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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 16 December 2025
Time: 6.00pm,
Location: Council Chamber
Contact: Gemma O'Donnell (01438) 212216
committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Sandra Barr, Phil Bibby, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand

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AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 November 2025.
5 – 10

3. MINUTES OF THE INFORMAL MEETINGS 26 NOVEMBER 2025 AND 1 DECEMBER 2025

To note the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Informal Meeting on Corporate Communications (26 November 2025) and Member Enquiries Complaints (1 December 2025).
11 – 18

4. PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - COUNCIL TAX BASE 2026/27

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for the approval of the Council Tax Base for 2026/27.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
19 – 28

5. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT DRAFT BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2026/27

To consider the decision of the Cabinet on the proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2026/27, to be considered by Council on 21 January 2026.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
29 – 80

6. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - RELOCATION OF THE LISTER HOSPITAL TAXI RANK

To consider the decision of the Cabinet for the approval to revoke the existing taxi rank located at the Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage and to adopt a new taxi rank, 35m from the existing rank on Coreys Mill Lane, in accordance with Section 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
81 – 108

7. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER 2 2025/26

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to receive a report highlighting the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter two 2025/26 and providing an update on progress against current strategic risks.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
109 – 216

8. PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - DIGITAL STRATEGY

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to receive the Digital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 which covers the development of online services ensuring the Council delivers improvements to help residents access digital services quickly and easily.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
217 – 252

9. 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

10. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

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

11. 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.

12. 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 19 November 2025.
253 – 254

13. PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET – LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT – AGENCY PROPOSAL

To consider the decision of the Cabinet regarding a report relating to the Leisure Management Contract

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
255 – 262

14. PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - THE PROVISION OF FIRE DOOR INSTALLS, INSPECTIONS AND REMEDIAL WORK TO FLAT FRONT ENTRANCES AND COMMUNAL FIRE DOORS

To consider the decision of the Cabinet to seek approval to procure and award a new contract for the provision of fire door installations, servicing, and remedial works to flat front entrances and communal fire doors across the Council's housing stock.

Notice of Decisions to follow in separate document.
263 - 272

15. 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

16. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

Agenda Published 08/12/2025

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 19 November 2025
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Council Chamber

Present:	Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Phil Bibby, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand
Start / End Time:	Start Time: 6.00pm End Time: 7.15pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle and Leanne Brady.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Part I Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - SECOND QUARTER MONITORING REPORT FOR GENERAL FUND, HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND CAPITAL MONITORING**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer provided an update to the Committee on the Quarter 2 2025/26 monitoring for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Monitoring. It was noted that the General Fund showed a stable and balanced position, with a minor overspend of £1,380.

Members were informed that the Council remained within its delegated budget variation limit, with reserves and balances forecasted to remain above the minimum threshold.

It was noted that in relation to capital, £10 million of expenditure had been rephased into future years. The HRA was projected to have an underspend of £164,000, although there continued to be demands with repairs and maintenance costs.

A question was raised regarding the salary budget overspend and the increase of agency staff within Stevenage Direct Services (SDS). Officers advised that the reliance on agency workers was being reviewed, noting that despite a previous restructure, agency staff were still required to cover some refuse rounds, weekend work, sickness and leave.

It was confirmed that this issue had been raised with the Assistant Director of SDS to determine the service's staffing requirements. Officers also highlighted the recent unpredictability of pay awards, which had affected the ability to offset agency costs with salary underspends.

A further question was raised regarding the accuracy of the General Fund working budget figures in a table referenced at 4.3.2 in the report, which appeared identical to the original budget. Officers confirmed that the approved budget changes and second quarter review adjustments had been incorrectly shown within the original budget column. Officers agreed to circulate an amended table to the Committee.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

4 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer advised the Committee that Cabinet had received the Mid-Year Treasury Management review, which confirmed compliance with all Prudential and Treasury indicators, and no breaches of borrowing or investment limits.

Members were advised that market conditions, including inflation and interest rate movements, would continue to be closely monitored to ensure financial sustainability.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

5 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27**

The Strategic Director and CFO advised the Committee that the Council Tax Support Scheme would be maintained in its current form for 2026/27 due to the fact that it had not been possible to carry out any modelling that did not show a significant impact on those in receipt of the current support scheme.

It was noted that future schemes would depend on the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timeline, as a single scheme would be required for the new unitary authority. With each legacy authority likely to have a different level of Council Tax Support, work would therefore continue, allowing the Council to implement changes or defer them as necessary.

Members raised a question regarding when the Council Tax Support Scheme was last updated. Officers explained that the scheme had remained largely unchanged since its introduction in 2012, aside from adopting an 8.5% discount scheme. This was for maximum liability for working-age claimants on maximum benefit.

The Chair noted that a pre-scrutiny meeting had not taken place as there was no substantive material for the Committee to review in 2025.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

6 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - BALANCING THE BUDGET 2026/27**

The Strategic Director and CFO updated members on the September Medium-Term Financial Strategy, noting additional savings identified since the report. It was reported that with a remaining savings target of approximately £400,000, required efficiencies would likely be met through increases in fees and chargers.

A projected surplus of around £700,000 in 2026/27 was noted, and officers advised that some of this could be used to support priority capital investment due to the reduced capital programme.

It was noted that Cabinet also approved an additional recommendation proposed by Councillor Thomas. This was to introduce one hour's free parking in the Church Lane North Car Park during Hertfordshire County Council's Active Travel works in the Old Town. This would affect around 50 spaces and would cost approximately £5,000. This would be implemented alongside the new parking tariffs in January for six months, or until the works were completed.

It was noted that since the report was written, the Council had received its Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payment of £1.2 million, and work was underway to use this funding for the flat-block recycling initiative.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

7 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - HRA BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee received an update on the 30-year HRA Business Plan for the period 2026/27 to 2056/57, which outlined the Council's long-term housing stock management and investment strategy.

Cabinet had welcomed the significant planned investment, including £148million for existing stock over the next five years, £745million over the full plan period, and £457 million allocated for the development of new housing.

The Committee was advised that the financial projections were based on an assumed rent convergence of CPI + 1% + £1, a decision that had yet to be confirmed by central government and would form part of the wider budget setting process. It was reported that, should the £1 convergence not be approved, an additional budgetary pressure of £209,000 could arise in the next financial year.

It was noted that, following reductions to the Right to Buy discount, future sales had been projected at eight properties per year, and this area would require ongoing monitoring.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

8 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - MANAGEMENT OF ESTATES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS POLICY 2025 - 2027**

The Committee received an update on the Management of Estates and Neighbourhoods Policy 2025–27.

It was noted that the policy aimed to support the Council's ambitions to create safe and welcoming neighbourhoods, drive improvements, and set out clear responsibilities for both the Council and residents.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

9 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - RECHARGE POLICY**

The Committee noted that Cabinet had received a report recommending the adoption of a new Housing Recharge Policy.

The report outlined the circumstances in which recharges may apply, while noting that discretion would be used in cases of vulnerability or exceptional circumstances. The policy aimed to ensure a fair and evidence-based approach to recharging.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

10 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - ANNUAL REPORT AND EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, informed Members that the Cabinet had received a report providing an overview of the progress on the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan and Annual Report.

The report outlined the 2024/25 progress update, as well as the 19 identified actions for 2025/26. The Annual Report also set out a range of demographic, resident and workforce data.

During discussion, Members raised a question regarding the interpretation of some demographic data and asked officers to review this. Officers agreed to review this information and to report back to Members on this issue.

Attention was drawn to the ongoing gap between resident earnings and workplace earnings in Stevenage, and its relevance to wider skills, economic work, social inclusion and the environmental impacts of travel to work.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

11 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET 18 NOVEMBER 2025 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE - SUBMISSION OF FINAL PROPOSAL**

The Committee received an update from the Strategic Director regarding the submission of the final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Cabinet had noted the indicative resolution of Full Council and following debate, agreed that the four unitary model be identified as the Council's preferred option.

Cabinet had approved the submission of the proposal, and delegated authority was granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to finalise and submit Hertfordshire's proposal by 28 November 2025.

Members thanked the officers involved and noted that the Council's approach to the LGR process had been conducted professionally.

The Chair informed the Committee that, prior to the meeting, he had agreed to disapply the call-in provision of the Cabinet decision regarding its preferred option to Government on the LGR submission, due to the urgency of the decision to be submitted by the deadline of 28 November 2025.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

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

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

13 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

14 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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

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

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

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 October 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - STATION GATEWAY**

The Assistant Director of Regeneration informed the Committee of the update on the Station Gateway vision under the current Development Management Service Agreement (DSMA) with Muse and the English Cities Fund (ECF).

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

17 **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.

18 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

The Committee received an update on the Town Centre Development Finance Report, and it was noted that the Leader had consented to the report being dealt with as a matter of urgency for the reasons set out in the report.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTES OF INFORMAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUNITY COMMITTEE MINUTES – CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

Date: Wednesday, 26 November 2025
Time: 4.00pm
Place: Kadoma Room

Present:	Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Phil Bibby, Peter Clark, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy. Officers: Interim Strategic Director; Kathryn Carr, Head of Communications and Marketing; Sandy Eaton, Scrutiny Officer; Stephen Weaver, Democratic Services Officer; Gemma O'Donnell.
Start / End Time:	Start Time: 4.00pm End Time: 5.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Brady, Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Kamal Choudhury, Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand.

2 COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING 2025 – 2026.

In preparation for the meeting Overview and Scrutiny Members had provided officers with responses to questions about the service that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny had set in advance of the meeting.

The interim Strategic Director, Kathryn Carr, provided Scrutiny Members with an overview of the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team, including staffing levels. The current national economic and political climate has a local impact that has generated more social media traffic and other online activity. This has also included local public demonstrations. This requires continuous monitoring such that managing all Stevenage related media is becoming more challenging. Members were advised that senior officers and HR are exploring cost effective options to resource the seven-day role that is increasingly required to cover this work.

The Head of Communications and Marketing, Sandy Eaton, provided Members with a PowerPoint presentation which covered the following items:

Team Structure

Members were introduced to the Council's Communications and Marketing Team:

- Sandy Eaton – Head of Communications and Marketing.

- The team included 3.7 FTE Comms & Marketing Officers and 1 FTE Graphic Designer.
- An additional team member would be recruited in the New Year.

A question was raised regarding the breakdown of other Hertfordshire Council's Communications and Marketing Teams. Officers outlined the team structures for Watford and Hertsmere and confirmed they would seek to provide the Committee with further examples of resources at comparable Councils.

The Head of Communications and Marketing welcomed how Members could support their work more effectively.

It was noted that the Website and Digital Team were separate, which created its own challenges. Members noted the strong need for closer working and possible reintegration.

Discussions included:

- Event pages and links would sometimes produce error codes (404 issue).
- 48% of residents used the website as their primary source of Council information.
- Digital Strategy (including online reporting systems) was due to go to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Google search results could be misleading due to paid placements, which can affect event visibility.
- The same SBC supported event circulated for different days at the same time.

Functions of the Team

Sandy presented the Remit of the Team:

- Press office management.
  - Responding to media enquiries, statements, and press releases.
- Social media management
  - 11,000 followers on Facebook, which was the main site for resident conversation.
  - 8,000 followers on X.
  - 5,000 followers on Instagram
- YouTube channel and digital boards management.
  - Livestreaming and recording of Council, Cabinet, and Planning meetings.
  - Promotion of these meetings via social media.
- Crisis management
  - Supporting reputation management during incidents.
- Promotion of Council services and events
- Production and delivery of the Chronicle residents' magazine
  - 36,000 copies printed and 400-500 downloaded online.
  - SBC produce three copies a year, which is the highest in Hertfordshire. Other councils have moved to digital or only one yearly edition.
  - Localised digital newsletters were raised as an alternative to printed publications of the Chronicle.
- Public affairs support

- Video / visuals / photography of Council services
- Staff intranet

Updating Councillors

Weekly events and activity summaries are sent to Members.

It was noted that Group Leaders received press releases at the same time. Members requested to have specific briefings on controversial matters.

Members commented that it would be helpful for information to be circulated to them prior to being published on social media, so they would be aware of upcoming events/ communications.

Controversial events/ issues in the community

Issues raised:
Fireworks Night Display

- Delay in releasing information due to unresolved parking details. Members noted the need for clearer, earlier information to avoid confusion.

Indoor Market Opening

- Contractor delays moved the opening from the 22 November to the 6 December.
- Caused reputational issues and the Head of Communications and Marketing noted that communication could have been smoother.
- Awaiting decisions for compensation for traders.

Christmas Light Switch On

- Widespread media coverage – Local and National - Apologies issued and gifts arranged.
- Issues with inappropriate comments directed at the Mayor who was not responsible for the event.
- Crisis management ongoing, including safeguarding of the children involved and an ongoing investigation by the Council into the event arrangements.

Main Campaign Themes

- Pioneering Stevenage Skills – Mission 44 Charity with Sir Lewis Hamilton.
- Transforming Our Town – Underpass works and Town Centre Regeneration.
- Green Stevenage – Green Space Volunteers and Parks.
- Spotlight on Housing – Projects delivered and future works.
- Pride in Stevenage Campaign – Promoting kindness, community and civic pride, with the aim to highlight positive resident led stories.

Making the Council more visible

- Showcasing staff and apprenticeships.
- Statistics post from Beryl was well received and Members asked for more infographics to include information such as fly-tipping costs.

- Youth Engagement – The Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor engage with the younger population at events.

Feedback

Members questioned the language used in information sent to residents, where some had misunderstood these communications. It was noted that better coordination was needed between teams to understand the guidance for communications to residents.

Members queried whether it remained appropriate to use X as a communications platform. Officers advised that the Council had around 8,000 followers on X and was used to provide updates on activities, including directing residents to Council meetings on Youtube. It was therefore considered a useful and appropriate platform to continue using.

Discussions took place on why the Website Team and Communications Team were now separate, when they were previously together. Members suggested it may be useful to look at how links between the teams could be strengthened, including considering reintegration, subject to understanding the original rationale. Officers confirmed they would circulate the LGA report on the separation of the services, with the advice included.

The council will continue to produce three print issues a year of the Chronicle to keep residents informed of the council's corporate plan, its progress and its initiatives to make Stevenage Even Better, a place for everyone.

A further question was raised regarding the current circulation of paper copies of the Comet newspaper, and it was noted that over 88,000 copies were printed and there were over 2.3 million page views online. It was noted that these figures were provided by the Comet.

Similar to many other issues, the impact of Local Government Reorganisation is currently unknown with regards to future iterations of publications like the Chronicle etc.

Members thanked the Communications and Marketing Team for all their work, especially when under challenging conditions.

Informal Recommendations:

Based on the discussion, the following possible recommendations were suggested:

- Officers confirmed they would seek to provide the Committee with further examples of resources at comparable Councils.
- Members requested to have specific briefings on controversial matters.
- Members noted the strong need for closer working and possible reintegration of the Communication and Website team.
- Members commented that it would be helpful for information to be circulated to them prior to being published on social media, so they would be aware of upcoming events/ communications.
- Better coordination was needed between teams to understand the guidance for communications to residents.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTES OF AN INFORMAL MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUNITY COMMITTEE – MEMBER ENQUIRIES

Date: Monday, 01 December 2025
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Autun Room

Present:	Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Stephen Booth, Peter Clark, Alistair Gordon, Kamal Choudhury and Akin Elekolusi. Officers: Assistant Director Business Change and Digital; Nadia Capuano, Head of Customer and Digital Services; Greg Arends, Democratic Services Officer; Lee Waller and Scrutiny Officer; Stephen Weaver
Start / End Time:	Start Time: 6.00pm End Time: 7.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lynda Guy, Sandra Barr, and Ceara Roopchand.

2 MEMBER ENQUIRIES

Members were asked to share their experiences of the member enquiries system as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

Members were sent the below questions to answer in advance of the meeting, answers were collated and given to officers to prepare the presentation based on this feedback:

- How long did you have to wait for a basic reply acknowledging the issue is logged?
- How long did you wait for a substantial reply?
- How long for an outcome (job done or conclusion it could not be resolved)?
- How long did you have to chase the issue?
- Where you told which SBC team was dealing with it (or, if appropriate, another external agency was responsible)?
- Were you effectively signposted or your message proactively forwarded to the best people?
- If there is one thing you'd like to prioritise for improvement, what would it be?

Summary of presentation

- Types of Member Enquiries
  - Complaints
  - Service requests
  - Enquiries
- Yoursay Member contacts Quarter 1-2 2025/26
  - Member contact peaked in April, this was likely due to canvassing and dropped off in May due to the elections taking place
  - The figures then remained steady month on month to the end of Quarter 2

- Examples of member enquiries
  - Matters of public interest like a planning permission
  - Asking about a constituents housing application
  - Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases or Tree works
  - Requesting a service like street cleaning, environmental nuisance or a repair

- Routes taken for member enquiries
  - Email to Yoursay
  - Email to senior officers (Assistant Directors, Leadership Team)
  - Direct to officers
  - Generic team contacts
  - Face to face discussions / service meetings

- Feedback from members – strengths
  - Prompt acknowledgements
  - Quick turnaround on simple cases
  - Using Yoursay email is easier than logging online

- Feedback from members – weaknesses
  - Some complex cases don't get responses until they are chased by members and some parts of a case may be resolved and action ceases before other components are sorted
  - Certain departments are less responsive
  - Officer absence can affect response times
  - Automated responses can mislead and lack full context
  - No-reply email addresses are unhelpful
  - "Nothing to do with SBC" don't always contain signposting
  - Information on which back-office team is handling the enquiry is not always clear
  - Jargon and acronyms can be confusing for members and residents
  - Access to information (e.g. tree ownership) is sometimes lacking
  - Multiple enquiries can be lost if the first issue is resolved

- Considerations that may need to be factored into any recommendations
  - Monitoring and Performance
  - Data Protection
  - Coordination between members, MP, officers, and residents

Discussions during the presentation included:

- Third party responsibilities
- Consent to discuss (GDPR)
- Guidelines for officer response times / standards
- Alternative approaches to the current communication methods (De-centralised / Centralised / Fully integrated system / Informal mixed approach – Some members expressed a preference for a centralised system
- Key person dependencies / reliance on email
- A central triage for all member enquiries
- Information pages for members
- Provision of a free text area
- Providing a trackable ticketing number for all cases to make the system auditable – even if a replacement solution is proposed for a deregulated model

The Head of Customer and Digital Services agreed to take away the issues and recommendations members raised and come back in the next quarter with some draft options on improvements/replacement of the current YourSay system.

Informal Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the following possible recommendations were suggested:

- There should be regular updates from officers to members until a case is resolved and it should be made clear to members when a case has been resolved
- There should be a discussion with the Strategic Leadership Team regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each department regarding timescales for responses to members and to residents on an issue
- Improvements to automated case closures (E.g. street cleansing, hedge cutting) providing a narrative and detail of when the routine works will be carried out, not just a bland reference like “when the area is next cleaned on a routine visit, etc.”
- Fuller responses provided alongside automated ones when needed (E.g. signposting to the relevant other authority or company rather than “it’s not us” responses)
- An Information page for members to include:
    - Third party contact information for key services like HCC, UK Power Network, Water company.
    - Tree / street light ownership information
    - Frequently Asked Questions
    - Changes to processes / systems (E.g. housing allocation policy / Street cleansing schedule.

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Part 1

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda item:

Meeting	CABINET
Portfolio Area	Resources and Performance
Date	10 December 2025

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2026/27

KEY DECISION

Authors	Atif Iqbal / Clare Fletcher
Contributor	Clare Fletcher
Lead Officers	Atif Iqbal
Contact Officer	Atif Iqbal

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To seek members approval of the Council Tax Base for 2026/27.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Stevenage Borough Council for the year 2026/27 will be 29,473.9 equivalent "Band D" properties, reduced to 28,884.5 equivalent "Band D" properties after making allowances for a 98.0% collection rate.

2.2 The 2026/27 Council Tax Base is approved subject to any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) for 2026/27. The Cabinet approved the CTS scheme at its meeting on 12 November 2025.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by subsequent legislation, billing authorities are required to notify major precepting authorities and levying bodies of their Council Tax Base for the forthcoming financial year. This notification must be made between 1 December and 31 January preceding the start of the financial year.

3.2. The Council has a statutory duty to formally determine its Council Tax Base by resolution before notifying major precepting authorities and levying bodies.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1. Taxbase

4.1.1. The actual number of domestic dwellings in the Borough, shown in the Valuation Officers list on 10 September 2025 was 38,694, compared to 38,395 as at 15 September 2024, an increase of 299 properties.

4.1.2. For each of the Council Tax bands, the tax base figure is the sum of actual dwellings on the valuation list, adjusted for estimated, newly constructed dwellings, exemptions, disabled reductions and discounts, (including the Council Tax Reduction Scheme discounts), to arrive at the net number of chargeable dwellings for each band. The projections for 2026/27 include known construction numbers planned, giving a total of 442 (pro rata), new homes for 2026/27 with the majority being band B properties. For 2026/27 to mitigate potential delays in new property completions, the assumed lead time for properties to come online is a further four months. This adjustment will slightly reduce the projected tax base in the short term, with benefits expected to materialise in subsequent years.

4.1.3. This net figure is then multiplied by the relevant proportions for the particular band (e.g. Band A is 6/9 in relation to Band D) in order to convert it to the estimated number of equivalents “Band D” properties for each band.

4.1.4. The relevant proportion for each band is:

Band	Charge ratio	Valuation (at 1/1/91 prices)
A	6/9	Up to £40,000
B	7/9	Over £40,000 and up to £52,000
C	8/9	Over £52,000 and up to £68,000
D	9/9	Over £68,000 and up to £88,000
E	11/9	Over £88,000 and up to £120,000
F	13/9	Over £120,000 and up to £160,000
G	15/9	Over £160,000 and up to £320,000

Band	Charge ratio	Valuation (at 1/1/91 prices)
H	18/9	Over £320,000

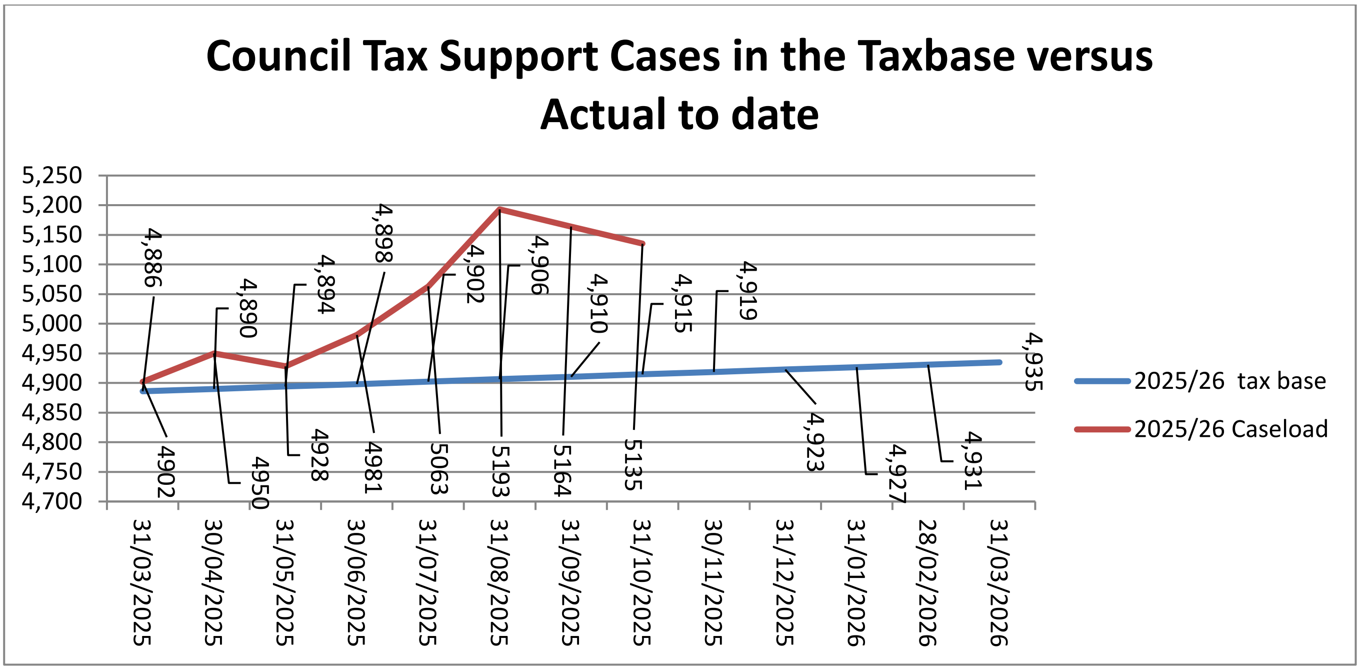
4.1.5. These "Band D" equivalents are aggregated to give the total number of the equivalent "Band D" dwellings for the authority as a whole. For Stevenage in 2026/27 this is 29,473.9 dwellings, which is less than the actual number of dwellings because the majority of dwellings in Stevenage are in Band C.

