need.

Our aim is to strike a balance between maintaining high-quality housing services and protecting tenants from financial hardship. We will continue to advocate for adequate welfare support to ensure no tenant is left unable to afford their home.

- 6.30 **HRA Housing Revenue Account** – a ring-fenced account that records income and expenditure related to SBC’s housing stock.
- 6.31 **CPI Consumer Price Index** – a measure of inflation used by the government, which is applied when calculating annual rent increases.
- 6.32 **Rent Standard** - National guidance set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) that sets rules on how rents should be calculated by social landlords.
- 6.33 **Flexible Rent** - A rent level that can be set up to 5% (general needs) or 10% (supported housing) above formula rent, used to respond to local financial needs.
- 6.34 **Temporary Accommodation (TA)** - Housing provided by SBC on a short-term basis, usually for those who are homeless or awaiting permanent housing.
- 6.35 **Service Charges** - additional costs paid by tenants or leaseholders for specific services provided to a property or estate, such as cleaning, lighting, or grounds maintenance.
- 6.36 **Management Fees** - Charges covering the cost of managing housing services, typically applied to leaseholders.
- 6.37 **Administrative Fees** - Costs incurred by SBC in managing service charge accounts and providing customer services.
- 6.38 **Any Day Start** - A tenancy that begins on a day other than Monday; rent is initially calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- 6.39 **Void** - A property that is empty and not currently tenanted, often in preparation for a new tenancy.
- 6.40 **Mutual Exchange** - When two tenants agree to swap their homes with the approval of SBC or housing provider.
- 6.41 **Leaseholder** - A person who owns the right to live in a property for a fixed number of years

- 6.42 **Shared Ownership** - A housing scheme where a resident owns part of the property and pays rent on the remaining share.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 SBC will give details of its rent policy in its tenancy agreement and on SBC's website. The tenancy agreement also states how and when the rent may be increased.
- 7.2 Stevenage Borough Council will consult with tenants and leaseholders on this policy using existing consultation mechanisms, to ensure a commitment to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard in offering tenants opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services.
- 7.3 This Policy will be consulted on with the Portfolio Holder for Housing as well as members of the Executive Housing Working Group before being approved at Cabinet.

8 Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years or earlier if there is a change in legislation. Where more than 10% of the policy content is changed, the Strategic 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

- 9.1 Rent Standard and Guidance
- 9.2 The Direction on the Rent Standard 2025

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

Appendix A – Stevenage Borough Council Rent Flexibility Statement

Appendix B – Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy Equality Impact Assessment

12 Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author

Appendix A

Stevenage Borough Council Rent Flexibility Statement

With the adoption of the revised Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027, SBC proposes to introduce rent flexibility on all newly let properties, which means that rents can be set up to 5% above formula rent on all general needs properties and up to 10% above formula rent for our independent living schemes. This does not affect the rent charged to current tenants unless they wish to transfer using the Choice Based Letting scheme.

As an example, if the formula rent is £86.03, 5% of this is £4.30 so we would charge £90.33 per week on a 50-week basis. All rents will be advertised with the properties when they are ready for bidding on.

The reason for introducing rent flexibility is because SBC currently has many competing demands that need to be covered in the HRA Business Plan, including the need to ensure all properties are maintained to a high standard, new requirements set in legislation such as Aawabs Law, the Building Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety (England) regulations are adhered to, alongside ensuring that the Council's commitment to ensure all HRA stock can achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C by 2030. There is also a consultation on a new Decent Homes Standard and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard, the requirements of which are still unknown.

In addition to this, the Council has also made the commitment to invest in our current stock as well as building a number of new homes for social and affordable rent over the coming years.

With the changes to right to buy legislation we may see a high reduction in sales which in turn lead to a reduction of sale receipts that can be invested in house building or acquisitions. By introducing rent flexibility, this will support these aims.

It is evident from the commitments above that there is significant investment required to both maintain, improve, and increase our stock and to deliver services to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

Accordingly, providing the level of investment required going forward is going to be a major challenge, which will require significant innovation and hard decisions. To summarise, achieving what is required and both maintaining and further improving the quality of the HRA stock will not be possible without applying rent flexibility.

Rent flexibility was set out within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25-2028/29 and approved by Cabinet in November 2024, subject to consultation with tenants.

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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



Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025/27

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

Date created	August 2025
Approved by	Assistant Director Housing & Neighbourhoods
Owner	Head of Hosuing Operations
Version	1
Author	Simon Kiff/Elizabeth Ddamulira
Business Unit and Team	Head of Housing Operations/Income Services Manager

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

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

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

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

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

--

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

Name of assessor: n/a

Decision approved by:

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?		Review of rent setting policy with implementation of Rent Flexibility	
Lead Assessor	Simon Kiff		Assessment team Elizabeth Ddamulira Keith Reynoldson
Start date	22/07/2025	End date	
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		Every 2 years	

Page 185

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	- Existing tenants and leaseholders - Prospective tenants - Vulnerable groups (e.g., people with disabilities, older people) - Low-income households - Staff responsible for rent/service charge administration
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	This policy outlines how rents and service charges are calculated and set for tenants and leaseholders. It ensures transparency, fairness, legal compliance, and financial viability for the council while maintaining affordability for residents. The policy is compliant with human rights legislation. It supports the right to housing and a fair standard of living, with no adverse impacts identified. To review and make relevant changes to the current rent setting policy and to consider the introduction of 'rent flexibility', which is provided for within the rent standard and allows providers of social housing to set rents at up to 5% above formula rent (10% for supported housing).