4.1.6. Stevenage Borough Council is the billing authority for all council tax in the Borough but does not keep the majority of council tax raised. The 2024/25 and 2025/26 amounts and percentage shares for the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Stevenage Council are shown in the chart below (based on Band D).

Authority	2024/25 Band D	2025/26 Band D	Charge Per day	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,685.75	£1,769.87	£4.85	**4.99%**	**77.58%**
Stevenage Borough Council	£239.26	£246.41	£0.68	**2.99%**	**10.80%**
Police Crime Commissioner	£251.00	£265.00	£0.73	**5.58%**	**11.62%**
Total	**£2,176.01**	**£2,281.28**	**£6.25**	**4.84%**	**100.00%**

Council Tax Support (CTS)

4.1.7. The 2026/27 Council Tax Base proposed is based on the current Council Tax Support Scheme liability of 8.5% and as agreed at the November 2025 Cabinet. The 2025/26 taxbase had assumed a 1% projected increase in council tax support numbers as a result of changes in the local economy and growth in new properties. The chart below shows the 2025/26 tax base assumed CTS cases, versus the actual case load and shows that actual to date has been more than what was projected by the year end.



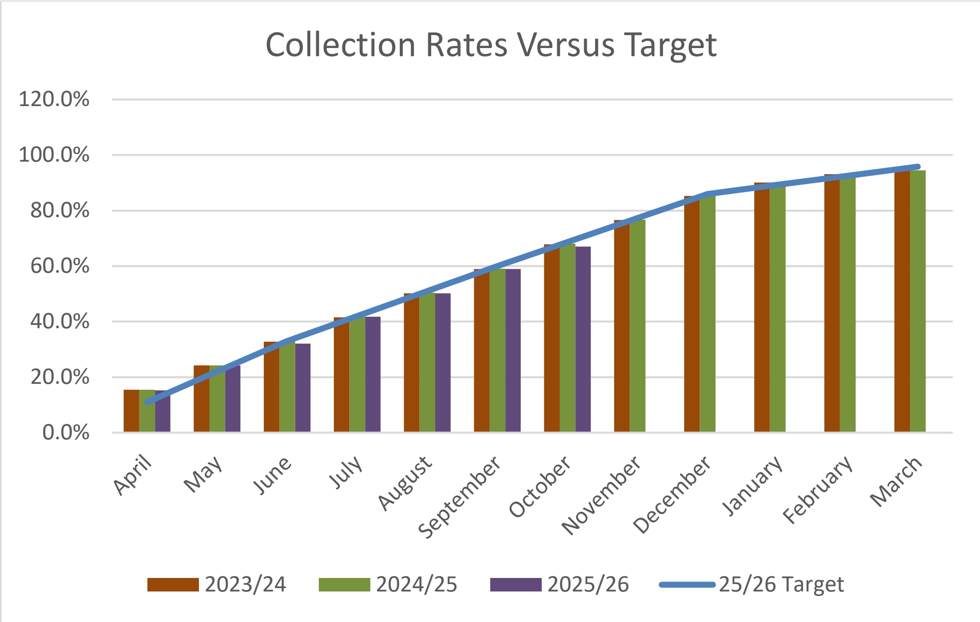
4.1.8. While the 2025/26 number of CTS claimants has increased by 5.95% since 1 April to 1 November 2025, this has been offset by a greater number of new properties than estimated and a reduction in other discounts. The Shared Revenues and Benefits team have also targeted potential claimants to improve CTS take up, which has increased the working age caseload in year. For 2026/27, it has been assumed that the CTS caseload will increase by a further 2%, as historically the caseload has reduced in previous years, but to reflect the impact of newer properties coming into the taxbase. The 2026/27 cost of CTS to the taxbase for those working and pensionable age is estimated at £7,041,257 (2025/26 £6,397,988), however the County Council has the biggest cost burden for this, as they account for 77.58% (2025/26) of the tax base with SBC at 10.80%. The average caseload level of CTS in the 2026/27 taxbase is modelled as 5,253 (based on 1 April 2026 5,201 cases increasing to 5,305 by 31 March 2027 assuming a 2% increase), versus a 5,114 total caseload for working and pensionable age claimants as at the 13 November 2025.

Collection Rate

4.1.9. The collection rate was reduced from 98.25% to 98% for the 2025/26 financial year and is projected to remain at this level for 2026/27.Since 2019/20 levels of debt have increased by £6.5Million by 2024/25, which is similar to other Councils in Hertfordshire. The Council achieves circa 98% but over a five-year period as debts are collected in future years, meaning there is a risk to achieving that and the in-year collection rate has dropped to under 95%. Officers are looking at options to improve collection rates.

4.1.10. Based on the collection rate analysis and the current length of time to collect, it is proposed that the 2026/27 collection rate percentage remains at 98%. The amount collected to 30 September 2025 was 59.0% against the target of 60% (2024/25 was 59.1%, target 60.0%). The current in year collection rate is lower than the target, a 1.9% under-recovery of council tax would equate to £1.238

Million for a full year, (SBC's share would be £133,750). However, there are other factors which influence cash collected, such as the level of properties in the taxbase and the level of discounts.



4.1.11. The Council Tax Base for 2026/27 after making allowances for a collection rate of 98.0% is 28,884.5 equivalent "Band D" properties. (The comparative figure for 2025/26 was 28,571.8). This is 18.76 Band D equivalent properties higher than the Medium-Term Financial Strategy estimate for 2026/27 or £4,622.76 more collectable council tax before any increase for 2026/27 is considered.

4.2 2025/26 Council Tax base versus approved taxbase

4.2.1 The Council approved a 2025/26 tax base of 28,572 at the Cabinet meeting on 11 December 2024, representing a 0.03% reduction compared to the 2024/25 tax base. This figure was based on projected growth of 208 new properties and a 1% increase in Council Tax Support (CTS). Currently, the actual tax base remains higher than the approved 2025/26 level due to several contributing factors:

- Since the 2025/26 tax base was set, an additional 79 properties have been added as of 1 October 2025.
- The number of exempt properties has decreased by 6, contributing to an increase in the tax base.
- Properties receiving a Single Person Discount have reduced by 120, further improving the tax base.
- However, properties under Council Tax Support (CTS) have increased by approximately 48, offsetting some of the gains noted above.

For 2025/26, the Council revised its projected CTS increase from 2% in 2024/25 to 1%, based on historic reductions in the previous four years. Due to a higher caseload (see also paragraph 4.1.8), the latest forecast indicates CTS levels could rise by around 3% by the end of the financial year.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1. The revised taxbase will be included in the draft 2026/27 Council Tax Setting and General Fund Report to the January 2026 Cabinet.

5.1.2. The increase in assumed property numbers less the discount assumptions including Council Tax Support (compared to 2025/26 approved taxbase) is the equivalent to a total additional 239.76 equivalent Band D properties or £59,079 before any council tax increase is considered. The reason for the increased council tax income is shown in the table below, (before any council tax increase for 2026/27).

Increased income from 2026/27 taxbase compared to 2025/26 before any council tax increase			
	2025/26 Estimate £	2026/27 Estimate £	Increase /(decrease) £
Properties numbers	8,627,879	8,745,690	117,811
Council Tax Support Scheme	(724,504)	(760,554)	(36,050)
Changes to other discounts & Premium	(719,313)	(722,463)	(3,150)
Increase in bad debt 2%	(125,721)	(145,253)	(19,532)
Total	**£ 7,058,341**	**£ 7,117,420**	**£ 59,079**

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1. The legal implications are in the body of the report.

5.3. Policy Implications

5.3.1. None.

5.4. Equal Opportunities Implications

5.4.1. There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

5.5. Risk Implications

5.5.1. The assumptions made are reasonable at the current time but, if the level of anticipated growth in the 2026/27 Tax Base is not realised and/or the council tax support caseload increases, there could be an in-year deficit on the Collection Fund.

5.6. Climate Change Implications

5.6.1. None.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 – Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 (Cabinet 12 November 2025)

APPENDICES

Appendix A 2026/27 Council Tax Base

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Appendix A 2026/27 Council Tax Base

BAND	Disabled	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	TOTALS
AS AT CTB1	0.00	1,692.00	6,959.00	21,853.00	3,428.00	3,314.00	994.00	437.00	17.00	38,694.00
ADD EXPECTED NEW PROPERTIES	0.00	0.00	345.68	61.11	20.42	8.50	1.00	5.00	0.00	**441.71**
EXEMPTIONS & DEMOLISHED	0.00	-57.00	-163.00	-258.00	-40.00	-24.00	-9.00	-8.00	-1.00	-560.00
DISABLED RELIEF	0.00	-3.00	-8.00	-87.00	-12.00	-27.00	-6.00	-6.00	-2.00	-151.00
DISABLED RELIEF ADJ	3.00	8.00	87.00	12.00	27.00	6.00	6.00	2.00	0.00	**151.00**
DWELLINGS SUB-TOTAL	3.00	1,640.00	7,220.68	21,581.11	3,423.42	3,277.50	986.00	430.00	14.00	**38,575.71**
ASSUMED DISCOUNTS										
25% (SINGLE PERSON DISCOUNT)	2.00	1,140.00	4,390.79	6,469.04	811.81	604.55	139.14	61.70	1.00	**13,620.02**
50% (EMPTY WORK-RELATED AND ALL PERSONS DISREGARDED	0.00	0.00	11.00	29.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	8.00	7.00	**66.00**
10% Empty uninhabitable & Empty unfurnished	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.00**
Council Tax Support (Reduction Scheme)	1.63	352.78	1,304.20	1,807.27	154.76	47.35	6.70	4.37	0.00	**3,679.07**
total discounts	3.63	1,492.78	5,705.99	8,305.31	969.57	655.90	149.84	74.07	8.00	**17,365.09**
TOTAL DWELLINGS charged at 100%	-0.63	147.22	1,514.70	13,275.79	2,453.85	2,621.60	836.16	355.93	6.00	**21,210.62**
Long term empty premium @ 50%	0.00	15.00	44.00	40.00	2.00	2.00	6.00	6.00	0.00	**115.00**
Value of discounted properties	1.50	855.00	3,298.59	4,866.28	610.35	455.41	106.35	50.27	4.25	**10,248.01**
DWELLINGS AFTER DISCOUNTS	0.87	1,009.72	4,835.29	18,162.07	3,065.21	3,078.01	945.52	409.20	10.25	**31,516.13**
RATIO TO BAND D	0.56	0.67	0.78	0.89	1.00	1.22	1.44	1.67	2.00	
NO OF BAND D EQUIVALENT	0.48	673.15	3,760.78	16,144.06	3,065.21	3,762.01	1,365.75	682.00	20.50	**29,473.94**

TAXBASE	**29,473.9**
98.00%	**28,884.5**

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Part I – Release to Press

Agenda item

Meeting CABINET

Portfolio Area Housing and Housing Development / Resources and Performance

Date 10 DECEMBER 2025

DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SETTING AND RENT REPORT 2026/27

KEY DECISION

Authors Keith Reynoldson; Atif Iqbal

Contributor Ash Ahmed; Andrew Garside; Clare Fletcher; Denise Lewis; Richard Protheroe; Kerry Clifford

Lead Officers Richard Protheroe; Clare Fletcher

Contact Officer Keith Reynoldson; Atif Iqbal

1. PURPOSE

1.1. To update Members on the proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2026/27, to be considered by Council on 21 January 2026.

1.2. To update Members on the formula for setting rents for 2026/27.

1.3. To propose the HRA rents for 2026/27.

1.4. To propose the HRA service charges for 2026/27.

1.5. To update Members on the 2026/27 HRA budget, incorporating the decisions included in the HRA Business Plan report that was approved at the Cabinet meeting on the12 November 2025 and the 2026/27 HRA fees and charges approved on the 8 October.

1.6. To update Members on the 2026/27-2030/31 HRA Capital Programme.

1.7. To update Members on any further financial issues identified since the HRA Business Plan was approved in November 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That HRA dwelling rents be increased (week commencing 1 April 2026) by 4.8%. This equates to an average increase of £6.72 for social rents, £8.85 for affordable rents and £8.19 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year) and assuming rent convergence with a £1 per week cap is approved by the Government.

2.2 That the 2026/27 service charges are approved as set out in paragraph 4.2.

2.3 That the HRA budget for 2026/27, set out in Appendix A, is approved.

2.4 The 2026/27 growth options as set out in section 4.4 are approved.

2.5 That the 2026/27 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix B are noted.

2.6 That the revised minimum levels of balances for 2026/27 shown in Appendix C are approved.

2.7 That Members approve the Rent Increase Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA) appended to this report in Appendix D.

2.8 That the contingency sum of £500K, within which the Cabinet can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2026/27.

2.9 That the decisions taken on recommendations 2.1 – 2.8 above be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules in the Council's Constitution.

2.10 That key partners and other stakeholders are consulted and their views considered as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a legally ring-fenced account that records all income and expenditure associated with the management and operation of the Council's housing stock. The main costs within the HRA include housing management, maintenance, depreciation (which helps fund capital works), and interest on loans. The account is primarily funded through rental income, which represents the majority of HRA revenue. Any surplus generated is retained within the ring-fenced account and used to support capital investment or offset future deficits. Under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 76), the Council is legally required to set a balanced HRA budget and cannot plan for a deficit on the fund.

3.2 The latest update to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan was presented to Cabinet in November 2025. This plan underpins the Council's key housing priorities for Stevenage, as set out under "More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes (MSAGQH)," one of the five strategic priorities in the "Making Stevenage Even Better 2024–2027 Corporate Plan".

3.3 The table below provides a summary of the overall commitments set out in the latest comprehensive review of the HRA Business Plan in 2026/27 to 2056/57.

Borrowing and RCCO	Housing Development	Housing Asset Management	Housing Service Delivery
New Borrowing for Capital Investment £171m (30Yrs) **Refinanced debt to enable revenue operations £175m (30Yrs)** **Revenue contribution to capital £2.2m in (years 1-5)** **RTB changes mean lower investment need and repayment of Debt within 30yrs**	**Invest £457m in new stock (30Yrs)** **Deliver 1,470 units (30Yrs) 320 in next 5yrs** **Deliver new homes to 5 star promise** **Secure grant funding for schemes where possible - £25m included in the plan**	**£744m stock investment funding (30Yrs) £148m in next 5 yrs** **£699m repairs, void and cyclical maintenance (30Yrs).** **Efficiency target of £699K (5%) for 27/28** **All properties to EPC-C by 2030**	**£775m in non-maintenance revenue funding (30yrs)** **Savings £566k 26/27 then £1m 27/28 £1m 28/29 £500K 29/30 £400K until 36/37 Total saving of £3.5m per annum by year 5.** **Growth of £700k pa to enable service improvement / efficiency**

3.4 Members received an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan at the November 2025 Cabinet, including the medium-term position for 2026/27 to 2030/31. This update reflected major changes since the previous year's plan, including new national regulatory requirements, rent policy reforms, and the updated stock condition survey data. These changes have resulted in increased investment needs and higher borrowing in the early years of the plan, alongside challenging savings targets to maintain long-term viability.

3.5 The HRA Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27–2030/31 reflects a front-loaded capital investment approach supported by tight revenue controls and significant borrowing. On revenue, the plan assumed:

Rent	Growth and Savings	Capital	Financing
Consumer Prices Index (CPI) + 1% rent increases **Rent convergence to national formula from 2026/27 capped at £1 per week** **Use rent flexibility on relet of homes – 5% for social rent and 10% for supported**	**£700k annual growth for compliance and service improvements** **Savings programme of £566k in 2026/27, rising to £1m annually.** **A one off 5% repairs saving from 2027/28, is required** **£5.8m ongoing savings by year 10**	**£148Million capital over five years for** • **major works/ compliance upgrades (incl. meeting EPC-C energy standard by 2030)** • **£95m for new development, delivering around 320 homes**	**Debt servicing peaks at 32% of income** **Financing based on** • **£171m new borrowing and £175m refinancing over the life of the plan** **Supplemented by** • **Homes England grants (£25m)** • **RTB receipts** • **limited revenue contributions** **Peak debt of £354m in year six, but repay debt by the end of the 30-year plan**

<u>Housing Regulatory Network</u>

3.6 The main regulatory framework for social housing is shaped by three key bodies: the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the Housing Ombudsman, and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The RSH sets economic and consumer standards, ensuring providers maintain financial viability, governance, and tenant engagement. The Council was inspected by the RSH in November 2024 and received a C2 consumer grading, indicating that while the Council meets many requirements of the Consumer Standards, improvements are needed in areas such as tenant engagement and transparency. The inspection confirmed strong compliance with health and safety obligations and effective repairs services, but highlighted gaps in reporting remedial actions and involving tenants in service scrutiny. The Council has committed to an improvement plan with the Regulator to address these issues and aims to achieve a C1 rating at the next inspection in four years. The Housing Ombudsman oversees complaints handling and promotes fair resolution processes, reinforcing accountability and transparency. Finally, the HSE focuses on compliance with health and safety legislation, safeguarding tenants and workers through robust building and maintenance standards. Together, these bodies provide a comprehensive framework that underpins quality, safety, and financial resilience across the sector.

3.7 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the budget-setting process, including a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget encompasses the allocation of financial resources to services and projects, proposed contingency funds, rent setting for the Housing Revenue Account, decisions on borrowing requirements, control of capital expenditure, and the setting of virement limits. In line with the HRA Business Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the Council ensures that these decisions reflect statutory obligations, long-term investment priorities, and enhanced tenant engagement during consultation.

3.8 The timeline for 2026/27 HRA Budget setting is as below:

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1. Rents

4.1.1. The total number of HRA homes in management as at 31 October 2025 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2026/27 are based on the current housing stock and any right to buy sales, or new schemes coming on stream after this date, may change the average rent per property type.

Stock Numbers at 31/10/2025	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	Shelt. Afford	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties	6,703	65	836	32	79	192	7,907

4.1.2. For 2026/27 rent has been set in accordance with the current Rent Standard of September CPI plus 1 %. The September CPI was 3.8% meaning rents will increase by 4.8%.

4.1.3. In the summer 2025 the Government consulted on their intention to restart a rent convergence policy that was initially introduced in 2002 but abandoned by the last Government in 2015. This policy involves moving all social rents in a locality (regardless of the provider) to a standard formula based rent that is calculated on average local earnings and property prices. Based on the consultation it was expected that the government would announce its decision on a £1 or £2 increase, as this had been a key request from the housing sector, alongside uprating the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate and temporary accommodation subsidy. However, there has yet to be announcement on the LHA rate and temporary accommodation and an announcement on rent convergence has now been delayed until January 2026.

4.1.4. Although the Government have not confirmed whether they will include rent convergence in the final rent standard for April 2026, the draft budget proposal assumes that this will proceed with a maximum limit of £1 per week for this increase. If the Government's final decision is made in time, the final HRA Budget proposal will be amended to reflect this which could reduce rental income by £209K if they decide not to implement rent convergence.

4.1.5. The tables below show the impact with and without rent convergence. The proposed average rents per week for 2026/27 are set out below, based on a 52-week year and the current housing stock in management.

2026/27 Rent Increase without rent convergence

Average Rents 2026/27	LSSO	Increase/ (decrease) %	Social	Increase/ (decrease) %	Affordable	Increase/ (decrease) %
Average Rent 2025/26	£151.17		£122.83		£184.36	
Add rent impact 2026/27	£7.26	4.8%	£5.89	4.8%	£8.85	4.8%
Total 52 wk Rent 2026/27	**£158.43**		**£128.72**		**£193.21**	

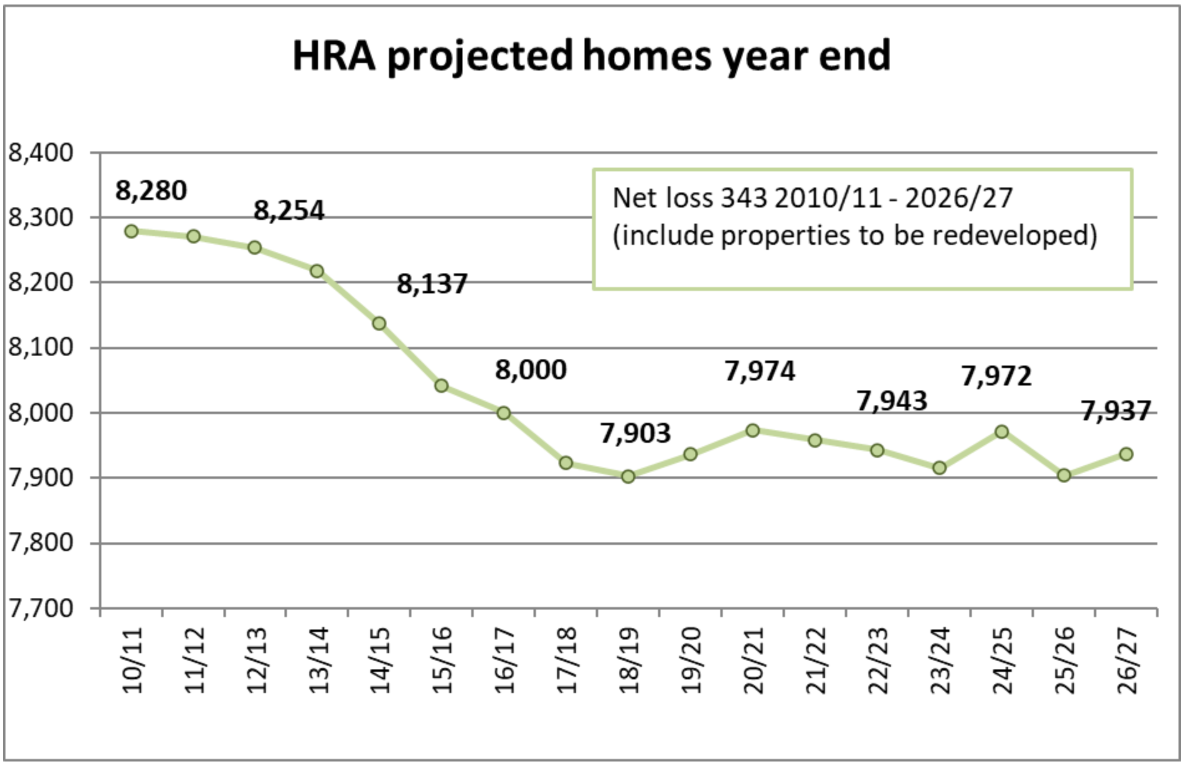
4.1.6. Applying CPI plus 1% to current rent levels would lead to an average rise of £7.26 per week for shared ownership (LSSO) properties, £5.89 per week for social rent properties and £8.85 per week for affordable rent (at 80% of market rents). The table below shows the additional impact of applying rent convergence with a £1 per week limit. This adds an additional 93p per week to shared ownership rent and 83p to social rents. There is no change to affordable rents, as these are not included within the rent formula standard.

2026/27 Rent Increase with rent convergence

Average Rents with Convergence 2026/27	LSSO	Increase/ (decrease) %	Social	Increase/ (decrease) %	Affordable	Increase/ (decrease) %
Average Rent 2025/26	£151.17		£122.83		£184.36	
Add rent impact 2026/27	£8.19	5.4%	£6.72	5.5%	£8.85	4.8%
Total 52 wk Rent 2026/27	**£159.36**		**£129.55**		**£193.21**	

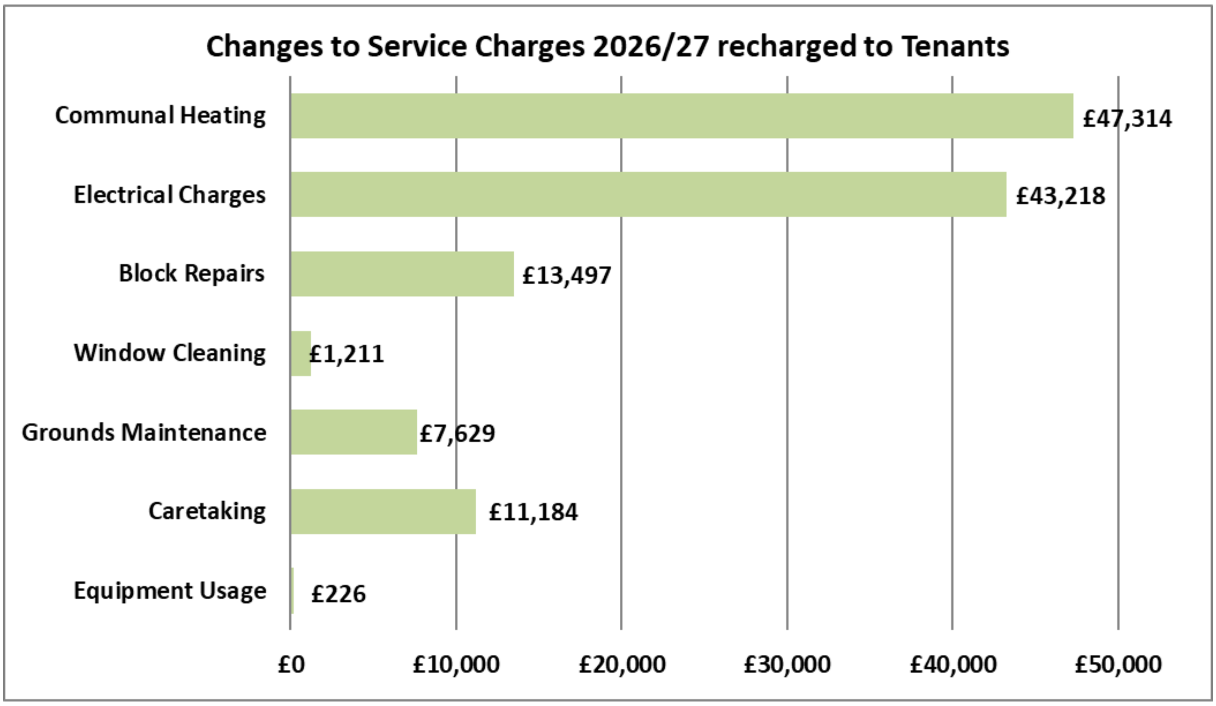
4.1.7. The 2026/27 net rental income increase is estimated to be £2.8Million (£2.6Million without rent convergence), which includes the estimated impacts of right to buy (RTB) sales, expected new properties, properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment) and the impact of rent convergence with a £1 cap. This is consistent with the parameters used in the HRA Business plan from the November Cabinet meeting.

4.1.8. The total number of Council homes is projected to have reduced by 343 between 2010/11 and the end of 2026/27 (based on the net impact of RTBs, new homes and homes awaiting development).



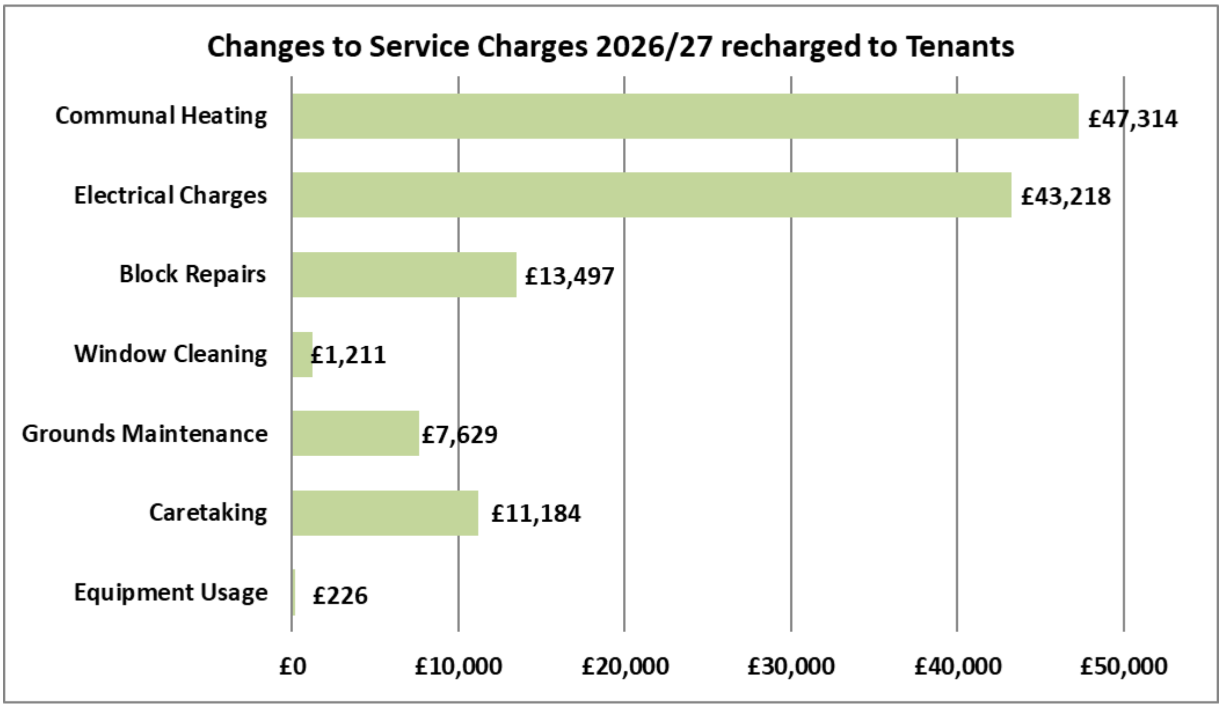
4.2. Service Charges 2025/26

4.2.1. Service charges are calculated on an individual block basis for 2,783 properties, (2025/26 2,757) or 35% of current SBC tenanted properties.

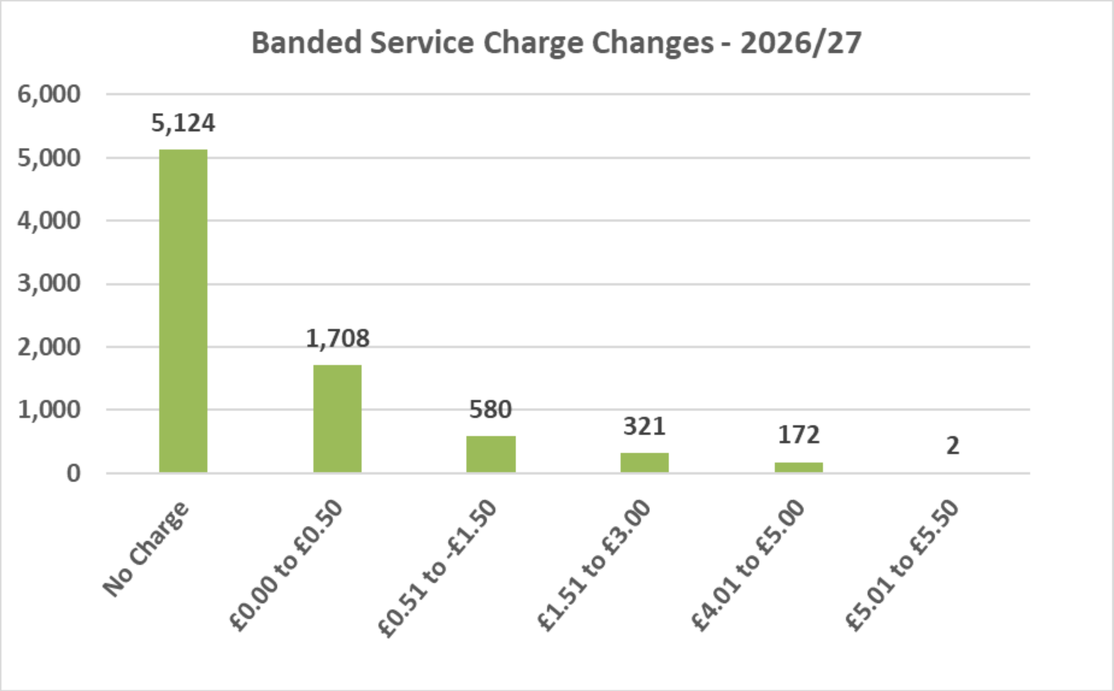


4.2.2. Service charges are not subject to a 4.8% rent increase but are based on cost recovery or actual cost. For 2026/27 service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart above identifies the changes between 2025/26 and 2026/27 for service charges and the estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs, except for block repairs, which are 'smoothed' over a five-year period to eliminate individual in-year spikes in repairs spend.

4.2.3. The graph illustrates that energy prices are still expected to cause the largest increase year to year. However, they are still lower than the exceptional spike in prices seen in 2022/23. Most changes are in line with the November Business Plan revision, but projected energy prices are slightly more than anticipated.



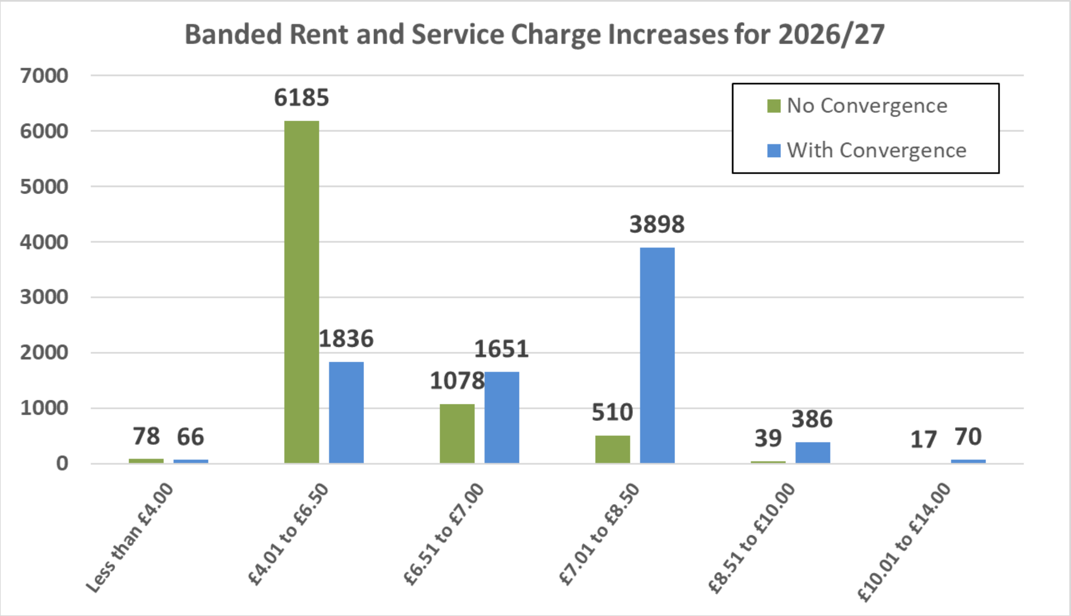
4.2.4. The spread of service charge changes for all tenants in 2026/27 is shown in the chart below, including utility charges and communal heating schemes that are not eligible for housing benefits. The graph shows that 5,124 (65%) of homes do not have service charges. Of the 2,783 properties that do 1,708, the majority (61%) will have increases of less than 50p per week. The remaining properties with higher increases, have been driven by utility price rises that are still projected to be higher than general inflation.



note increase per week

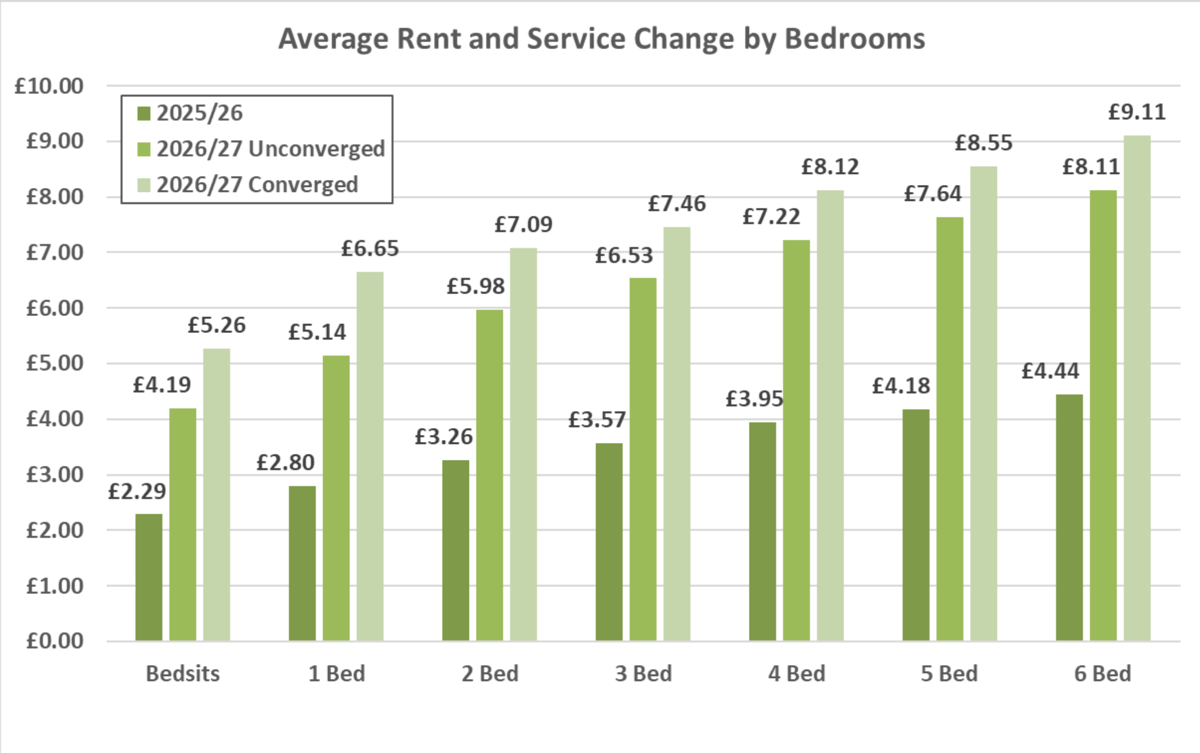
4.3. Rents and Service Charges

4.3.1. The graph below shows the combined impact of the 2026/27 rent and service charge increases, both with and without rent convergence. Without rent convergence the majority of properties (7,341 93%) have a weekly increase of £7 or less. With rent convergence, capped to £1 per week, the majority of properties (7,451 94%) have a weekly increase of £8.50 or less. With rent convergence included there are 70 properties with an increase between £10 and £14 per week (or 0.9% of the stock). Of these, 53 include charges for communal heating and 17 are affordable rent properties, with a higher weekly rent. The full distribution of the 2026/27 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below.

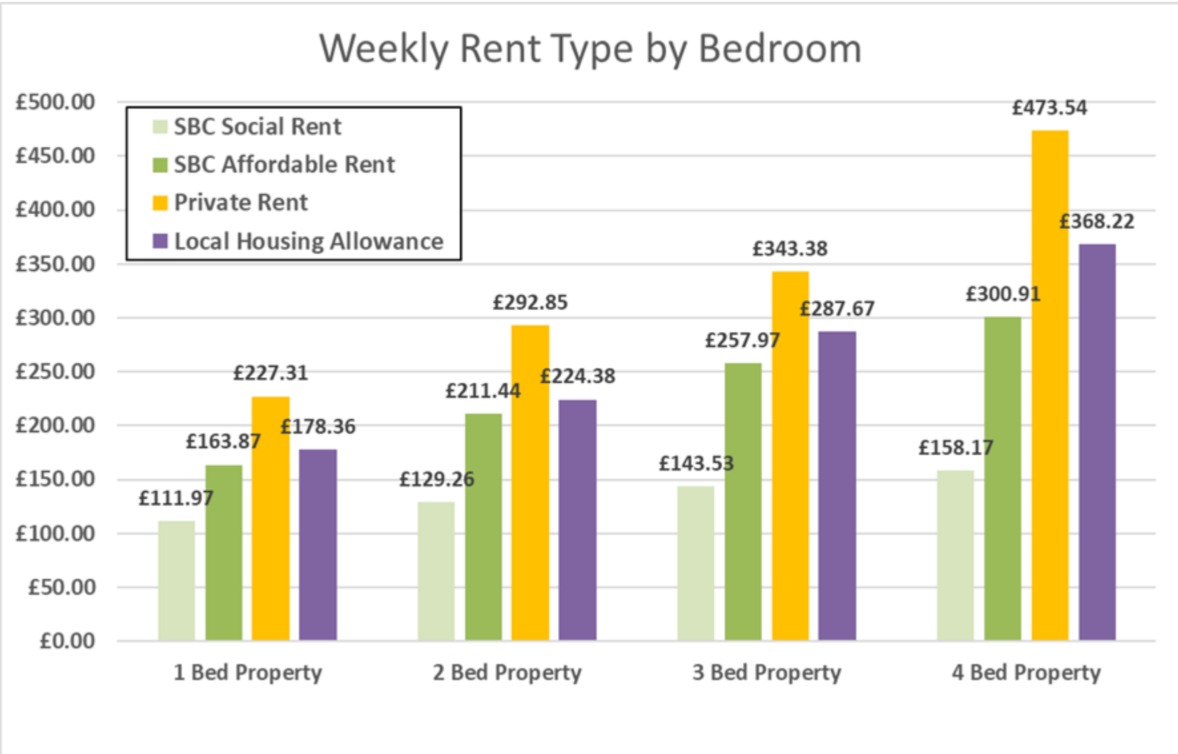


note increase per week

4.3.2. The average rent and service charge increase by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below.



4.3.3. The chart shows the increase with and without rent convergence with a £1 cap per week. This also illustrates the higher rent increase, from last year, due to the September CPI figures.



4.3.4. The comparison between HRA property rents per week (with rent convergence and a £1 cap) and private sector rents per week, for one to four-bedroom properties, is shown in the Graph above. The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, to October 2025, shows that private sector rents in Stevenage have increased substantially from last year. One bedroom properties have risen by 6% and four bedroom homes have risen by over 4%.

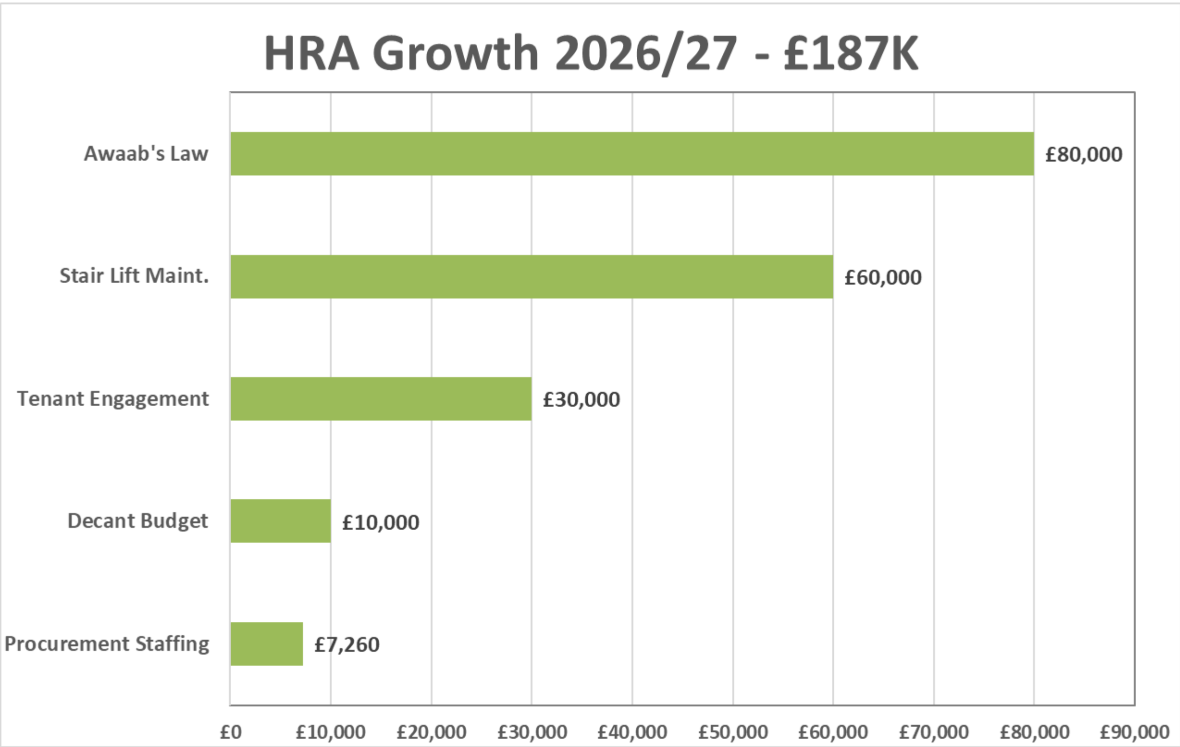
Rent Convergence - £1 Cap	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance	Private v SBC Social %	Private v SBC Affordable %
1 Bed Property	£111.97	£163.87	£227.31	£178.36	103%	39%
2 Bed Property	£129.26	£211.44	£292.85	£224.38	127%	39%
3 Bed Property	£143.53	£257.97	£343.38	£287.67	139%	33%
4 Bed Property	£158.17	£300.91	£473.54	£368.22	199%	57%

Private rent Data from ONS as at October 2025 and the Local Housing Allowance is based on current rates. Please note the SBC rents are April 2026 prices and the private rents October 2025 prices.