	The review of the policy is to make sure that the council are working in line with the current rent standard due to the original rent standard implemented in 2020/21 was set for a 5 year period. The Council is proposing to consult with tenants re the amended policy and re the introduction of rent flexibility for all newly let properties, both general needs and independent living and the acceptable tolerance levels that would apply.
--	---

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	The aim of the Rent & Service Charge Policy is to provide a fair method of calculating rents and service charges for all of our tenants. It also aligns with the Council's Concessions for Fees and Charges Policy, and the principle of recovering the cost of providing services.	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Rent Standard and Guidance The Direction on the Rent Standard 2025 Rent account information Housing System data (NEC) Supported housing service data Social Housing Act 2023 Demographic profiles of current residents Income levels and benefit dependency
---	---

	Ethnic background and age distribution Disability status Analysis of arrears and affordability trends by protected characteristics
--	---

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	This EqIA confirms that, while the Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy has a broadly neutral or positive impact, steps should be taken to mitigate any unintended disadvantages for vulnerable or low-income residents. The policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The Policy statement on rents for social housing recognises that registered social providers should have some discretion over the rent set for individual properties, to take account of local factors, in consultation with tenants. Any groups that are potentially disadvantaged are still expected to be able to benefit from a council property set at a social rent and receive benefit support to cover affordable rent properties.
---	---

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	Rent Flexibility - The increase would be applied to all newly let properties; whilst the Government Policy allows for an rent flexibility increase of 10% on supported accommodation,	Negative impact	Rent Flexibility - Residents may be experiencing economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on	Unequal impact	Rent Flexibility - The increase would be applied to all newly let properties; properties would be advertised at the new rent level at the point of letting, therefore prospective tenants

	tolerance levels will be identified through public consultation. Rent setting policy - Transparent charges support budgeting and planning		older people and disabled people, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment and may also have lower income / be reliant on pensions and/or benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation). However, the levels of rent will still be inline with the LHA rate. The rent charge is means tested and residents may be entitled to either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover the increased charge. Financial advice can be given from our Welfare Advice and Debt team or through our partnership with the CA.		can decide whether it is affordable to them.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page 5 & 6				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	To agree rent setting policy and to introduce rent flexibility, a period of consultation must take place with tenants for a period of no less than 4 weeks.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Supports equitable treatment	Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the cost of living crisis, and increases in energy, food and fuel costs in particular. This may have a greater impact on people with a disability, who may have additional needs for heating and to run particular equipment, and may also have lower income / be reliant on benefits (which have been increased in line with inflation) However, the levels of rent will still be in line with the LHA rate. The rent charge is means tested and residents may be entitled to either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover the increased charge. Financial advice can be given from our Welfare Advice and Debt team or through our partnership with the CA to support maximising of income and support with external factors.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Page 3 and 4				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	To introduce rent flexibility, a period of statutory consultation must take place with tenants for a period of no less than 6 weeks.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
---	--	--	--

Gender Reassignment

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

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Rent flexibility - A cohabiting couple, including those married or in a civil partnership, who both are in employment, with or without children, may find it easier to meet increased costs than a single person household or single parent with children.				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Pregnancy & Maternity

Positive impact		Negative impact	May increase pressure during maternity leave or reduced income periods	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Rent flexibility - Those who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be impacted to a greater degree by this change if they need to move to larger accommodation as a result on lacking a bedroom, however rent is advertised before the tenancy starts and tenants are aware of what they will be expected to pay when bidding on suitable properties.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The rent charge is means tested and residents may be entitled to either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover the increased charge. Financial advice can be given from our Welfare Advice and Debt team or through our partnership with the CA to support maximising of income and support with external factors.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race

Positive impact	Consistent application regardless of ethnicity	Negative impact	Language barriers may affect understanding of charges	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 evidence to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.				
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 to suggest any specific impacts on customers within any of these protected characteristic groups.			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Inclusive practice maintained	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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

Socio-economic ¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact	Rent flexibility - Rent and Service Charge increase	Unequal impact	

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.