4.3.5. A three-bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 139%, (2024/25, 142%) more per week than a Stevenage Borough Council home and 33% more than the affordable let properties, (2024/25 34%). The Local Housing Allowance (LHA), shown in the table above, is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

4.4. Growth included in the HRA

4.4.1. The following growth items have been included within the 2026/27 HRA budget, in addition to the current working budget.



4.4.2. **Awaab's Law Implementation £80K –** An additional business support role has been funded from within existing budgets in 2025/26. However, with the implementation of Awaab's Law from October 2025 and expanded to the other "Housing Health and Safety Rating System" (HHSRS) potential hazards over the next two years, it is likely that staffing resources will need to increase to ensure legal and regulatory compliance.

4.4.3. **Stair Lift Maintenance Contract £60K –** The contract value is expected to be higher, as the number of stairlifts and other lifting equipment, installed in Council properties, has increased. This is in response to the level of demand for aids and adaptations to homes. It is projected that the increased level of servicing will offset any potential cost efficiencies that may be achieved through a competitive tender process.

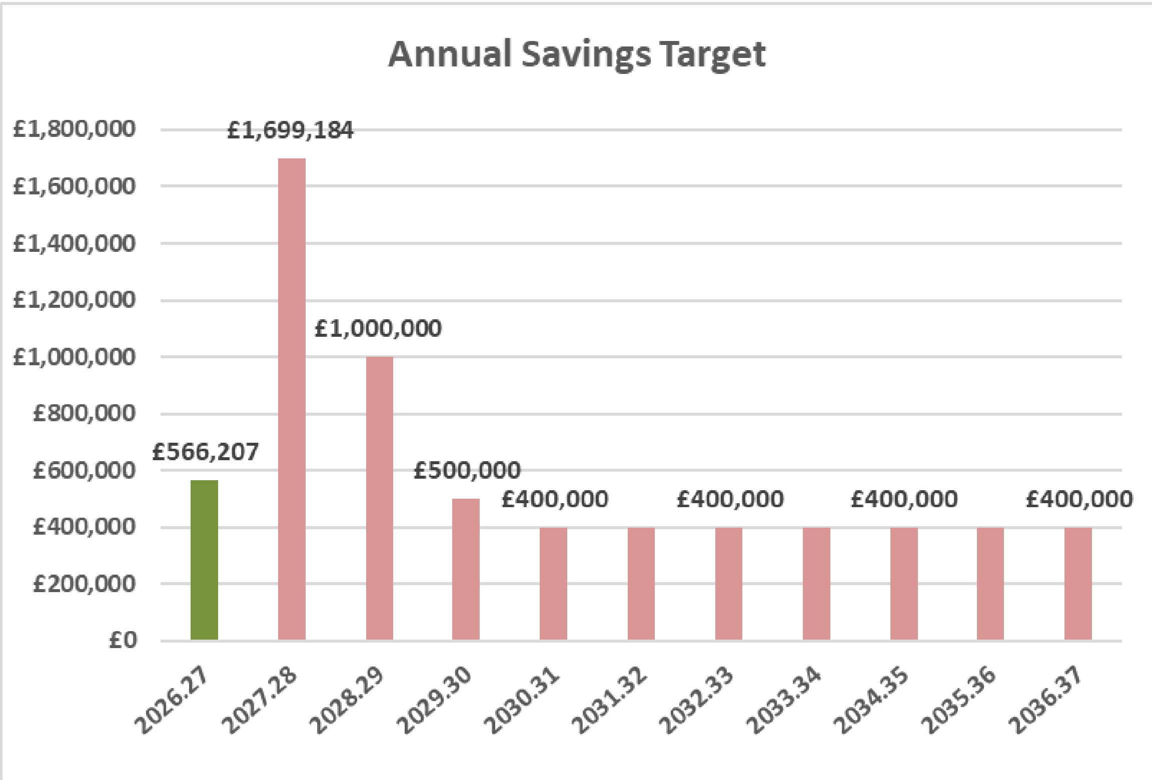
4.4.4. **Tenant Engagement £30K -** This growth is for the facilitation of tenant engagement activities, linked to the “Provider Improvement Plan”, so that the Council can demonstrate enhanced regulatory compliance with the “Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard” and meet the commitments within the Resident Engagement Strategy 2024-2027.

4.4.5. **Decant Budget £10K -** There is a rise in the necessity to decant tenants from their properties, due to historic disrepair cases and on occasion, due to property neglect. This is likely to be further impacted by Awaab's Law.

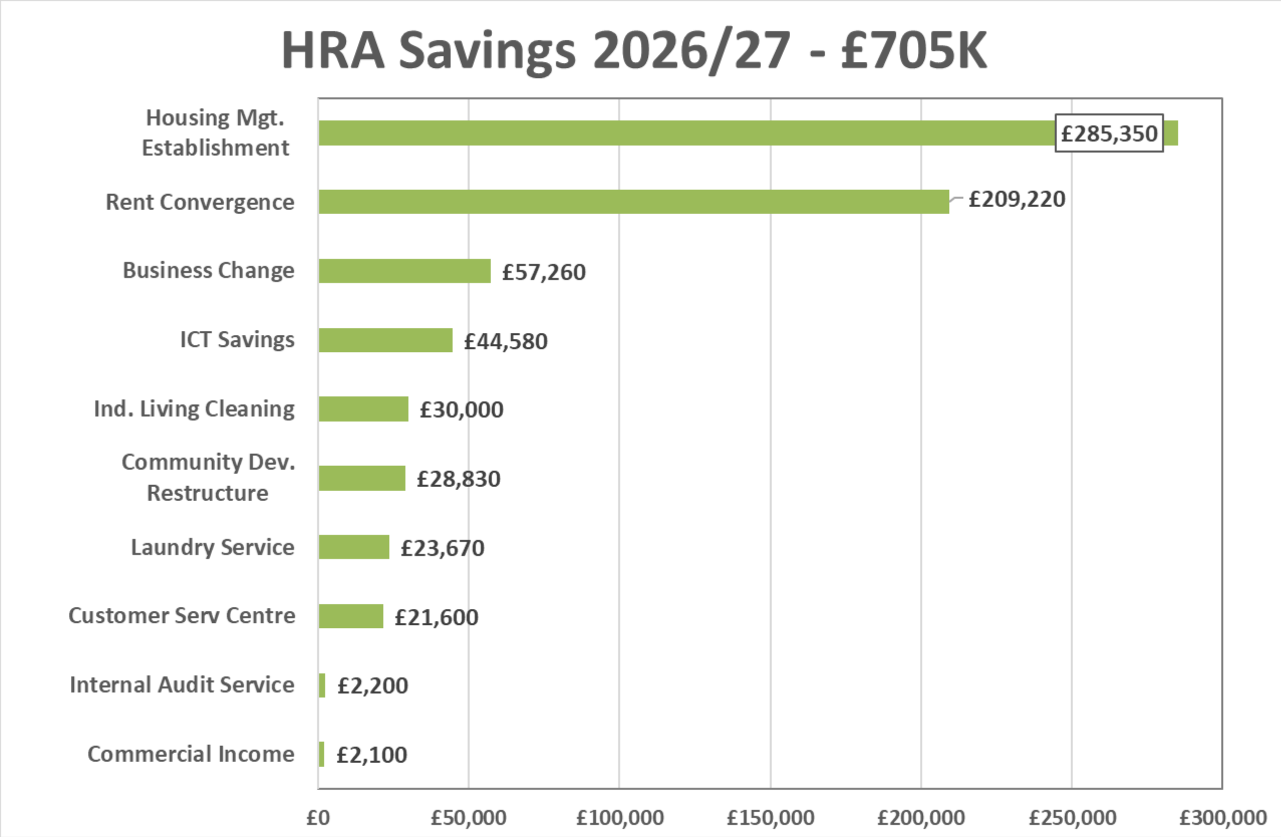
4.4.6. **Procurement Staffing £7K –** This function has three staff that support a shared service across East Herts, Hertsmere, and Stevenage Councils. The additional staff resource is supported by the Senior Leadership Team and will ensure that new regulations, as a result of the new Procurement Act 2023, are delivered effectively. The remainder of the post’s costs have been funded from changes in the finance team.

4.5. **Savings Options**

4.5.1. The latest 30 year HRA business plan has identified the need for substantial revenue savings in the medium term forecast, see paragraph 3.3 and graph below.



4.5.2. A preliminary savings review was conducted in the summer, and this has resulted in identified savings of £496K for 2026/27, with the addition of £209K from rent convergence with a £1 cap (to be confirmed by the Government). The individual savings included in the proposed budget are detailed below.



4.5.3. **Housing Management Establishment £285K –** The budget saving exercise in the summer identified a potential £346K saving from a rationalisation of the current staffing establishment, in particular an analysis off long-term vacant posts. After the detailed analysis was completed an actual saving of £285K has been included in the budget. There is no negative impact on services from this measure, as the savings derive from long term vacant posts where service efficiencies mean that they are no longer needed. Also, there are some vacated “fixed term” posts that have remained in the establishment, or where new posts have been created for a job share and the original post is still budgeted.

4.5.4. **Rent Convergence £209K -** The business plan also included an estimated £209K additional income stream from the reintroduction of rent convergence that the Government has recently consulted on and is detailed at 4.1. This estimate is currently included in the budget.

4.5.5. **Business Change Team £57K –** a review of the Business Change Team budgets has identified savings for 2026/27 and the HRA’s share of these central costs has reduced by £57K as a result.

4.5.6. **ICT Savings £45K –** there are two areas included in this saving. A saving of £33K has been identified, as a result of a software review and more extensive use of the Microsoft 365 product. The second item of £12K relates to the HRA’s share of the removal of a vacant post in the current ICT staff structure.

4.5.7. **Independent Living Cleaning £30K –** A review has been carried out to reduce duplication between caretaking services and the Independent Living cleaning service and this is projected to reduce costs by £30K per annum.

4.5.8. **Community Development Restructure £29K -** Savings were identified for the HRA following the restructure of the Community Development and Co-operative Neighbourhoods Team, which was approved and actioned in June 2025.

4.5.9. **Laundry Service £24K -** The closure of laundry facilities was proposed due to a low level of usage and the costs of maintaining the equipment. Consultation was carried out with affected residents in the 2 blocks impacted before the decision was made to close these facilities. Those residents who raised concerns about the closure will be supported. For example, plumbing will be provided where tenants wish to install a washing machine in their flat and referrals will be made to the Welfare team for help, advice, and support.

4.5.10. **Customer Services Centre £22K –** A management saving is proposed within the Customer Service Centre through the deletion of one management role. No redundancies are expected, as temporary arrangements are currently in place.

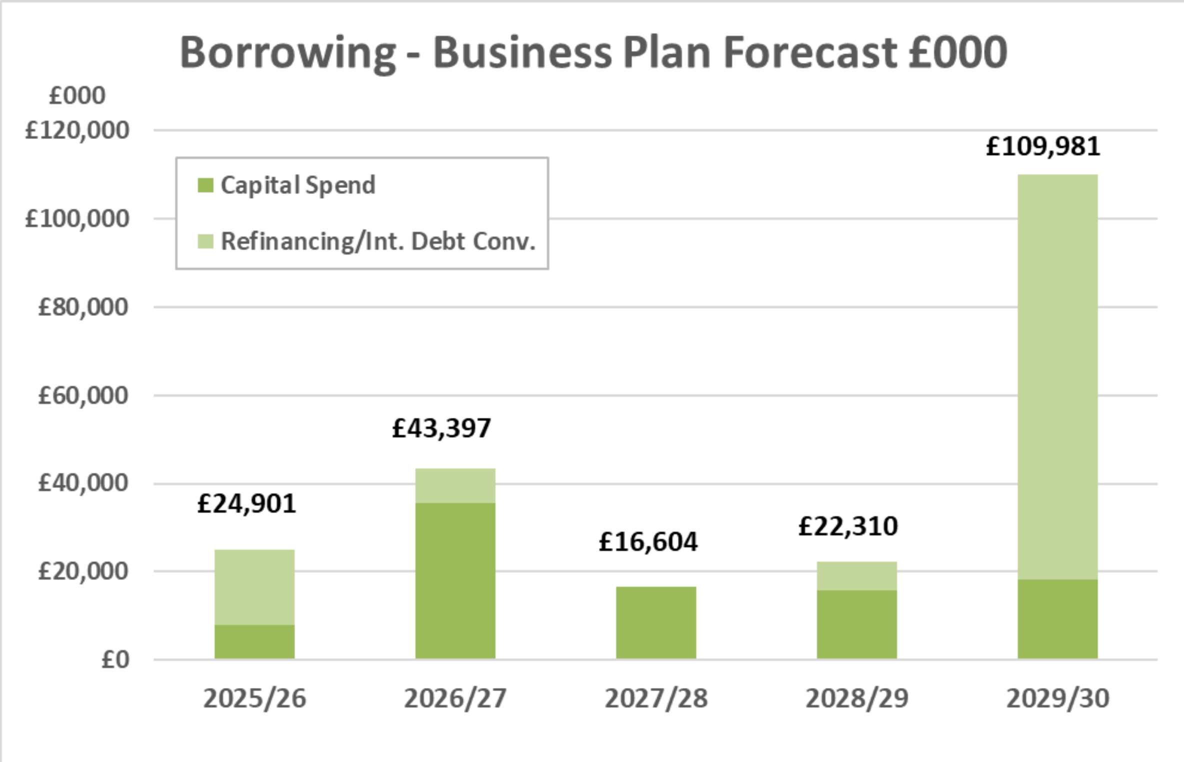
4.5.11. **Other savings £4K –** there are two other small savings, totalling £4K, identified for additional commercial income from advertising and changes to the internal audit costs.

4.5.12. In addition to the savings identified above and since the business plan report was published, the results of the latest pension scheme review have been received and the annual employer contribution reduces for the period 2026/27-2028/29 reducing pay costs by an estimated £876K which will help meet future savings gaps. The pension scheme actuaries carry out a major review every three years to determine the necessary contribution rate of the Council and to identify any historic underfunding that needs to be met. Originally it was anticipated that the current employer’s contribution of 19.3% would remain in place and additional historic costs would need to be funded. A growth item now not needed of £30K was included in the business plan to meet this contingency.

4.6. Borrowing

4.6.1. Based on current forecasts, new loans totalling £24.9Million and £43.4Million are projected to be taken in 2025/26 and 2026/27, respectively. However, recent volatility in Government debt interest rates may change the timing of when to take the new borrowing. This will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates. The interest payable in 2025/26 and 2026/27 is estimated to be £9Million and £9.7Million respectively and the Government are still currently giving Local Authorities a 0.6% discount on loans taken for the HRA up until March 2026.

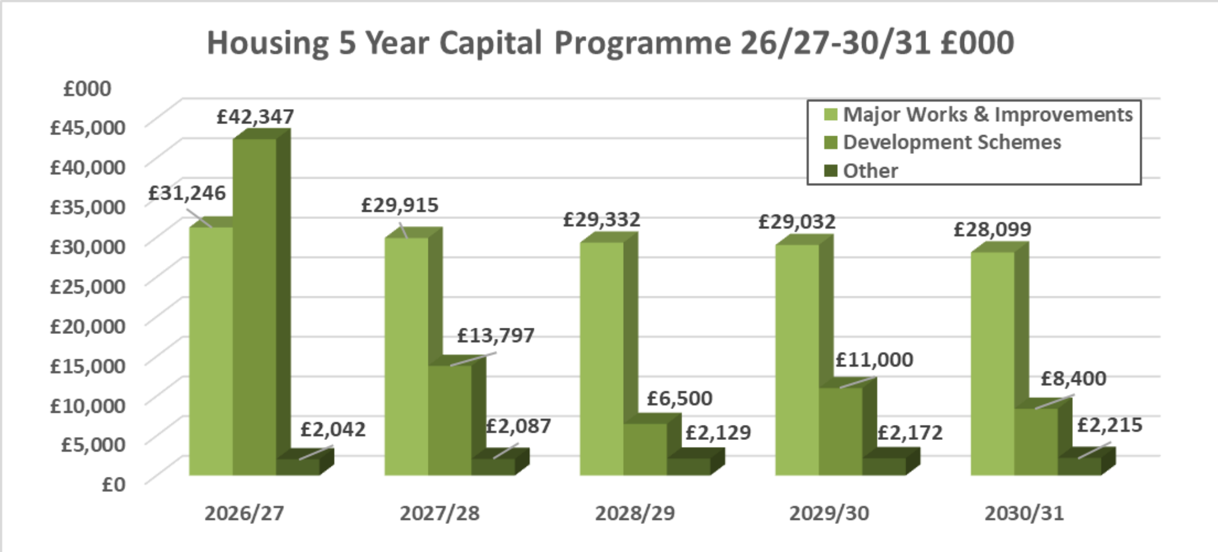
4.6.2. Current interest rates on Government debt remain higher than the much lower levels seen in the past decade and this has led to a revised debt strategy in the HRA Business Plan. As shown in the graph below there is a high level of projected borrowing in 2029/30, with £92Million of refinancing of current loans. This will allow the Council to borrow short term at 4.39% compared to the 30 year maturity rate of 5.59% (PWLB rates at 01/12/25) and refinance when lower interest rates are anticipated. For the next two years the current model assumes an average rate of 4.8%, with the HRA Business plan estimating a longer-term average of 3.75%.



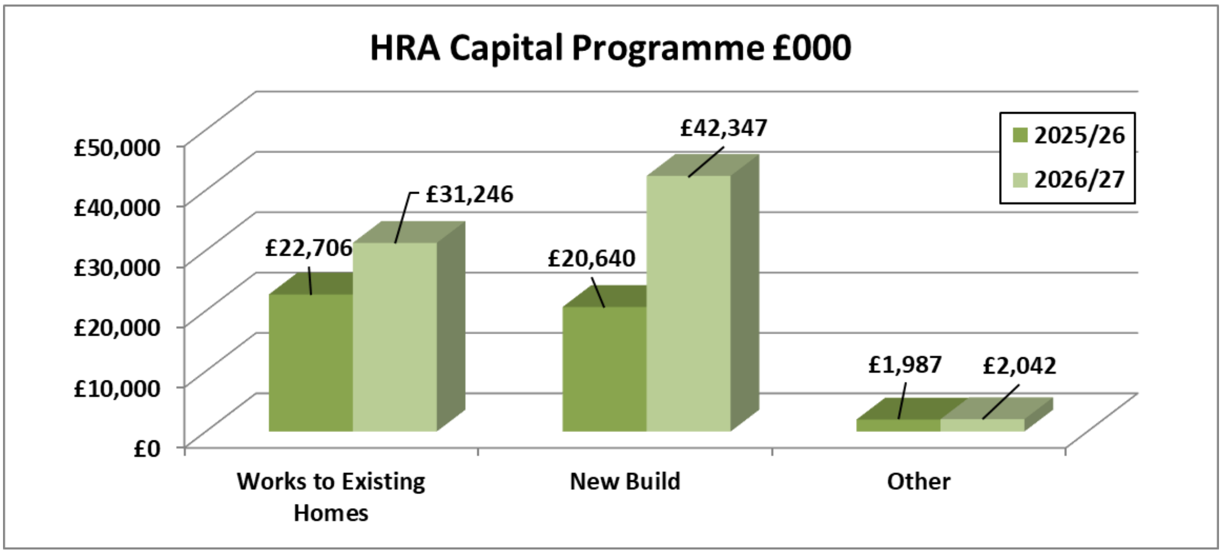
4.6.3. The graph above also shows the annual borrowing projected in the medium term and the split between loans funding capital expenditure and loans taken to convert internal borrowing, or to re-finance existing loans when they become due. Internal debt is generated when the Council uses balances to underwrite capital expenditure, usually for a temporary period. The debt to be taken for 2025/26 and 2026/27 is £68.3Million, of which £24.8Million is for converting internal borrowing to external debt. However, the exact timing of this borrowing could change, based upon the amount of balances held by the Council and changes to interest rates.

4.7. Capital Expenditure

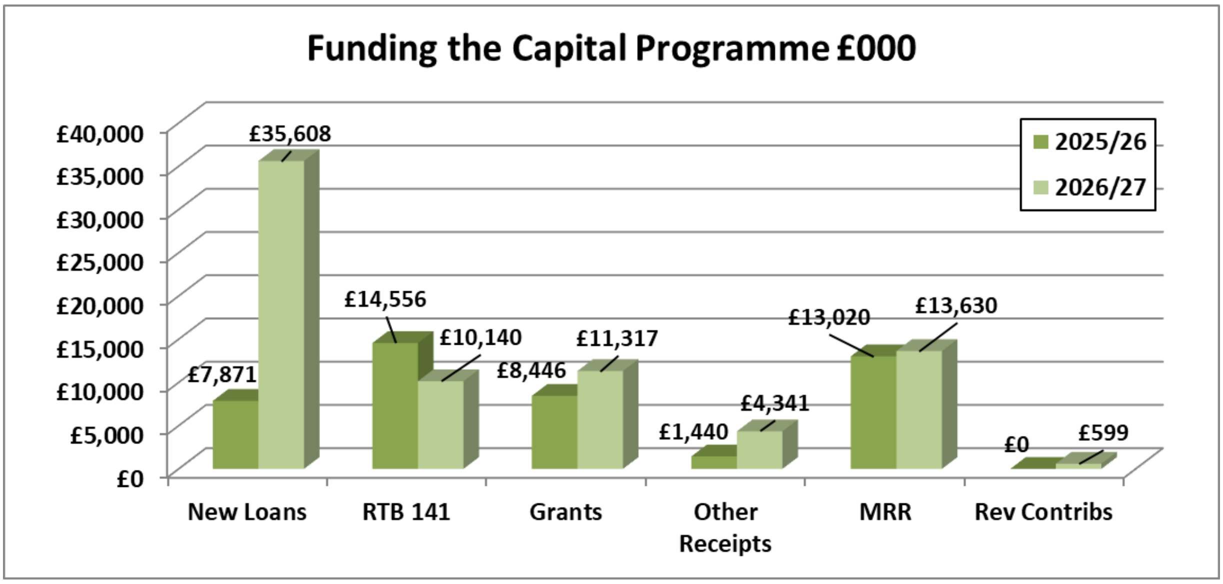
4.7.1. The graph below shows the high level summary of projected capital expenditure, included in the HRA Business Plan, for the next five years. Major works expenditure is expected to stay fairly consistent, starting at £31Million and dropping to £28Million by year five. This is higher than the major repairs allowance (funded by depreciation) and will require additional financing from grants, loans, and revenue contributions to capital. Development expenditure is linked to the timing of planned schemes and does vary from year to year. The high level of spend in 2026/27 of £42Million is due to two schemes at the Oval and Brent Court, but the timing of this expenditure may need to be adjusted, in line with operational requirements. Overall, there is a projected £240Million capital programme over the next five years.



4.7.2. The graph below compares the revised capital programme for 2025/26 and the proposed spend for 2026/27. Work to existing homes is set increase in line with the additional investment needs identified in recent stock condition surveys, from £23Million to £31Million. New development spend is also set to increase from £21Million to £42Million, due to the timing of the current schemes, as detailed in 4.7.3. The detailed HRA capital programme, showing expenditure at individual scheme level, will be included in the Final HRA Budget Report in January.