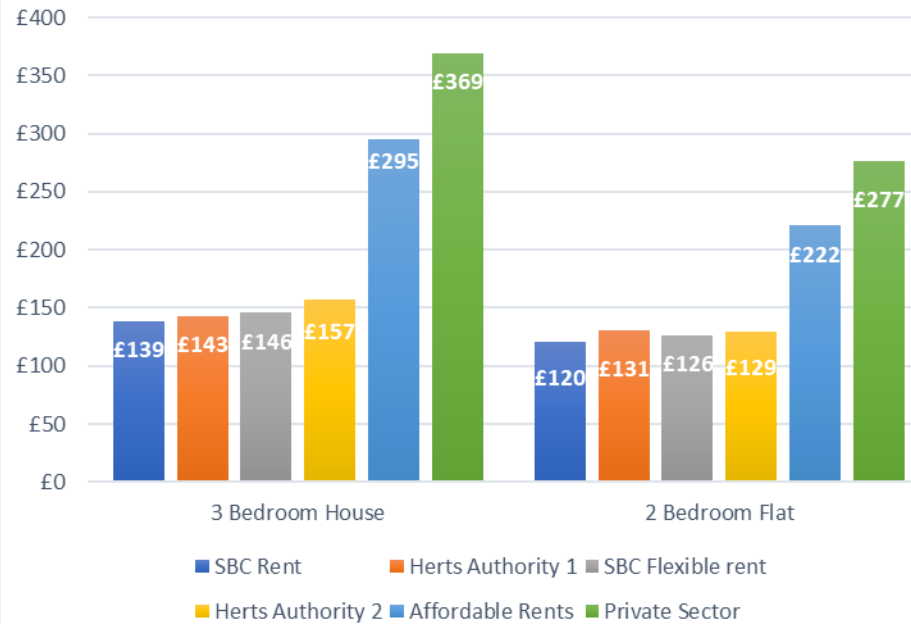
			could negatively affect residents in a lower socio-economic standing as they may already have financial challenges. However, the levels of rent will still be in line with the LHA rate. The rent charge is means tested and residents may be entitled to either Housing Benefit or Universal Credit to cover the increased charge.		
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Housing Management systems reports on those in rent and service charge arrears and those supported. At the end of Q1 2025 36% were in rent arrears. Transferring tenants should not have any former tenant arrears and the new rent would be advertised at bidding stage, therefore the prospective tenant would be aware of the rent level before accepting a property.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Identify and support those who are struggling utilising various support streams such as downsizing for those who are under occupying. Financial advice can be given from our Welfare Advice and Debt team or through our partnership with the CA to support maximising of income and support with external factors.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Additional Considerations

Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	If rent flexibility is implemented, all properties will be advertised at the new rent levels, and Income Recovery staff will work with any new tenants who may be impacted by this change to ensure that they are claiming all of the financial assistance to which they may be entitled. Also, the authority has Welfare and Debt Advice Officers and continues to fund Citizen's Advice (CA), who will also support tenants in ensuring they are aware of wrap around support that may be available, including debt management advice, discretionary housing payments, household support fund and Community Chest. Average rents will still be below the Local Housing Allowance and significantly less than affordable or market rents. To explore the option of rent flexibility, a review of the Council rents compared to other local providers and the private sector has been conducted. The comparison is illustrated in the graph below, which shows where the Council's flexible rents would be for two types of properties (a 3 Bed House and a 2 Bed Flat) compared to two other local housing providers in Hertfordshire, as well as the rates charged for affordable rents and rent in the private sector, as depicted below;				

Flexible Rent Comparisons



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

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?

The policy states that the Council will have regard to the Local Housing Allowance when setting affordable rents. If affordable rents are set at this level, HB/ UC housing cost will cover the rent in full

What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

Staff in the Income Services and Finance team will closely monitor, through day-to-day income management and tenant account management, to establish the impact of the rent flexibility increases and

	for those tenants who are entitled to the maximum amount of housing benefit. Setting at the Local Housing Allowance will also benefit tenants who are, for example on a low wage or zero-hour contracts and where partial housing benefit can be paid. For those moving into Affordable Rent (AR) properties a comprehensive affordability assessment is carried out prior to offer to ensure that the tenancy is sustainable. The implementation of the policy in respect of Affordable Rent will be kept under review by the Housing Development Working Group and should adverse impacts be identified this will inform future decision making in this regard.		put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly
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Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Need for translation and accessible formats	Residents?	A statutory consultation of 6 weeks will need to be undertaken before SBC can
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	General support for transparency and fairness		introduce rent flexibility and implement new rent setting policy. Staff in the income services and Finance team will closely monitor through day-to-day income management and tenant account management to establish impact of the rent & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly.
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?	The report will go through the Council's pre-budget scrutiny meetings before being presented to the Full Council		

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	This EQIA has found that the Rent and Service Charge Setting Policy is fair and legally compliant. Potential negative impacts are manageable with appropriate support and communication. The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all residents. The future viability of the HRA Business Plan is reliant upon SBC being able to maximise income collection, recover arrears and the costs of service provision where it's possible to do so.

	2c. Stop and remove	
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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 income service, and fit for purpose support services so the relevant support and guidance can be given to those tenants effected	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	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:

Date:

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

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