4.7.3. The table below shows the funding sources for the programme. Due to the increased investment required in the existing housing stock (compared to the previous HRA BP), borrowing will be required to supplement the funding from the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) that comes from depreciation charges to the HRA. New development will continue to be funded from RTB sale receipts and borrowing supplemented by significant Government grant support from Homes England secured to support qualifying developments.

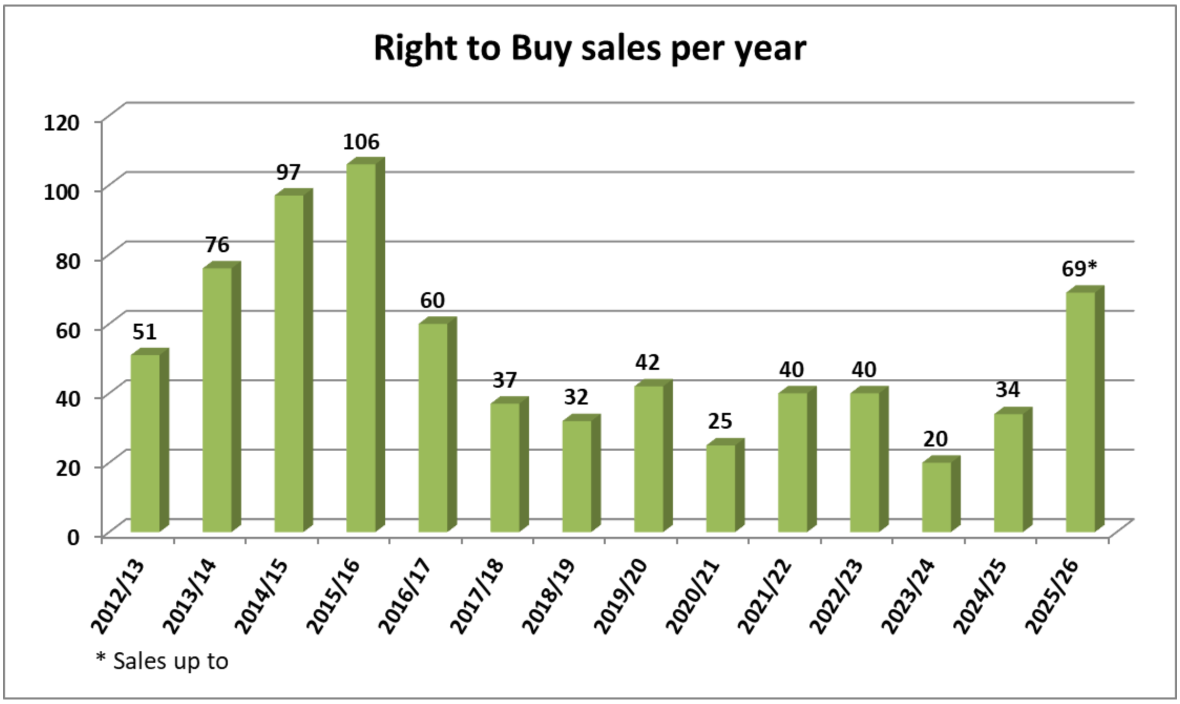


4.8. **Use of RTB One for One Receipts**

4.8.1. Over the last year there have been significant changes in the RTB system, including the rules the Council have to follow in spending retained sales receipts on new properties. In the summer, the Government confirmed that many of the changes are now in place indefinitely and outlined further changes to the system that they intend to legislate for in the near future. In summary they confirmed that:

- Extension of the changes made in July 2024.
- Cap on purchase of existing properties permanently removed.
- 5 years to spend receipts confirmed (10 years from 2027/28).
- Treasury and local authority pre HRA self financing deductions from receipts permanently removed from 2026/27.
- RTB receipts can be used with grant funding from 2026/27
- Further changes to discount calculations and qualification times to be legislated when parliamentary time allows.

4.8.2. The change in discounts from a maximum of £104K to £34K in November 2024 led to a large increase in applications before the deadline. Due to the time required to complete these sales, most of these additional applications are due to complete in 2025/26. The chart below shows a significant increase of 69 sales to October, and this is projected to be over 100 by the year end. It is also anticipated that there will be a further 20 sales in 2026/27, but after this the lower discount and further changes to the scheme are likely to reduce future disposals, (estimated to be 8 RTB's per annum from 2027/28). This has given the HRA a larger capital receipt than normal to be spent on replacement properties, under the RTB receipts retention scheme, of an estimated £21Million. However, the latest business plan anticipates that this is a one-off event and future receipts will be much lower.



4.8.3. This bigger than normal RTB receipt will give the Council more flexibility in its replacement programme over the next five years (albeit reduce the housing stock) and the opportunity to combine this with grant funding will enable further development and acquisitions to replace the lost housing stock. The latest business plan projects a further 320 new units will to be added over the next five years and that the Council.

4.9. **Draft Budget Proposals**

4.9.1. The Draft 2026/27 HRA budget is estimated to be a net surplus of £558,520. The table below shows the main movements in the budget and includes growth and savings proposals for 2026/27 detailed in sections 4.4 and 4.5 above. The table below shows a reduction of £738K from the projected business plan deficit of £179K. This is largely due to the impact of the latest triennial pension scheme review (see paragraph 4.5.12). As stated in paragraph 4.5.1, there are high savings targets needed in the HRA over the medium term and any additional amounts identified now gives more certainty about achieving those targets in the medium term, (the 2027/28 savings required is £1.7Million).

4.9.2. Although there is currently a surplus, the final budget proposals will need to be adjusted for to support cost recharged from the General Fund that are currently indicating this will be a pressure but not yet included in the draft budget. There is also a potential budget pressure on compliance and building safety costs, as the implementation of new regulations, and comprehensive service reviews have indicated that a higher budget will be needed in this area. The details of these changes were not available for inclusion in the business plan or the draft budget but will be included in the final report in January and will reduce the currently reported surplus.

Summary of 2026/27		
Working Budget 2025/26 - Quarter 2		**£587,890**
Adjusted for "one off" and non-carry forward items	(£918,960)	
Revised Base Budget from 2026/27		**(£331,070)**
Increases in Income/Reductions in Expenditure:		
Additional Rental Income and other fees and charges	(£2,602,820)	
Savings achieved	(£704,810)	
Capital Salary Adjustment	(£305,460)	
Additional Income	(£40,000)	
		(£3,653,090)
Increases in Expenditure/Reductions in Income:		
Increase in loan borrowing interest	£1,032,670	
Increase in Depreciation trf to MRR	£374,220	
Interest on Balances	£56,500	
Increase in Revenue Contrib to Capital	£598,780	
Net Salary Increases for Inflation/NI/Re-grading/Pensions	£476,860	
Busines Plan Growth	£187,260	
Utility Inflation	£220,480	
Contract Inflation	£356,620	
General Inflation	£104,610	
Net change in Recharges to/from General Fund	£15,750	
Other minor changes	£1,890	
		£3,425,640
Total Net Changes:		**(£227,450)**
Draft HRA 2026/27 budget		**(£558,520)**
Business Plan Projected Draw Down of Balances		**£178,990**
Variance to Business Plan Projection		**(£737,510)**

4.9.3. A risk assessment of balances has been completed and is in Appendix C to this report. Current minimum balances have increased from last year (£6.3Million to £10Million) to reflect the change in operational risks identified in the latest business plan projections. The need to invest more in the housing stock in the early part of the plan, large savings targets in the medium term and higher borrowing levels, with uncertainty on future interest rates, has meant that it is prudent to hold higher reserves to mitigate against variations in these costs. The HRA balances are expected to exceed the minimum requirement in the 2026/27 budget and these additional funds are held against any potential unknown future service pressures.

HRA Balances:	2025/26 £	2026/27 £
HRA Balance 1 April	(10,925,848)	(10,337,958)
Use of balances in Year	587,890	(558,520)
HRA Balance 31 March	**(10,337,958)**	**(10,896,478)**
Minimum Balances	(10,000,000)	(10,000,000)
Potential service pressures	(337,958)	(896,478)

4.10. **Consultation**

4.10.1. The proposals in this paper have been developed following extensive consultation with Cabinet Members, the Executive Housing Working Group on 26 November 2025 (where they were noted), Senior Executives, and service managers across the Council. They also incorporate customer priorities identified through the recent Tenant Survey.

4.10.2. At the June 2025 Spending Review, the UK Government announced a 10-year rent settlement allowing social housing providers to increase rents annually by September CPI + 1% from April 2026. This was an extension of the previous five-year proposal and was introduced to give housing providers, lenders, and investors greater long-term certainty for planning and investment.

4.10.3. In addition, the Government has consulted on a rent convergence mechanism, which would permit additional uplifts of £1 or £2 per week for properties currently below formula rent to accelerate alignment with target levels. This policy aims to ensure fairness and consistency in rent structures while supporting landlords' financial sustainability. The Government has confirmed that a response to the consultation will be given in the new year (2026) and will need to be removed from the 2026/27 budget and MTFS if not approved requiring a further £209K of savings by 2029/30.

4.10.4. For the Council, these proposals align with the assumptions in the HRA Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, offering an opportunity to improve income streams while maintaining affordability for tenants.

4.10.5. Further consultation will take place following this Cabinet meeting, including consideration by relevant Member committees before the proposals are presented to Council for agreement in January 2026.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 **Financial Implications**

5.2 Financial implications are detailed within the body of the report. The proposed HRA budget for 2026/27 is underpinned by the updated 30-year HRA Business Plan, which assumes CPI + 1% rent increases and the reintroduction of rent convergence. However, confirmation of rent convergence is not expected until January 2026, creating uncertainty around income projections. The draft budget assumes a £1 per week convergence limit, generating an additional £3.7Million over the first five years, but if this policy is not implemented, the savings requirement will increase by £210k in 2026/27 and £681k in 2027/28.

5.3 The draft budget needs to include additional costs as set out in paragraph 4.9.2 which will reduce the surplus currently shown in paragraph 4.9.3 and will be included in the report to the January Cabinet.

5.4 **Legal Implications**

5.5 Legal implications are included in the body of the report.

5.6 **Staffing Implications**

5.7 The unions will be consulted on any options in this report that could have an adverse impact on staffing resources. While the 2026/27 savings programme includes some staffing-related efficiencies, these will be achieved through a review of vacant posts and service redesign only, with no impact on any currently filled posts. Human Resources will co-ordinate the implementation of any staff-related savings arising from the budget process to ensure compliance and workforce stability.

5.8 **Risk Implications**

Financial Risks

5.9 The HRA faces significant financial risks that could impact its long-term sustainability. Inflation remains a key driver of both income and expenditure and is difficult to predict, influencing rent levels and overall stability. Interest rate volatility and the ability to service increased borrowing forecast to peak at £354 million in 2031/32, pose material challenges, despite assumptions of a gradual reduction to 3.75% in the longer term. Rent policy uncertainty adds further complexity and while a CPI+1% increase has been agreed, the Government has yet to confirm whether rent convergence will be implemented from 2026/27 and beyond. Also, service charge recovery may fall short of expectations.

5.10 Regulatory changes, including evolving Consumer Standards and Building Safety requirements, could increase operating and compliance costs. The Council's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050 presents technical and funding challenges, as decarbonisation costs cannot be fully met from tenant rents under current assumptions. Increased Right to Buy sales, despite revised forecasts, risk reducing rental income and constraining development capacity. In addition, sustained demand for aids and adaptations, currently requiring an additional £600k per annum, and rising rent arrears leading to higher bad debt provisions, represent further pressures on financial resilience. Unexpected build cost inflation and potential supply chain disruptions could add further uncertainty to the delivery of capital programmes and planned works.

5.11 The latest revision of the 30 year HRA Business Plan also includes high revenue savings to balance the demands on the ring fenced account in the medium to long term. By year 10 of the model £5.8Million of total on-going savings will need to have been made from the revenue budget, or reduced capital expenditure and financing costs. This represents a significant fall in expenditure and not meeting this target represents a large financial risk to the account.

Operational and Compliance Risks

5.12 Operational risks include the potential for investment needs to exceed planned expenditure due to evolving Decent Homes and Consumer Standards, as well as compliance with the Building Safety Act. While current requirements apply only to buildings over 18 metres, any change in scope could significantly increase costs. Failure to meet the Social Housing Regulation Act requirements could result in enforcement action or fines, adding further pressure to the HRA. These risks are compounded by the need to maintain compliance with new regulatory frameworks and achieve a C1 grading, which may require additional investment in resident engagement and service improvements. Furthermore, shortages of skilled labour and supply chain disruptions could affect the timely delivery of capital programmes and maintenance works, increasing costs and operational risk.

Strategic and Social Risks

5.13 The Council's commitment to achieving net zero by 2050 presents technical and funding challenges, as decarbonisation costs cannot be fully met from tenant rents under current assumptions. Although funding has been secured for EPC C compliance by 2030, further resources will be required to meet long-term targets as detailed in 5.17 below. Increased Right to Buy sales, despite revised forecasts, could reduce rental income and constrain development capacity. Rising rent arrears and associated bad debt provisions, alongside sustained demand for aids and adaptations, represent further risks to financial resilience. These pressures could lead to increased savings targets and require reprioritisation of capital programmes. Additionally, demographic changes and the need for specialist housing, such as Independent Living Schemes, will require careful planning to ensure future demand is met within financial constraints.

Mitigation Strategy

5.14 To address these risks, the business plan incorporates a minimum £10 million reserve to absorb cost pressures and maintain flexibility. Debt assumptions are regularly reviewed, and capital programmes are monitored to ensure affordability. Rent and service charge policies allow for formula-based adjustments and flexibility on relets, while procurement strategies include forward ordering and support for local SMEs to mitigate inflation and supply chain risks. The Council continues to enhance stock data, seek external funding for decarbonisation, and implement revised arrears management processes. Compliance with regulatory requirements is supported through gap analysis, improvement plans, and proactive budget reviews, ensuring the HRA remains robust and adaptable to emerging challenges. Strategic flexibility is maintained through development mix adjustments, including scope to increase affordable rent units where necessary, and by re-profiling capital budgets to meet demand-led pressures such as aids and adaptations.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.15 In exercising or changing its functions, including service delivery and staffing, the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010, specifically section 149, which sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty. This duty replaced previous legislation under the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A), and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to demonstrate, as part of its decision-making process, that due regard has been given to the needs outlined in the Act. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2026.

5.16 To inform decisions on the 2026/27 Budget, officers have undertaken initial Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for HRA Rent Setting and Service Charges. These assessments will be further developed as proposals are agreed and implemented. Where a potential negative impact has been identified, officers have outlined additional actions required to inform final decisions and, where possible, mitigate adverse effects.

5.17 Attached as Appendix D is an EqIA for increasing the rent charged by 4.8% per annum and increased Service Charges including the mitigations that will be implemented to lessen the impact wherever possible.

Climate Change Implications

5.18 The anticipated revised Decent Homes Standard and the targets set within the HRA Asset Management Strategy will continue to improve the environmental performance of the existing housing stock. The revised HRA Business Plan includes provision to achieve a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030, supported by the Warm Homes programme, which will retrofit 379 properties by March 2028. However, approximately 2,200 homes will still require investment to meet this standard. While the Council is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its housing stock, full decarbonisation to achieve net zero by 2050 is not included in the current plan due to the estimated additional cost of £110m–£128m, which is unaffordable without significant external funding. The Housing Asset Management Service will continue to review its approach and seek grant funding opportunities to support delivery of energy efficiency improvements, contributing to the Council’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

5.19 Future housing developments will incorporate environmental performance considerations within design and specification, introducing technologies and materials that enhance energy efficiency and sustainability, subject to viability and funding availability.

6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 Final Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget Setting and Rent Report 2025/26 - January 2025 Council.

BD2 HRA Business Plan – November 2026 Cabinet.

BD3 Making Stevenage Even Better 2024–2027 Corporate Plan

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A – HRA Summary 2026/27

Appendix B - Fees and Charges 2026/27

Appendix C - Risk Assessment of Balances 2026/27

Appendix D - EQIA for HRA Rent 2026/27

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APPENDIX A	HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUMMARY			
	Actual 2023/24 £	Original Budget 2025/26 £	Working Budget 2025/26 £	Original Budget 2026/27 £
Summary of Expenditure				
Supervision and Management	10,922,941	13,317,360	12,777,470	12,504,480
Special Services	6,805,960	7,670,426	7,722,716	7,609,310
Rent, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	826,362	870,784	894,784	898,610
Repairs and Maintenance (1)	18,285,688	15,094,930	16,153,120	15,859,220
Depreciation	13,381,745	13,138,170	13,138,170	13,512,390
Corporate and Democratic Costs	1,141,113	1,081,490	1,081,490	1,081,490
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	391,226	439,270	439,270	488,220
Total Expenditure	**51,755,035**	**51,612,430**	**52,207,020**	**51,953,720**
Summary of Income				
Rental Income:				
Dwelling Rents	(48,942,003)	(50,984,660)	(50,798,060)	(53,332,290)
Non Dwelling Rents	(82,270)	(104,050)	(104,050)	(110,150)
	(49,024,273)	(51,088,710)	(50,902,110)	(53,442,440)
Charges for Services & Facilities - Tenants	(3,196,863)	(3,275,840)	(3,275,840)	(3,567,320)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(1,552,894)	(1,254,930)	(1,422,930)	(1,480,210)
Contributions Towards Expenditure	(371,588)	(365,880)	(433,480)	(387,370)
Reimbursement of Costs	(460,432)	(348,540)	(398,540)	(399,040)
Recharge Income (GF & Capital)	(2,450,925)	(2,813,320)	(2,588,020)	(2,825,600)
Total Income	**(57,056,976)**	**(59,147,220)**	**(59,020,920)**	**(62,101,980)**
Gain/(Loss) on disposal of HRA Non-Current Assets	(3,247,677)	0	0	0
Interest Payable	8,269,717	10,146,840	8,641,160	9,673,830
Interest Receivable	(1,024,664)	(1,444,070)	(739,370)	(682,870)
Capital grants & Contributions receivable	(9,898,062)	0	0	0
Capital Financed from Revenue Contributions	2,836,926	0	0	598,780
Net (Surplus)/Deficit For Year	**(8,365,702)**	**1,167,980**	**1,087,890**	**(558,520)**
Movement on the HRA				
Accounting basis to funding basis under statute	13,769,830	0	0	0
Transfer to/(from) Reserves	(5,745,371)	(500,000)	(500,000)	0
Housing Revenue Account Balance				
Net Expenditure/(Income) for Year	**(341,243)**	**667,980**	**587,890**	**(558,520)**
Balance B/Fwd 1 April	**(10,584,605)**	**(10,925,848)**	**(10,925,848)**	**(10,337,958)**
HRA Balance C/Fwd 31 March	**(10,925,848)**	**(10,257,868)**	**(10,337,958)**	**(10,896,478)**

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Appendix B

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Propossed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
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%		
Guest flats	Norman Court, Silkin Court	**£25.40**	**£28.60**	£3.20	12.58%		
Short Stay Units	Assessment (per day)	**£12.90**	**£15.30**	£2.40	18.60%		
	Respite*	**£25.30**	**£28.10**	£2.80	11.07%		
						5,704	**570**
Laundry Charges	Independent living/flexicare laundry wash	**£3.60**	**£3.70**	£0.10	2.78%		
						22,144	**-1,534**
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**
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%		
	Additional pendant for 2nd service user (additional weekly charge) (50 weeks)	**£0.50**	**£0.55**				
	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%		
	response service for new customers (50 weeks)	**£8.70**	**£8.70**	£0.00	0.00%		
	Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	**£4.90**	**£5.00**	£0.10	2.12%		
	Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	**£3.90**	**£4.20**	£0.30	7.69%		
						587,385	**13,873**
Care Connect 24/7 alarm - private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)	Response service **(52 weeks)** *	**£8.70**	**£9.00**	£0.30	3.45%		
	Additional pendant **(52 weeks)***	**£0.60**	**£0.70**				
	Response service out of area (**52 weeks**)*	**£8.70**	**£8.70**	£0.00	0.00%		
	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%		
						128,000	**2,600**
	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**
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%		
Joint to Sole	Administration Fees	**£0.00**	**£50.00**	£50.00	New Charge		
Sole to Joint	Administration Fees	**£0.00**	**£50.00**	£50.00	New Charge		
Mutual Exchanges	Administration Fees	**£0.00**	**£50.00**	£50.00	New Charge		
Non-Statutory Succession	Administration Fees	**£0.00**	**£50.00**	£50.00	New Charge		
						1,987	**3,059**

Appendix B

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Propossed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
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**
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%		
Adminstration	Administration	**£187.20**	**£193.00**	£5.80	3.10%		
						6,720	**0**
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**
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%		
	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%		

Appendix B

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FEES AND CHARGE PROPOSED 2026/27

Service	Details	2025/26 Fee	2026/27 Propossed Fee	2026-27 Proposed Increase (£)	2026-27 Proposed Increase (%)	Working Budget 2025/26	Budget Increase (from fee proposals)
		£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
	GRAND TOTAL					£775,638	£24,271

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APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES 2026/27

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	There is a potential risk that the budgeted income from activities where the Council charges for services will not be achieved. This is largely anticipated due to the challenging economic conditions, but could also result from increased void rates, lower collection rates, and disputed bills. All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. Budgets are profiled over the year based on previous experience.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Income**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
Rechargeable works not raised or recovered	-£153,790	10.00%	£15,379
Leaseholder charges not realised (excluding insurance)	-£1,480,210	5.00%	£74,011
Rental income (increase in voids rates)	-£53,332,290	0.75%	£399,992
Rent Convergence is not agreed	-£209,220	100.00%	£209,220
Service Charges (increase in voids rates)	-£3,567,320	0.75%	£26,755
Heating charges	-£639,350	5.00%	£31,968
Total			**£757,324**

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	There is a potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide services will increase significantly, including due to regulatory requirements. Individual budgets are reviewed as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. Budgets are profiled over the year based on previous experience, so any variances should be identified during the year.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Exposure**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
Storm damage and fire damage uninsured costs (excess is £25,000 for fire damage)	£25,000	100.00%	£25,000
Response and Emergency repairs increase as a result of inflationary pressures or unforseen repairs	£15,859,220	10.00%	£1,585,922
Unforeseen Capital works not budgeted for requiring a contribution to capital (based on a proportion of the capital programme)	£75,635,000	3.00%	£2,269,050
Inflation pressures on capital works requiring additional revenue resources to fund the shortfall	£75,635,000	1.00%	£756,350
There is an insufficient budget identified for Void, Fencing, Aids and Adaptation, and Damp and Mould and compliance work.	£1,500,000	50.00%	£750,000
Total			**£5,386,322**

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Exposure**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5% not achieved	£372,420	5.00%	£18,621
Increase in bad debt provision	£488,220	5.00%	£24,411
Utility inflation (Electricity increase in April 2025, Gas increase from Oct 2025)	£1,428,280	5.00%	£71,414
Pay award is higher than budgeted for	£14,494,050	1.00%	£144,941
Total			**£259,387**

APPENDIX C: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCES 2026/27

Potential Risk Area	**Comments including any mitigation factors**		
Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Exposure**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
Savings Options delayed or not realised over Medium Term (5 yrs)	£4,165,390	20.00%	£833,078
Total			**£833,078**

Potential Risk Area	**Comments including any mitigation factors**		
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Exposure**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
Gross Expenditure (excluding fixed interest costs and depreciation and RCCO and cost covered above)	£1,633,750.00	5.00%	£78,770
Total			**£78,770**

Potential Risk Area	**Comments including any mitigation factors**		
Greater exposure to interest rate changes	The latest Business Plan revision includes re-financing of existing debt and a higher level of borrowing in the first 5 years of the plan. To mitiigate this reserve values have been increased related to future debt		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	**Estimated Exposure**	**Risk assessed at**	**Balances Required**
5 Year Assumed new borrowing - interest rates 1% higher than projected	£214,789,000	1.25%	£2,684,863
Total			**£2,684,863**

Level of Balances Assumed in Housing Revenue Account Based on risk **£10,000,000**

HRA: Rent and Service Charge 2026/27

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

December 2025 – December 2026

Date created	November 2025
Approved by	Executive/SLT
Owner	Assistant Director for Housing and Neighbourhoods
Version	1
Author	Simon Kiff, Head of Housing Operations
Business Unit and Team	Housing and Neighbourhoods, Housing Management

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.

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqIA?

Title:	**HRA Rent and Service Charges 2025/26**
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 EqIA.

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

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

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 Rent and Service Charges 2025/26**				
Lead Assessor	Simon Kiff			Assessment team	Elizabeth Ddamulira Keith Reynoldson
Start date	April 2025	End date	April 2026		
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically every 1 year)	Nov 2025				

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Who may be affected by the proposed project?	All tenants
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	To assess the impact of the proposed rent increase and Service charge increase for 2025/26 on Stevenage Council tenants. As part of the government's 10-year rent settlement for social housing, announced in the Spending Review 2024, the government has confirmed that rents for social housing will be allowed to increase by Consumer Prices Index (CPI) +1% annually starting from 1 April 2026. However, a key aspect of this new settlement is the implementation of Social Rent convergence for properties where rents are currently below 'formula rent'. For 2025/26 the permitted increase to rents is CPI plus 1%, based on the September 25 CPI figure. This follows the previous Government’s extension of the current settlement by one year. Rent increases will be permitted at up to 4.8 per cent after CPI rose by 3.8 per cent in the 12 months to September 2025.

	To increase the rent on dwellings from week commencing 7 April 2025 by 4.8%, which is an average increase to £128.72 for social rents, £193.21 for affordable rents and £158.43 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per week (based on a 52-week year). This has been calculated in accordance with the current Rent Standard issued by the Government and the Council's Rent and Service Charge Policy which provides a framework for setting rents and service charges within legislative requirements. The rent and service charge income underpins the delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan's key housing objectives to deliver effective services, to invest in its properties to ensure homes are of a modern standard and to provide new social housing to rent. The policy has been reviewed and is subject to governance approvals. Rent convergence will allow Social Rent properties that are currently charging rents below the 'formula rent' to gradually increase above the CPI +1% cap until they "converge" with the national formula rent level. This means that rents will rise by an additional amount each year, above the CPI +1% limit, until they match the formula rent target. This mechanism was originally introduced in 2002 but was scrapped in 2015. With the new rent settlement, the government is set to reintroduce this convergence mechanism, but the precise implementation details are not expected until January 2026. Rent convergence could have significant implications for tenants, particularly those in Social Rent properties where rents are currently below the formula rent level. These tenants may face higher annual rent increases than under the standard CPI +1% cap However, whether it is £1, £2, or £3, this increase will still be covered by Universal Credit (UC) or Housing Benefit (HB) as long as the rent does not exceed the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. Council rent levels are still within this rate so will not be affected. This is a crucial point for assessing the impact on different protected characteristic groups, as it means that tenants receiving benefits will not be financially burdened by the rent increase.

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	Encourage good relations	

			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.		

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	• Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, February 2019 • Direction on the Rent Standard, 2019 • Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 • Housing and Planning Act 2016 • Rent and service charge policy agreed by Exec December 2019 and recommended to Council in January 2020 • Rent account information • Housing System data (NEC) • Supported housing service data

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there	The average rent increase for 2025/26 is 4.8%, in line with the current rent standard. When calculating rents and service charges, consideration will be taken of the need to balance any increase in the combined rent and service charge with the potential financial impact on

any overall comments that you would like to make?	customers. This relates to 35% of homes to which a service charge applies, which are predominantly flats as well as sheltered accommodation. The Council aims to recover the actual cost of providing the service, as they change due to inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The impact of the 2025/26 rent increase and service charges is • 7,341 homes or 93% receive a rent and service charge increase below £7 per week; • If rent convergence is agreed by the Government with a £1 cap, 7,451 homes or 94% will receive a rent and service charge increase below £8.50 per week. We had 6,703 general social rented properties, 65 affordable rent properties, 836 Independent Living/Flexicare Accommodation and 79 LSSO as at October 2025. The setting of a proportion of new build lets at affordable rents will contribute positively to increasing the supply of new homes in Stevenage. All target groups will benefit given the need for affordable housing is common across all socio-economic and minority groups. The current low supply of new affordable housing and the high cost of the private rented sector in Stevenage have impacted adversely on those groups whose incomes are average or below average. This also further supports work with people who need help to live independently at home and those at risk of homelessness, through wider housing options, continued provision of support, and financial assistance for adaptations and more homelessness preventative programmes, respectively. 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.

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Evidence and Impact Assessment

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

Age					
Positive impact	With the implementation of rent convergence, additional income will be received by SBC which allows for further investment for our HRA stock and help support with current financial pressures	Negative impact	Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment. This may have a greater impact on 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 rent increase including any rent convergence will be covered by UC or HB for those on low income.	Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. A proportion of tenants may see an increase in service charges in any given year. The majority of tenants who are charged for services live in flats and/or independent living accommodation. Tenants living in independent living do so because they have additional needs that require support relating to age, disability or both. The minimum age for entry into independent living is 60 years and data from Northgate indicates that the proportion of tenants aged 60+ in independent living, is almost three times the proportion for all tenant housing. In relation to flat blocks, the data indicates that there is a higher proportion of people aged 18-29 years in flat blocks compared with all SBC housing who may also struggle to pay. For people living in independent living/flexicare schemes, in addition to basic rent and service charges, those who pay for the support/emergency response services that are not eligible for Housing benefit may see an increase in overall payment due each week. We currently know that the general economic challenges and Cost of Living

					are disproportionately of particular risk to older people and those with underlying conditions. This may result in in this age group incurring extra expenses that may affect their ability to pay rent and service charges.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page 5				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Ongoing and day to day consultation will take place with residents in 2025/26 to establish the impact of the rent & service charge increase. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section below, most of which will also apply to this protected characteristic group.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		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) The Welfare Advice and Debt team will provide to support to ensure that this group attracts maximum income to through benefits, however the rent increase including any rent convergence will be covered by UC or HB for those on low income.	Unequal impact	The increase is applied to all properties; it is not possible to exempt any particular groups. Northgate data on tenants in relation to disability is collected at the lettings stage and in most cases their circumstances may change and recorded as and when we are updated. Some tenants may not have provided it.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page two and three.				
What opportunities are there to promote			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

equality and inclusion?			

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	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)			

Pregnancy & Maternity					
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)	

Race					
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)			

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

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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?			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 and Service Charge increase could negatively affect residents in a lower socio-economic standing as they will have a financial challenge.	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Northgate reports on those in rent and service charge arrears and those supported. At the end of Q2 2025 35% were in rent arrears.				
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.	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	The rent increase for 2025/2026 will be applied across all tenancies regardless of circumstances. Those reliant on Housing Benefit (HB) and Universal Credit (UC) Housing costs to cover their full rent and	Unequal impact	

[1]Although 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.

			eligible service charges will not be affected by the increase in rent and service charges as their benefit award will be recalculated. Those who receive partial or do not receive any benefits and experience affordability challenges will be supported accordingly. The number of bids on the new build properties let at affordable rents are similar to the number received for new build let at social rents. There is a mixture of employed and unemployed applicants. Applicants in receipt of benefits are not excluded or unfairly treated. Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of those services. Heating and Water charges are exempt from HB and tenants are expected to pay this from other income or benefits. Residents may be experiencing exceptional economic hardship as a result of the current economic environment with increases in energy, food, and fuel costs in particular. We will use the Household Support Fund to assist those identified as in need. Households in the general rented homes, especially those on lower incomes, in general pay more of their income on housing costs and have less resilience to cope with financial shocks. This is anticipated to lead to a significant increase in fuel poverty. Income services Team will		

			monitor this and provide or signpost to support.		
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	See page two and three				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The policy allows for capping of service charges, subject to any legal constraints. As a means of mitigating the impact of an increase that would cause hardship, the council may subsidise the costs. Rent increase information will be published on the Council website early February 2025 to start preparing tenants. The rent notification letter (to be sent out at the end of February) will offer tenants the opportunity to discuss any queries they have with staff. It will explain why the rent has increased and also explain any increase in service charges. Where support charges are also included (mainly but not exclusively for sheltered and flexi care schemes) separate notifications will be sent out to these residents to ensure it is clearly set out how each element of the weekly charge is made up.		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 & service charge increase and put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly. This is done in April and May. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section above	

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	To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website and hard copies available for those who need them. 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 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. Support provision for this group has been increased as part of an Income Recovery Action plan and it has been extended for a further 2 years to ensure		

	that they can pay through sustainable arrangements to maintain payments towards rent and service charges and have access to required support. The Council will make links to support and guidance clear on all of its communication platforms. The Council will prepare staff to enable them to respond effectively and empathetically with tenants.		

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	N/A	Residents?	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. This is done in April and May. Please also refer to the mitigations outlined in the socio-economic section above.
Voluntary & community sector?	N/A	Partners?	N/A
Other stakeholders?	The report will go through the Council's pre-budget scrutiny meetings before being presented to the Full Council in January.		

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 future viability of the HRA Business Plan is reliant upon us being able to maximise income collection, recover arrears and the costs of service provision where it is possible to do so. Only a proportion of new builds will be at affordable rent in line with the revised HRA Budget plan. The proposal to offer a mix of new build rents at affordable rent levels and at social rent levels would result in additional income to the HRA over 30 years which makes a significant contribution to the sustainability of the plan and the Council's ability to build new homes and to deliver other housing priorities.
	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 through day to day income management and tenant account management to establish to establish the	Remove discrimination and promote equal opportunities.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	Oct 2026	Current practice is to assess cases or groups that are experiencing challenges and putting in place processes

impact of the rent increase challenges relating to affordability and provide tenants with support accordingly	Put in place systems to mitigate this accordingly			and systems to mitigate impacts.

To be Approved by Cabinet (December 2025)

Date: 10/12/2025

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

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda item: ##

Meeting Cabinet

Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change

Date 10th December 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANIOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 – REVOCATION & ADOPTION OF TAXI RANK, LISTER HOSPITAL, COREYS MILL LANE, STEVENAGE.

Authors Julie Dwan – Licensing Manager | 2493

Lead Officers Alex Robinson – Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation | 2288

Contact Officer Julie Dwan | 2493

NON-KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To seek approval to revoke the existing taxi rank located at the Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage and to adopt a new taxi rank, 35m from the existing rank on Coreys Mill Lane, in accordance with Section 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet approves the revocation of the existing, adopted taxi rank located at Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage.

2.2 That Cabinet approves the adoption of the new taxi rank at Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage, which will replace the existing rank being revoked, ensuring continued service provision, improved accessibility, and enhanced pedestrian safety in the area.

2.3 That Cabinet approve the implementation of a temporary taxi rank, located in the vicinity of the existing one, in the event that the new rank cannot be completed prior to the removal of the current provision. This temporary arrangement will ensure the continuity of taxi services. A plan outlining the anticipated location of the temporary taxi rank can be found in **Appendix E**.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), pursuant to its powers under Section 63 of the Local government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, formally adopted the Hackney Carriage stand in Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage on 2nd April 2017. A copy of the order and schedule is attached at **Appendix A**.

3.2 Pursuant to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Hertfordshire County Council (Highways) undertook a statutory public consultation between 28 August 2025 and 18 September 2025 in relation to the *Hertfordshire (Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage) (Prohibition of Stopping Except Taxis) Order 2025*. This proposed Order forms part of the wider scheme for the reconfiguration of the Lister Hospital bus terminal and has been combined with other associated traffic regulation orders to support the overall design and operational changes to the site.

3.3 No responses were received, no objections, comments, or expressions of support.

Consultation

3.4 In line with the statutory requirements set out in sections 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council must give notice to the Chief Officer of Police. A public notice must also be provided in one local newspaper. Any objections which are received within 28 days of the first publication of the public notice must be taken into account, including any comments from the Chief Officer of Police, before such a stand is appointed, revoked or varied.

3.5 The Licensing Authority conducted a 28-day public consultation on the proposed revocation and relocation of the existing taxi rank. The consultation was held between 13th October and 10th November 2025. Full details of the relocation of the Lister Hospital Taxi Rank were published on the Council's website, including a plan of the works to be carried out, an explanation of the reasons for the changes, information about the consultation period and instructions on how to submit representations. In addition to this, a Public Notice was displayed at the Customer Service Centre, Daneshill House, and published in the Comet newspaper on 16th October 2025.

3.6 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. Social media posts went out on 3rd November for the remainder of the consultation period. Copies of all public notices are included as background documents.

3.7 The Council has received one representation from a member of the public, who is not against the relocation of the Taxi rank but objects to the removal of trees to accommodate the works being carried out. A copy of the representation can be found attached at **Appendix D**.

3.8 HCC have confirmed that four trees will have to be removed from the area whilst completing the works but will be replaced with six new trees as part of the scheme.

3.9 No responses have been received from police, or the taxi/private hire trade.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 The proposal to remove the existing taxi rank at the hospital on Coreys Mill Lane is essential as part of the reconfiguration of the Lister Hospital bus terminal. The new bus terminal layout will utilise the current taxi rank area making it unsuitable to retain the rank in its present position.

4.2 The reconfiguration aims to support public transport, while also encouraging more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, wheeling, and cycling. These improvements are part of the Council's broader strategy to encourage fewer car journeys, enhance the overall travel experience and encourage greater use of public transport in the region. This is a scheme that also meets with SBC objectives in its local plan to improve and invest in the lives of the local community.

- SBC are supporting the initiative and have dedicated land to HCC for the Bus interchange improvement to be delivered by them. This is so the improvement works can be designed and constructed by one organisation, HCC, and delivered by their team contract. This approach provides the following additional benefits to SBC:
- The construction work can now be carried out by HCC in its entirety without cost or liability to SBC.
- It reduces SBC’s future maintenance burden and liability for the existing Bus area (the parcel of land that has been dedicated to HCC). This is because it will now be owned and operated by HCC.
- It supports and fosters collaborative working among authorities in the Stevenage area. This is because HCC have also acquired land from the North Herts NHS trust in order to deliver the scheme and improve accessibility and transport links in the vicinity for all our organisations.

4.3 It is proposed that a new taxi rank be introduced to replace the existing rank, which is to be revoked. The new location is situated approximately 35m from the current site, positioned on the opposite side of the area where the bus terminal exits. The proposed location is adjacent to a footway that provides a direct pedestrian link to the hospital. A plan showing the existing taxi rank and the location of the new taxi rank is attached at **Appendix B**.

4.4 The new rank will extend for approximately 24 metres, providing sufficient capacity for up to four licensed hackney carriage vehicles at any one time. While this represents a reduction of one vehicle compared to the current rank, we do not anticipate a significant impact on operations.

4.5 No responses were received from the trade indicating concerns about the reduced capacity during the consultation period. As such, we believe the new rank will meet the operational needs of the area without causing any undue disruption to service levels.

4.6 The revised location also provides an improved layout, allowing taxi users to be picked up and dropped off without crossing through the bus terminal, thereby reducing potential conflicts between taxis and bus movements and improving overall safety and accessibility.

4.7 HCC has confirmed that there will be no loss of taxi provision during the reconfiguration of the bus terminal. The intention is to construct the new proposed taxi rank prior to the removal of the existing one, ensuring continuity of service. However, in the event that this phased approach is not feasible, a temporary taxi stand will be established within the vicinity of the existing rank.

4.8 No formal authorisation is required for a temporary taxi rank. The temporary rank will be managed by the contractor carrying out the works, through the placement of temporary signage for an estimated period of around two to three months, during which time certain parking bays will be suspended. Due to the nature of the works and the space requirements, the location of the temporary rank may shift slightly as the project progresses. However, HCC will ensure that the contractor maintains an adequate and safe area to maintain taxi availability throughout the duration of the works.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

The costs associated with revoking/relocating the taxi rank (e.g., removal/addition of road markings, signage and statutory notices) will be met by Hertfordshire County Council who have secured funding from BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) to improve the existing Bus interchange outside Lister Hospital. This funding is time limited, and the works themselves need to commence by the end of the Financial Year 25/26 for the money to be committed to HCC. The money is ringfenced for Bus Improvement and if it is not utilised here, it could be redistributed and spent elsewhere in the county or possibly the country. There are no anticipated ongoing financial implications for SBC.

5.2 **Legal Implications**

Under Section 63(1) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, the Council has the power to appoint, alter, or remove taxi ranks (hackney carriage stands) within the district. However, this power is subject to the procedural requirements set out in Section 63(2), which must be strictly followed to ensure legality and to mitigate the risk of challenge.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out on 1st November 2025. The taxi rank being revoked will be relocated a short walk from its existing location, alternative pick-up and drop-off arrangements remain available for patients and visitors, including accessible parking bays and drop-off points near the main entrance. The proposal is not expected to adversely impact equality of access. A copy of the Equalities Impact Assessment can be found at **Appendix C.**

5.4 Community Safety Implications

5.4.1 The removal of a designated taxi rank has several potential implications for community safety, which must be carefully considered as part of the decision-making process under Section 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

5.4.2 The revocation of the existing taxi rank at The Lister Hospital is not anticipated to have a negative impact on the community safety, as the proposed new rank will be located adjacent to a footway, therefore maintaining safe and convenient pedestrian links to the hospital.

5.4.3 An added benefit of the proposed location of the new taxi rank, is that taxi users will no longer be required to cross the bus terminal when being set down or picked up. This will significantly reduce potential conflicts between taxi and bus movements, improving overall pedestrian safety, traffic management, and accessibility for patients, visitors and hospital staff.

5.4.4 Overall, the revised arrangement is expected to enhance safety standards at the front of the hospital and surrounding transport facilities. HCC have confirmed that there will be no loss of taxi provision whilst the bus terminal reconfiguration works take place.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976

BD2 HCC Local Transport Plan: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/recycling-waste-and-environment/planning-in-hertfordshire/transport-planning/local-transport-plan.aspx

BD3 HCC Bus Service Improvement Plan: http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/busimprovements

BD4 Consultation Email

BD5 Newspaper Notice

BD6 Social Media Post

APPENDICES

A Copy of the Order for the adoption of the Lister Hospital Taxi rank dated 02/04/2017

B A Plan showing the existing taxi rank and the location of the proposed new taxi rank

C Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

D Representation received from a member of the public.

E Plan showing the location of temporary taxi rank.

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE BOROUGH OF STEVENAGE (APPOINTMENT OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE STANDS) (COREYS MILL LANE, DANESTRETE AND WESTGATE, STEVENAGE) ORDER 2016

The STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL pursuant to its powers given under Section 63 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 hereby makes the following order:

1. This order will come into force on the 2nd day of April 2017 and may be cited as the Borough of Stevenage (Appointment of Hackney Carriage Stands) (Coreys Mill Lane, Danestrete and Westgate, Stevenage) Order 2016

2. The various places specified in the Schedule hereto are appointed as stands for such number of Hackney Carriages as specified in the Schedule hereto with effect from the date this order comes into operation.

3. The interpretation Act 1978 shall apply for the interpretation of this order as it applies for the interpretation of an Act of Parliament.

4. The provisions of Stevenage Borough Council (Control of Parking) (Consolidation) Order 2013 is hereby revoked only in so far as it is affects Stand Danestrete (Rank 2) of the Schedule of the Borough of Stevenage (Appointment of Hackney Carriage Stands) (No.1) Order 2000

The Common Seal of the
Stevenage Borough Council
was hereunto affixed this
20th day of March 2017
in the presence of:-

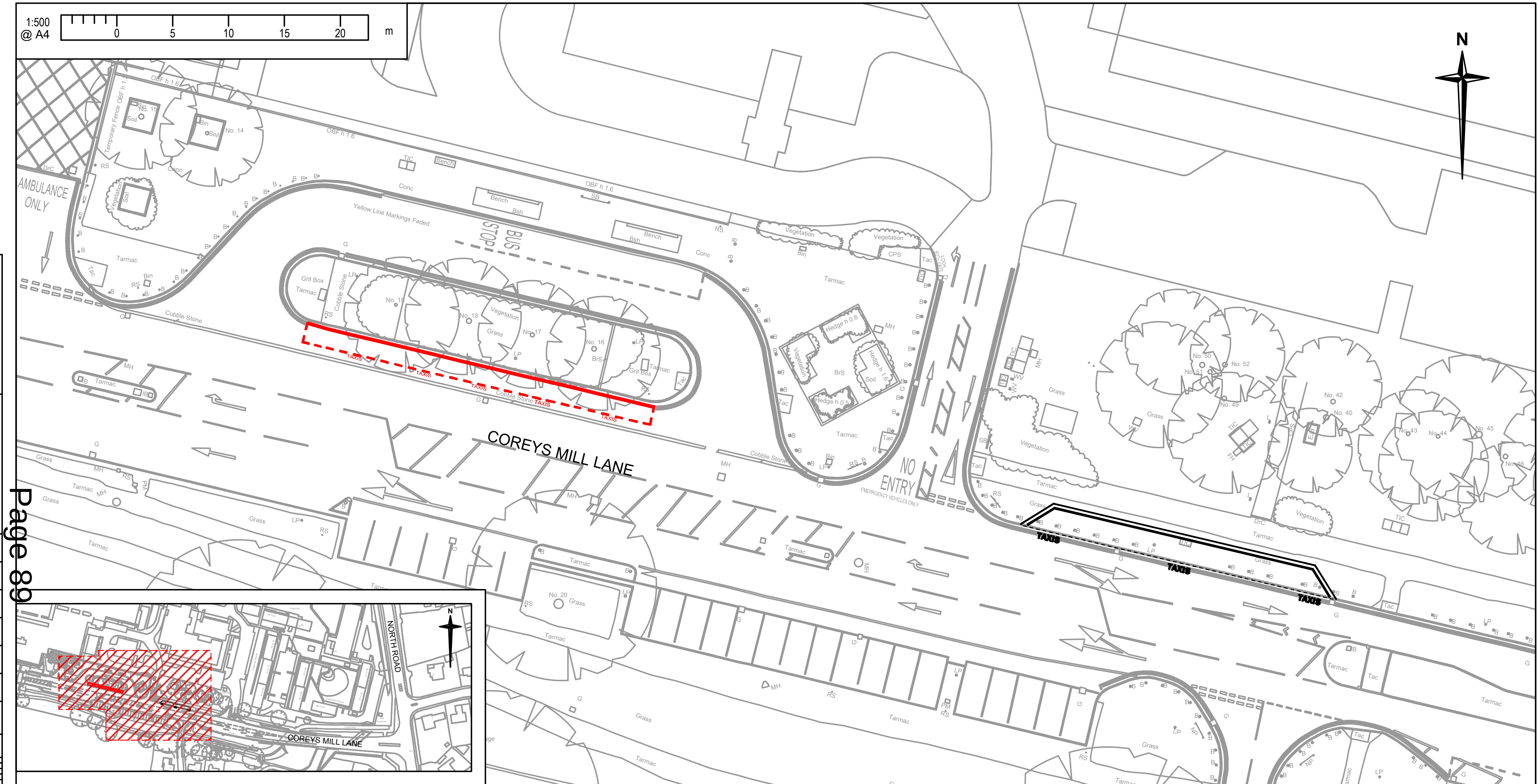
[redacted]

Des Deg 22/7/09
as amended
8/12/2010

Authorised Signatory
Borough/Principal Solicitor

SCHEDULE

Stand	Description	Number of Vehicles
Danestrete (Rank 7)	The west side, from a point 33 metres south of the centreline of its junction with Swingate, southwards for a distance of 15 metres	3
Westgate South (Rank 8)	The south side ,from a point 25 metres east of its junction with Danestrete eastwards for a distance of 17 metres	4
Coreys Mill Lane (Rank 9)	The north side, from a point 20 metres east of its junction with the eastern kerb line of the Lister Hospital PPCI Access Road eastwards to a point 18 metres west of its junction with the western kerbline of its junction with the Lister Hospital Emergency Department Access Road	5



KEY:

TAXIS — NEW TAXI RANK TO BE INSTALLED

TAXIS — EXISTING TAXI RANK TO BE REMOVED

Rev	Date	Description of Revisions	Drawn	Chkd	Appr
P01	01/10/2025	FIRST ISSUE	JU	CB	CB

Hertfordshire

Farnham House
Six Hills Way
Stevenage, Herts
SG1 2ST
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/highways

Drawn	Designed	Checked	Approved	Approved Date
JU	JU	CB	CB	01/10/2025
Signature	Signature	Signature	Signature	Scale(s)
				1:500

Project
PTU230018-1
LISTER HOSPITAL HUB
BSIP WS1

Sheet
PROPOSED RELOCATION OF TAXI RANK
SHEET 01 OF 01

Project No.	Sheet. No.	Revision
PTU230018-1-JAC-HGN-DWG-CH-0190	01	P01

Original Sheet Size A4 [297x210] Plot Date 01 Oct 2025 @ 1:37 PM Path C:\Users\jussher\OneDrive - Jacobs\HCC - Lister Hospital\Models & Drawings\Drawings\HCC-PTU230018-1-0190_TAXI RANK RELOCATION.dwg A4V

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Revocation and relocation of the Taxi Rank at the Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

November 2025

Date created	November 2025
Approved by	Cabinet/SLT
Owner	Julie Dwan – Licensing Manager
Version	1.0
Author	Julie Dwan
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 EqIA?

Title:	**Revocation and relocation of the Taxi Rank at the Lister Hospital at the Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage**
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 EqIA.

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

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

N/A

I determine that no EqIA is needed to inform the decision on the Revocation of the Taxi Rank in Danestrete, Stevenage.

Name of assessor: Decision approved by:

Role: | Date: | Role: | 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?	**Revocation (Removal) and relocation (Adoption) of the Taxi Rank – Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage**				
Lead Assessor	Julie Dwan			Assessment team	
Start date	November 2025	End date			
When will the EqIA be reviewed? (Typically, every 2 years)					

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	Taxi drivers, members of the public
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	The proposal seeks to revoke the existing taxi rank located at The Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Lane, Stevenage, and the adoption of the new taxi rank, to be located also situated in Coreys Mill Lane, a short walk from the existing rankHertfordshire County Council (HCC) have committed to enhancing the attractiveness of bus travel by improving journey times and increasing the reliability of bus services around the County. As part of this initiative, the County Council are proposing to reconfigure the bus stops at Lister Hospital, with a focus on improving accessibility and providing better facilities for all users. The proposal to remove the existing taxi rank at the hospital on Coreys Mill Lane is essential as part of the reconfiguration of the Lister Hospital bus terminal. The new bus terminal layout will utilise the current taxi rank area making it unsuitable to retain the rank in its present position. It is proposed that a new taxi rank be introduced to replace the existing rank, which is to be revoked. The new location is situated a short distance from the current site, positioned on the opposite side of the area where the

	bus terminal exits. The proposed location is adjacent to a footway that provides a direct pedestrian link to the hospital. The revised location also provides an improved layout, allowing taxi users to be picked up and dropped off without crossing through the bus terminal, thereby reducing potential conflicts between taxis and bus movements and improving overall safety and accessibility.

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	A new taxi rank will be introduced to replace the existing rank, located a short distance from the current site. The new location is to be located adjacent to a footway providing a direct pedestrian link to the hospital. The new revised location provides an improved layout, allowing taxi users to be picked up

					and dropped off without crossing through the bus terminal, therefore reducing potential conflicts between taxis and bus movements and improving overall safety and accessibility.

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Taxi Unmet Demand Survey carried out in September 2023. Public Consultation responses, as a result of a 28-day consultation.

In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	The rank to be revoked will be replaced with a new rank just a short walk away whilst maintaining direct pedestrian links to the hospital.

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		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)			

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	X	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	The new revised location for the taxi rank unlike the existing one is to be located adjacent to a footway providing a direct pedestrian link to the hospital which means passengers can be picked up and dropped off without crossing through the bus terminal, therefore improving safety and accessibility. .				
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		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)			

Religion or Belief					
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)	

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		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)			

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	The new revised location provides an improved layout, allowing taxi users to be picked up and dropped off without crossing through the bus terminal, therefore reducing potential conflicts between taxis and bus movements and improving overall safety and accessibility				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	N/A		

[1]Although 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.

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	Public Consultation – No responses received	Residents?	Public consultation – No responses received
Voluntary & community sector?	Public consultation -No responses received	Partners?	Police Consulted – No responses received
Other stakeholders?	Licensed Taxi/Private Hire Trade consulted – no responses received		

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		No responses/objections were received as a result of the 28-day consultation period which ran between 13th October and 10th November 2025; therefore, I recommend to Cabinet that the taxi rank in Coreys Mills Lane be revoked. Furthermore, I recommend that Cabinet approve the relocation and adoption of a new taxi rank on Coreys Mill just a short walk away from the existing one. Lane.
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	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?
Taxi Unmet Demand survey to be carried out every three years	To assess the demand surrounding each taxi rank and to determine whether there is a need for additional licensed taxis (hackney carriages) to promote equal opportunities.	Julie Dwan	August2026	

Approved by Assistant 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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From: [redacted]
Sent: 04 November 2025 18:49
To: Licensing
Subject: [External] Regarding the taxi rank outside lister

Not so against it being moved but I would ask is the big tree being cut down. If so i would highly suggest a big NO. Move it somewhere else where no trees or old trees will be cut down.
Kind regards
[redacted]

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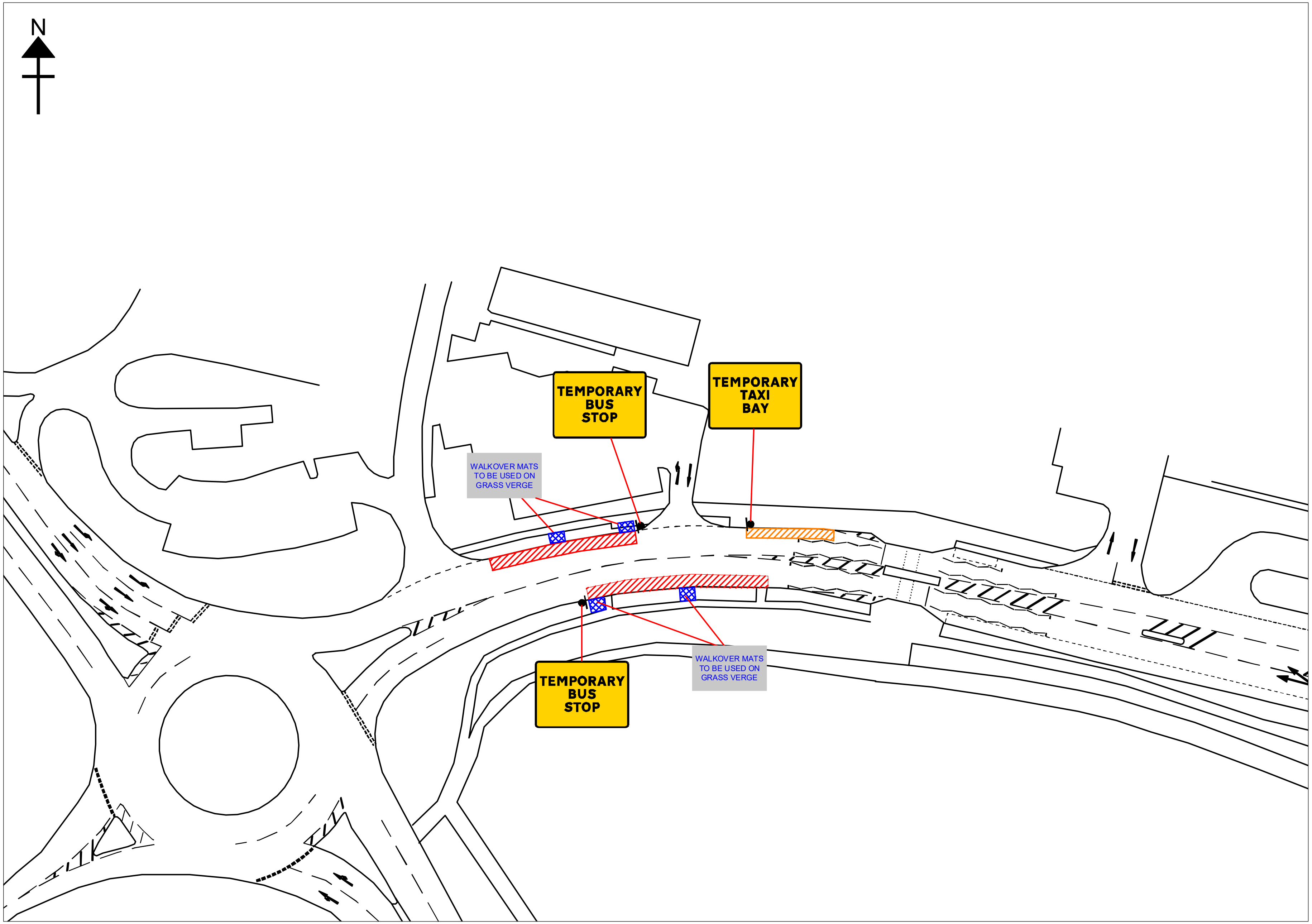

RINGWAY

Site Agent/Contact:

Ben Howard

Traffic Mamagement Notes

1) All temporary traffic management shall be in accordance with chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual 2009.
2) All temporary traffic management shall be in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016
3) All temporary traffic management shall conform to the Safety at Street Works and Road Works, a code of Practice 2013.
4) All temporary traffic management signs should be located 450mm minimum from the kerb face.
5) All temporary traffic management sign locations are indicative and are subject to a on-site approval from the Engineer.

This drawing has been produced for the specific client and project identifed below and is not intended for the use by any other person or for any other purpose (c) Fenton TM specislists.
This drawing is a representation of the traffic management systems, which must be installed by qualified personnel. Distances between signs may NOT be to scale for purposes of clarity.
On installations Taper lengths, Safety zones, Minimum Visibility to first sign & Minimum size of Signs & Cones will conform to Chp8 Guidlines for the speed of the road.

KEY

Temporary Bus Stop

Temporary Taxi Bay

Walkover Mat

Fenton TM — TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

Fenton TM Address:
Unit 29-30
Shangri-La Farm,
Todds Green,
SG1 2JE

Site Address:
Lister Hospital
Coreys Mill Ln
Stevenage
SG1 4AB

Speed of Road: 30

Drawing Number:	8220-D8		
Scale @A3	N/A	Date Drawn:	06.08.25
Works Date:	TBC	Drawn By:	DB
Checked By:			

Notes:

TEMPORARY BUS STOPS/ TAXI BAY, TO BE INSTALLED FOR THE DURATION OF WORKS

WALKOVER MATS TO BE SPACED WITH ENOUGH ROOM TO ACCOMMODATE 2 BUSES

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Part I – Release to Press

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda item: ##

Meeting Cabinet

Portfolio Area All

Date 10 December 2025

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER TWO 2025/26

KEY DECISION

Authors Chloe Pullen
Daryl Jedowski

Contributor Strategic Leadership Team

Lead Officers Tom Pike
Richard Protheroe

Contact Officer Richard Protheroe

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter two 2025/26 and provide an update on progress against current strategic risks.

1.2 For Members' information, a presentation will be provided at the Cabinet meeting which will cover updates in relation to delivery against Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the Quarter two performance data.

1.3 The report also summarises headline findings from the 2025 Residents' Survey, with overall satisfaction amongst residents remaining high at 83%, and feedback providing insight into priorities for the local area and how Council services are delivered.

1.4 The Council has successfully completed another quarter of Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) surveys, meeting regulatory responsibilities and continuing to build a robust evidence base for understanding tenant perceptions. In key areas such as "repairs service overall" and "contribution to neighbourhood," results are already outperforming last year's final scores.

1.5 Alongside performance data, the report provides the regular quarterly update on complaints made to the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

1.6 In addition, it presents key messages from the Housing Annual Report 2024/25 and the Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 and the associated self assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, alongside an update on preparations for the implementation of Awaab's Law.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the service performance against 50 corporate performance measures and progress of key projects in Quarter two 2025/26 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.

2.2 That progress with the introduction of Awaab's Law and inclusion of four new measures be noted (section 4.5).

2.3 That further work on the Housing Complaints Satisfaction pilot and a planned performance clinic are noted (section 4.3.7).

2.4 That the improvement actions being taken to improve void turnaround times and deliver value for money for tenants be noted (section 4.3.2).

2.5 That the strategic risk updates (section 4.9) be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 In January 2024, the Cabinet agreed the new Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan until 2027. This includes five strategic priorities:

- Transforming Our Town
- More Social, Affordable & Good Quality Homes
- Thriving Neighbourhoods
- Tackling Climate Change
- Balancing the Budget

The plan also includes three Cross-cutting themes:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Health & Wellbeing
- Technology & Innovation

3.2 The plan was subsequently approved at Full Council in February 2024. The corporate performance suite was also updated to reflect existing and future programmes of work, resident priorities and regulatory and legislative housing requirements.

3.3 The Council's approach to performance management demonstrates a clear link between service delivery and the strategic objectives in the MSEB Corporate Plan. By aligning performance measures and projects under the 5 strategic priorities, a 'golden thread' linking what the Council delivers to the fulfilment of its strategic outcomes can be clearly seen. By taking this approach, the Council can simplify and streamline how performance monitoring and progress are communicated to Members and residents.

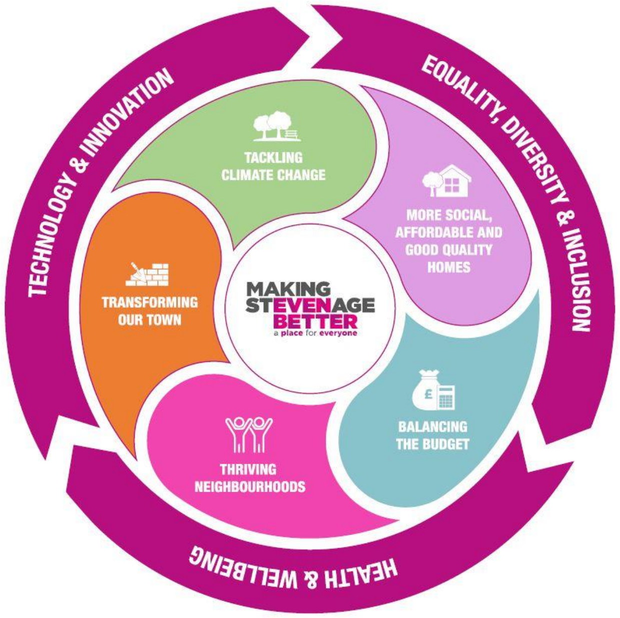

Fig 1.

3.4 The Corporate Performance Suite for 2025/26 contains 50 measures which are aligned with the 5 MSEB strategic priorities. The 50 measures are complemented by statutory and local measures which are managed internally with performance overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.

3.5 There are 10 baseline measures within the corporate performance suite. The majority of these reflect the increased regulation and focus on housing compliance. Baseline measures provide a starting point from which to assess and compare performance in the future. The remaining 40 measures are relevant to the Council's focus on what matters to residents and progress made against the MSEB objectives.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 QUARTER TWO CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

4.1.1 As outlined in section 3, the corporate performance suite has been aligned with the five MSEB priorities set out in Figure 1. Progress against performance measures is presented alongside key projects. By taking this mixed-method approach, the Council is able to present a holistic overview of its performance activity. This helps demonstrate to residents that the Council is on track to deliver key projects, programmes and service improvements associated with MSEB, as well as highlighting performance against key service delivery targets.

4.1.2 Key highlights from the MSEB programmes are summarised in section 4.2. For further information on the aims and objectives of the MSEB programme in 2025/26, please refer to MSEB Priorities & Projects 2025/26, which was presented to the Cabinet in July 2025: MSEB Priorities & Projects 2025/26

4.1.3 Two measures have been removed this quarter (% of Damp and Mould Cases completed on time and % of Damp and Mould inspections completed on time). These measures have been superseded by four new measures that will support the new AWAAB's Law. These four measures are now being captured and will be reported from Quarter 3.

4.1.4 The total number of measures by Red, Amber & Green (RAG) rating is shown in Figure 2 below. The full set of current corporate performance measures results and MSEB projects are attached at Appendix A.

Q2 2025/26 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW						
MSEB Programme	Baseline measure for 2025-26	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (Within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (Urgent improvement action required)	Unavailable Data	Projects Reported Qtr. 2
More Social Affordable and Good Quality Homes (23 measures)	8	12	0	3	0	20
Transforming Our Town (3 measures)	0	3	0	0	0	15
Thriving Neighbourhoods (11 measures)	2	9*	0	0	0	10
	*The data for 'NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)' and 'NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting' comes from an external source and is only available a quarter in arrears, therefore will be reported this way					
Tackling Climate Change (1 measures)	0	1	0	0	0	7
Balancing the Budget (12 measures)	0	12	0	0	0	9
Cross Cutting (0 measures)	0	0	0	0	0	7
TOTAL (50)	10	37	0	3	0	68

Fig 2.

4.1.4 There were several strong areas of performance this quarter which are highlighted below:

- Compliance certification and documentation for Gas Safety, Fire Safety, Asbestos, Legionella and Lifts are at 100%.
- There are no overdue Fire Remedial Actions outstanding for the second quarter in a row; this has reduced from 286 medium overdue actions and 312 low overdue actions in Quarter two 2024/25.
- The percentage of remedial actions completed across corporate buildings has exceeded target and is at its highest level in the last year, with the overall compliance position continuing to improve.

- Satisfaction with the CSC customer service remains high at 92.1%; however, as always, it is recognised that there is still room for further improvement to be made in this area.
- All Planning measures have significantly exceeded their statutory targets.

4.2 MSEB PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

4.2.1 Alongside performance, the Council also captures quarterly updates on the milestones associated with the strategic priorities set out in the MSEB Corporate Plan and subsequent service planning and priority setting activities.

4.2.2 Further details on the projects included in the MSEB programmes and corporate highlights can be found in Appendix A.

4.2.3 All programmes have made progress on the projects agreed at Cabinet in July 2025, with Quarter two highlights including:

More Social, Affordable, Good Quality Homes

4.2.3.1 Public consultation was held for the Bragbury End scheme, with a planning application submitted in late August.

4.2.3.2 Contracts have exchanged on the land deal and affordable homes delivery for the Cartref site.

4.2.3.3 Initial offers have been received for units at the Courtlands scheme, but none have yet been accepted.

4.2.3.4 The contractor has been appointed for the Oval. It is anticipated that works will begin in October with a full start on site anticipated for December.

4.2.3.5 Procurement is complete and the contract has been awarded for the next phase of the Council's Decarbonisation (Wave 3.1) Programme. Initial meetings with the contractor have taken place. Mobilisation has started, although works on site are due to begin later in the year.

Transforming Our Town

4.2.3.6 HR have successfully recruited to six corporate apprenticeships and two additionally funded posts. Over 200 applications were received, and it is anticipated that postholders will start by November 2025.

4.2.3.7 A new permanent piece of public artwork has been unveiled at the Stevenage Bus Interchange. This features stories and memories from the local community, with local artist Donna Reeves and Junction 7 Creatives collating these stories. This forms part of the Stevenage Heart Trails – 27 miles of traffic free footpaths.

The Planning and Development Committee approved planning permission for the new Sports and Leisure Centre in September. In Quarter 3, approval of the business case and authority to enter into the full contract will be sought through the Council's governance structures.

Thriving Neighbourhoods

4.2.3.8 80% of the Play Area Improvement project has been completed, and the remaining two sites with be finalised in Quarter 3.

4.2.3.9 The Playzone Programme has been approved by the Football Foundation and final plans are being devised ready for submitting a planning application. This will create an inclusive and accessible 3G pitch within King George V Playing Fields.

Tackling Climate Change

4.2.3.10 Progress has been made with the Simpler Recycling project. The introduction of the weekly food waste service is scheduled for Quarter 4. Vehicles, caddies and other capital items have been procured. New routes have been designed and comms will be released in due course.

4.2.3.11 The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) action plan has been renewed for 2025/26. The annual E & D report is being compiled for 2024/25 and will be published in Quarter 3.

4.3 PERFORMANCE MEASURES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.3.1 As highlighted in Figure 2, there are three measures that are red this quarter. The table below outlines the actual performance and the target that was set for the performance measure. The paragraphs that follow set out the reasons for improvement in Quarter two.

MEASURE NAME	BUSINESS UNIT	Actual – Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual – Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual – Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual – Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual – Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD
More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes								
% of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage two (Housing)	Housing & Neighbourhoods	0%	27%	0%	-	11%	40%	40%
% of tenants satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage one (Housing)	Housing & Neighbourhoods	47%	55%	0%	-	18%	40%	40%
Average time taken to relet a routine void (GN) key to key	Building Safety & Housing Property Services	89 days	85 days	63 days	54 days	84 days	40 days	35 days

Fig.3

General Needs Voids

4.3.2 Q2 presented a temporary challenge for the Council in managing void properties, primarily due to staffing shortages within the Empty Homes Team. These vacancies affected the time taken to survey properties and commence works, contributing to longer turnaround times during the quarter. Despite these pressures, 20 void properties were successfully let during the quarter, including three historic voids requiring Aids and Adaptations. These properties had been vacant for an extended period, but their completion reflects improvements in processes and closer collaboration between the Adaptations and Lettings teams. Excluding these historic cases, average turnaround improves from 84 days to 52 days.

4.3.3 Recruitment issues have now been resolved, with all vacant posts filled, strengthening operational capacity. This improvement is already evident in October's performance, where average turnaround time reduced to 40 days, moving the council significantly closer to the target of 35 days. Contractor performance has also improved, and further enhancements are planned. Two dedicated contractors for void works will be appointed by the end of February 2026, and a pilot scheme with the in-house team will launch in January 2026, adding resources and supporting innovation.

4.3.4 Property condition remains a challenge, with many voids requiring substantial work before re-letting. While these homes do not meet the criteria for Major Works, they still demand considerable effort. The council continues to focus on efficient turnaround without compromising quality. Accountability measures have been significantly reinforced to ensure properties are returned in an acceptable condition and costs are recovered where appropriate. In Q2, recharges were applied to 28 properties, totalling circa £44k, primarily for the clearance of belongings left inside and outside homes. To prevent avoidable costs, Tenancy Leaving Standards are issued at the point of notice to quit or transfer, providing clear guidance on how properties should be left and outlining tenant responsibilities. Any works identified as the tenant's responsibility are fully rechargeable to the outgoing tenant or their estate.

4.3.5 To strengthen consistency and transparency, the Tenants Recharge Policy is currently being finalised under the leadership of the Head of Housing Management. This policy will provide a robust framework for managing recharges, ensuring fairness and clarity for tenants while supporting the Council's commitment to maintaining property standards.

4.3.6 Although some properties were harder to let within target timescales due to specific challenges, the overall trend since the beginning of the year has been positive. Building on this financial year's performance, officers are reviewing and enhancing the voids improvement plan to reduce average turnaround times to 35 days and ensure void works deliver value for money for tenants.

Housing Complaints Handling

4.3.7 Both satisfaction measures relating to stage one and stage two complaints for Housing customers are below target this quarter. Stage one achieved 18% against a target of 40%, and stage two achieved 11% against a target of 40%.

4.3.8 The Housing service began piloting a new automated transactional satisfaction survey for complaint handling as part of the Govmetric system in July 2025, so the results are from the first quarter that this method has been used. It is noted that initial results have indicated a reduction in satisfaction from the previous independent phone-based assessment. However, analysis of the free text that has been provided by respondents shows that in most cases feedback and comments relate to the initial cause of the complaint and not to the complaint handling process.

4.3.9 It is also noted that complaints will be either upheld or not upheld, and the most recent transactional survey satisfaction data does not reflect the range of responses as would be expected, with a clear bias on responses from those with complaints that were not upheld. As a result, further work is underway to review the new approach and the team are seeking guidance from independent specialist consultants that have worked on other satisfaction surveys to ensure the Council is following good practice and is able to obtain robust and transparent feedback from residents.

4.3.10 It should be noted that the new transactional survey data contrasts with the Tenant Satisfaction Survey results at 4.6.6, which shows a more positive experience of 27.8% satisfaction for complaint handling and a 12.5% increase when compared to the same period last year.

4.3.11 Alongside the analysis that shows complaint satisfaction surveys were returned mainly by complainants who had not had their complaints upheld, the timing of the survey may also influence the response as the Council will not have had the opportunity to complete any actions arising from the initial complaint.

4.3.12 A complaints performance clinic has been arranged for December 2025 to focus on this area and revise the transactional survey methodology and approach.

Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 and Annual Self-Assessment

4.3.13 The Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 (Appendix D) and the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code provide transparency on complaint volumes, themes, and outcomes; highlight service improvements made as a result of learning from complaints; key actions to be implemented during 2025/26 to improve services further; and demonstrate compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's standards for complaint handling.

4.3.14 Alongside this, the self-assessment (Appendix E) enables the Council to test its approach against the Code, identify any areas for development, and provide assurance to the tenants, leaseholders, elected Members, and Regulators that complaints are being handled in line with best practice.

4.3.15 The most recent self-assessment has confirmed that the Council is meeting all requirements of the Code. This includes having a clear, accessible complaints policy, ensuring timely and fair responses, and maintaining robust governance arrangements for oversight of complaint handling. The assessment also demonstrated that the Council's approach is aligned with best practice in terms of learning from complaints and using feedback to improve services.

4.4 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING

4.4.1 As set out within the Council's Complaints Policy residents are able to contact either the Housing Ombudsman Service, mainly for issues which relate to the Council as a landlord, or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for areas such as homelessness, the housing register and associated advice. Both Ombudsman services will independently consider cases where they have been approached by residents and will then come to a determination concerning the matters which have been raised.

4.4.2 In line with the Housing Ombudsman's Statutory Code of Complaint Handling, Appendix C provides details of the eight cases where an Ombudsman has made a determination in Q2. For the Housing Ombudsman Service, four cases were determined, one of which resulted in an order. A further four cases were determined by the LGSCO, three of which were confirmed to not be progressing. In all cases, any orders or agreed actions have been completed.

4.4.3 As part of the Housing Complaint Management process, full details and information are considered by the Housing Complaint Handling Clinic, which includes the Strategic Director, the Housing Portfolio Holder and other senior officers. This ensures that complaints have been fully investigated, that learning has been undertaken and that improvements have been identified.

4.5 AWAAB'S LAW UPDATE

4.5.1 The introduction of Awaab's Law requires landlords to address damp, mould and other hazards within strict timeframes from 27th October. The required timescales under Awaab's Law cover both potential emergency and potential severe hazards. A full list of actions taking place to implement changes for the introduction of Awaab's Law can be seen at Appendix B.

4.5.2 To measure compliance with the requirements of Awaab's Law regarding damp and mould, the Council has developed a KPI framework. The KPI framework is based on measures and methodology suggested by HQN for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the legislation. This includes four corporate measures, which have superseded the two current damp and mould measures, and five operational KPIs, with the corporate measures being:

- Percentage of standard investigations completed within ten working days.
- Percentage of emergency investigations and safety works completed within 24 hours of awareness.
- Percentage of safety works for significant hazards completed within five working days of investigation conclusion.
- Percentage of supplementary preventative works begun within five working days of the investigation conclusion.

4.5.3 The operational measures cover other timescales within the requirements such as providing written summaries to tenants, triaging issues and where required offering alternative accommodation.

4.5.4 A draft process document has been produced using the HQN framework for compliance template and has been adapted to reflect SBC's systems and policy. This includes roles and responsibilities for capturing key data, monitoring and reporting on performance. Performance reports will be scheduled weekly and monitored by the Damp & Disrepair Manager.

4.5.5 Non damp and mould related emergency hazards covered by Awaab's Law will be measured using existing KPIs for repairs, with an additional KPI incorporated separately to measure those hazards relating to heating

4.6 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES

4.6.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced in 2023/24 as a regulatory requirement for all social landlords in England. There are 22 TSMs – of which 12 are sourced from a tenant perception survey. The Council has commissioned Housemark to conduct the tenant perception surveys quarterly during 2024/25.

4.6.2 The Council is required to complete at least 570 surveys for its stock size. For 2025/26, 1,000 responses will be collated over the year to ensure that the results provide further statistical robustness. The intention is that 90% of surveys will be completed over the phone and 10% online. The surveys are conducted quarterly to provide an ongoing rolling update, which supports greater transparency and timely consideration of the feedback provided.

4.6.3 The Council has successfully completed another quarter of Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) surveys, meeting regulatory responsibilities and continuing to build a robust evidence base for understanding tenant perceptions.

4.6.4 It should be noted that these results are not yet statistically reliable due to the sample size, but reliability will increase as further quarterly data is collected, allowing for an accurate and representative view of overall tenant sentiment at the end of the year.

4.6.5 Quarter one of 2025/26 achieved the highest performance recorded since TSM surveys began, setting a high benchmark for 2025/26. As expected, Quarter two results show lower levels compared to these when compared with Q1. Quarterly variation is an expected feature of this reporting approach and should not be interpreted as a long-term trajectory.

4.6.6 In Quarter two for 2025/26, 286 surveys were completed. The Q2 satisfaction results can be seen in the table below:

Ref	Question	Q2 2025/26	Previous year (Q2 2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP01	Overall satisfaction	58.9%	60.8%	-1.9%
TP02	Repairs service overall	68%	57.9%	+10.1%
TP03	Speed of repairs	57.1%	55.9%	+1.2%
TP04	Home is well-maintained	61.2%	59.7%	+1.5%
TP05	Home is safe	68.8%	71.2%	-2.4%
TP06	Listens to views and acts	48.2%	47.7%	+0.5%
TP07	Keeps tenants informed	55.5%	60.8%	-5.3%
TP08	Treats tenants fairly and with respect	66.3%	69.9%	-3.6%
TP09	Complaint handling	27.8%	15.3%	+12.5%
TP10	Communal areas are clean and well-maintained	58.6%	57.5%	+1.1%
TP11	Contribution to neighbourhood	53.7%	55.1%	-1.4%
TP12	ASB handling	50.8%	53.8%	-3%

Figure 4.

4.6.7 The full annual quota of online surveys has almost been achieved. Consistent with last year's approach, the remaining online responses will be captured during Quarter 3, with Quarter 4 returning to telephone surveys only. This design supports balanced representation and facilitates direct comparison with previous year-end results.

4.6.8 When viewed in context, the Q2 downturn aligns with established patterns observed in previous years since the introduction of TSM surveys. Historically, Q2 tends to produce the lowest scores of the year, with improvement typically recorded in Q3 and Q4. Early indications from Q3 survey returns suggest improved performance across all questions compared to Q2, which is positive and consistent with this seasonal pattern. Despite these fluctuations, trend levels remain stable, indicating consistent underlying tenant perceptions. Combined performance for Q1 and Q2 2025/26 remains broadly in line with the 2024/25 year-end position. In key areas such as “repairs service overall” and “contribution to neighbourhood,” results are already outperforming last year’s final scores. Seasonal trends can also offer reassurance; last year, Q2 represented the lowest satisfaction quarter, followed by steady improvement in Q3 and Q4. If this pattern continues alongside the early Q3 results, the Council is well positioned to achieve stronger year-end results than in 2024/25.

4.6.9 Taking into account the early Quarter three indications described above, the Quarter two dip remains consistent with long term trends and does not indicate a deterioration in overall tenant perceptions. The Council continues to meet its regulatory obligations, strengthen its data reliability, and build a comprehensive understanding of tenant experience.

4.6.10 Continued focus on communication, tenant engagement, and service delivery will support improvement in the second half of the year, with the expectation of a positive trajectory towards year-end.

4.7 HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

4.7.1 The Housing Annual Report provides an overview of the Council’s housing performance between April 2024 and March 2025, including details of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). It notes achievements and indicates where progress has been made, setting out key actions to be implemented in 2025/26.

4.7.2 The Council has demonstrated measurable improvement across almost the full suite of TSMs this year, reflecting enhanced service delivery and stronger resident outcomes. A Provider Improvement Plan (PIP) has been developed, which focuses on areas where services need to be strengthened and has been approved by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

4.7.3 Transactional surveys have been introduced across a range of housing services with insights gained helping to build a rounded picture of the tenant experience and to target improvements where they are needed most.

4.7.4 A number of highlights to note are included in the following tables which are also included with the full report attached as Appendix F:

Property

In the last 12 months, the Council have:

- ✓ Surveyed **2,866** properties as part of a Stock Condition Survey Programme
- ✓ Upgraded approximately **240 homes** through Wave Two of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (SHF) Programme to achieve a minimum of EPC Band C, resulting in **66.46%** of council homes now rated Band C or above.
- ✓ Increased the proportion of homes deemed 'Decent' from 94.11% to **96.64%**
- ✓ Continued to deliver the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC), bringing the total to 477 flat blocks with completed communal works to enhance their structure and appearance.
- ✓ Invested in homes to provide:
  - 443 Boiler replacements
  - 18 Kitchens
  - 74 bathrooms
  - 13 heating systems
  - 3 window replacements
  - 14 door replacements
- ✓ Implemented new policies covering the areas of Responsive Repairs and Maintenance, Aids and Adaptations, Fencing, Voids Management and the Lettable Standard
- ✓ Delivered **639** home adaptations ranging from minor works such as grab rails to more complex installation including through-floor lifts
- ✓ Procured a new specialist contractor to deliver the majority of adaptions, enabling an accelerated programme delivery
- ✓ Completed 98% of emergency repairs and 91% of non-emergency repairs within target timescales
- ✓ Fixed **95.72%** of repairs first time
- ✓ Completed over 80% of Damp, Mould and Condensation cases on time

Housing Management

In the last 12 months, the Council have:

- ✓ Let **293** general needs and **195** specialist accommodation properties
- ✓ Implemented a new Allocations Policy to optimise use of housing stock and ensure fairer and more transparent allocations
- ✓ Published a summary version of the Allocations Policy in response to requests to feedback asking the Council to make this clearer
- ✓ Regenerated a downsizing scheme and supported **51** home moves making best use of the Council's housing stock
- ✓ Conducted **1417** Tenancy Audits, **115** Settling-In Visits and **125** 8-Month Visits, building stronger relationships with tenants and helping to sustain tenancies
- ✓ Collected over **98%** of rent due; a 0.67% increase on last year; while developing tailored payment arrangements in collaboration with customers with outstanding debt
- ✓ Dealt with **107** cases of ASB, ranging from low to high level, with **94%** of cases resulting in successful enforcement action

Supporting People
In the last 12 months, the Council have:
✓ Provided more than 7,900 households with safe, affordable and secure social housing, offering a stable foundation for their future ✓ Introduced a new Reasonable Adjustments Policy ✓ Supported all parties involved in ASB cases, including alleged victims and perpetrators, harnessing collaborative working with partner agencies including the Police and Herts County Council ✓ Improved the support that the Council provides to households who need to move to more suitable accommodation by recruiting a Decant Officer ✓ Set in motion the 'Know our Tenants' initiative; a comprehensive programme of home-visits to help build stronger relationships with the Council's tenants, whilst assessing vulnerability and improving understanding of support needs. ✓ Responded to over 32,000 calls and carried out nearly 21,000 homes visits to tenants living in the Council's Supported Housing schemes, helping them to maintain their independence ✓ Attended to a total of 1126 calls from Care Connect 24/7 service users, enabling them to remain safe and independent within their communities ✓ Assisted tenants in 1022 welfare benefit related cases, helping to safeguard tenancies and reduce financial pressures

Supporting People
In the last 12 months, the Council have:
✓ Strengthened the approach to tenant and leaseholder participation, influence and scrutiny based on 'engaging, listening and acting', by developing and implementing a new Resident Engagement Strategy, Framework and Improvement Plan, in collaboration with the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and residents. ✓ Integrated tenant feedback more effectively into service design and delivery by appointing a Resident Engagement Manager, putting the tenant voice front and centre. ✓ Shared clearer and more consistent updates with residents, supported by a new Communication Plan, that sets out how the Council will keep them regularly and meaningfully informed ✓ Kept out tenants informed, engaged and connected throughout the year by launching a quarterly tenant newsletter ✓ Sough residents' views on building safety works, through a dedicated High Rise Resident Engagement Plan ✓ Engaged with residents on a high-rise Capital Investment Programme, and a Repairs and Maintenance Policy, helping shape the Council's priorities and influence decision making ✓ Ensured residents have the opportunity to help shape outstanding strategies and policies captured in the forward plan, following the development and approval of a comprehensive Strategy and Policy Register

Figure 5.

4.8 RESIDENTS SURVEY

4.8.1 Stevenage Borough Council commissioned DJS Research to deliver its 2025 Residents' Survey. Conducted using a mixed-method approach of telephone (CATI) and face-to-face (CAPI), a total of 1,103 interviews were achieved across a fieldwork period of 5 weeks from 06 May to 16 June 2025; 623 interviews via CATI and 480 via CAPI.

4.8.2 The survey found that 83% of residents are satisfied with their local area, maintaining the performance seen in 2021 (84%). Encouragingly, Stevenage outperforms the LGA average by 9% points. A similar pattern also emerges in terms of sense of belonging to the local area. Like in 2021, three-quarters of residents feel either a very or fairly strong sense of belonging (74%), and the LGA average is comfortably outperformed – this time by 15% points.

4.8.3 Satisfaction with the Council has increased significantly compared to 2021, rising from 62% to 68%. Again, the Council comfortably outperforms the latest LGA score (56%).

4.8.4 Perceptions of value for money have declined by 9% points compared to 2021 (43% cf. 52%), although this is still above the LGA's average (36%). When asked to consider ways to generate efficiencies and extra income for the council, residents' most preferred option is to modernise services or sell more of the Council's services.

4.8.5 There has also been an improvement in the percentage who feel informed about Council services. In 2021, just under half (49%) felt very or fairly well informed, but this has increased to three in five (61%). This means that Stevenage is comfortably ahead of the LGA benchmark (47%).

4.8.6 A full report will be provided to Cabinet in January 2026.

4.9 STRATEGIC RISK

4.9.1 The strategic risks were considered by Corporate Risk Group on 25 September 2025 and considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 4 November 2025.

4.9.2 The Audit Committee receives a detailed Strategic Risk Report each quarter. The report to the Audit Committee considers the actions which have been identified to mitigate each of the identified risks and the progress of those actions. Changes to the way risk is managed at the Council are also highlighted and considered by the Audit Committee. Where the Committee raises specific concerns about the risks or the process for managing them, these are highlighted to the Cabinet within this quarterly report.

HIGHLIGHTED RISKS

4.9.3 One risk score has changed this quarter: the Capacity risk has been reduced to medium, reflecting a lower likelihood of the risk materialising. This reassessment is due to positive progress in recruitment across several previously challenging areas, along with encouraging developments in HR initiatives supporting recruitment and retention, including the apprenticeship programme.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications. Any financial impact of the under/over achievement of Corporate Performance Indicators will be reported as part of the Quarterly Monitoring report.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

5.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report. Where required, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects, service changes and improvement activity identified.

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.

5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and provides good governance assurance.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report, except for those activities that seek to have a positive impact in this area, and the officers responsible for delivering the improvements are charged with identifying and addressing any related climate change considerations.

5.6 OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

5.6.1 Implementing the priorities and improvement activity outlined in this report may impact on the development of future policy or procedure, which will be monitored through the formal policy/procedure sign-off process via the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Strategic Risk Register (Part II Audit Committee Report)
- Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- MSEB Corporate Performance Suite 2025/26
- MSEB Priorities & Projects 2025/26
- Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2024-25
- Regulator for Social Housing – Provider Improvement Plan

7 APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Quarter Two Corporate Performance Compendium
- Appendix B – Damp and Mould Spotlight
- Appendix C – Q2 Complaint Handling
- Appendix D – Housing Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report 2024/25
- Appendix E – CHC Self-assessment 2024/25
- Appendix F – Housing Annual Report 2024/25

Corporate Performance Report 2025/26

Quarter 2 (July, August, September)

Key to Performance Status Symbols

Red - Focus of Improvement

Amber - Initial Improvement Activity Identified

Green - Achieving Target

Pink - Baseline Measure

Key to Milestone Status Symbols

- Severe delays

- Some delays

- On track

- Completed

MORE SOCIAL, AFFORDABLE & GOOD QUALITY HOMES 2025/26 PERFORMANCE								
	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
% of customers satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage two (Housing)	0.00%	27.00%	0.00%		11.00%	40.00%	40.00%	30/09/2025 The Housing service began piloting a new automated transactional satisfaction survey for complaint handling as part of the Govmetric system in July 2025, so the results are from the first quarter that this method has been used. It is noted that initial results have indicated a reduction in satisfaction from the previous independent phone-based assessment. Further work is underway to review the new approach and the team are seeking guidance from independent specialist consultants that have worked with on other satisfaction surveys to ensure the Council is following good practice and is able to obtain robust and transparent feedback from residents. A complaints performance clinic has been arranged for December 2025 to focus on this area and revise the transactional survey methodology and approach.
% of tenants satisfied with how their complaint was handled at stage one (Housing)	47.00%	55.00%	0.00%		18.00%	40.00%	40.00%	30/09/2025 The Housing service began piloting a new automated transactional satisfaction survey for complaint handling as part of the Govmetric system in July 2025, so the results are from the first quarter that this method has been used. It is noted that initial results have indicated a reduction in satisfaction from the previous independent phone-based assessment. Further work is underway to review the new approach and the team are seeking guidance from independent specialist consultants that have worked with on other satisfaction surveys to ensure the Council is following good practice and is able to obtain robust and transparent feedback from residents. A complaints performance clinic has been arranged for December 2025 to focus on this area and revise the transactional survey methodology and approach.

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
Average time taken to relet a routine void (GN). key to key	89.00	85.00	63.00	54.00	84.00	40.00	35.00	30/09/2025 Q2 void performance was affected by staffing shortages in the Empty Homes Team, leading to delays in surveys and works. Despite this, 20 voids were let, including three long-term adapted properties, and excluding these historic cases the average turnaround improves from 84 to 52 days. All vacancies have now been filled, and October performance improved to 40 days. Contractor performance has strengthened, with two dedicated void contractors to be in place by February 2026 and an in-house pilot starting January 2026. Many voids still require substantial work before re-letting, even though they do not meet Major Works criteria. Accountability measures have been reinforced, with £43,900 recharged across 28 properties in Q2, mainly for clearance of belongings. To prevent avoidable costs, Tenancy Leaving Standards are issued at notice to quit, and tenant-responsible works remain fully rechargeable. The Tenants Recharge Policy is being finalised to improve consistency and transparency in managing recharges and support property standards. Although some properties were harder to let within target timescales, overall performance has improved since the start of the year, and an expanded improvement plan is being developed to sustain progress, meet the 35-day target, and deliver value for money.
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	497.00	498.00	500.00	501.00	529.00	528.00	529.00	
Homelessness preventions	58.00	82.00	117.00	47.00	101.00	60.00	90.00	30/09/2025 The team's focus on early intervention is starting to show results. The updated triage process means people are getting advice faster and more efficiently, while additional training has helped staff handle complex situations with more confidence. We hope to learn more through feedback via customer satisfaction surveys about why some people don't approach services sooner. With the hope that this insight will help to shape new outreach and communication work aimed at encouraging earlier engagement. This will help towards our goal of helping more households stay in their homes or resolve issues before they escalate.
Rep4: Percentage of repairs & inspections completed first time	97.19%	95.83%	93.07%	84.86%	94.82%	90.00%	90.00%	

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
RP01a: Percentage of homes maintained as decent against national minimum DH standard	95.97%	92.22%	96.64%	96.42%	97.74%	98.50%	98.50%	30/09/2025 This measure is within target range for Q2 as the Decent Homes programmes have commenced and the completed works carried out will have improved the figures for this quarter. The team envisages to improve the Decency furthermore for the next quarter, as works begin to increase in numbers with all the contractors being fully mobilised.
RSH BS01: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS02: Percentage of dwellings with a valid Fire Risk Assessment	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS03: Percentage of properties that require an annual asbestos inspection / survey	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	30/09/2025 Four blocks have been removed from the Asbestos register as the asbestos has been removed.
RSH BS04: Percentage of sites with valid legionella inspections certificate	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH BS05: Percentage of domestic passenger lifts with an in date LOLER inspection	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
RSH CH01 (part 2): Number of stage two complaints made by tenants	36	57	85	34	69			
RSH CH01 (part1): Number of stage one complaints made by tenants	357	516	688	134	290			
RSH CH02 (part1): Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants and responded to within CH Timescale	337	493	651	125	267			30/09/2025 During the second quarter 156 complaints involving Housing Services were recorded/received - these were not exclusively by 'tenants' Of those 156: • 142 were responded to within time • 5 were responded to out of time • 9 remained active at the end of the period but were still within target time The reason some cases will be open and active at the end of a quarter depends on when they were received. If a complaint is received on 30 September then the target date for response would not be until 10 working days, that being in October

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
RSH CH02 (part2): Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants and responded to within CH Timescale	30	51	69	28	51			30/09/2025 During the second quarter 35 stage 2 complaints were recorded/received. This is all complaints received for Housing Services, not exclusively 'tenants' Of those 35: • 23 were closed within time • 4 were closed out of target time • 8 remained active at the end of the period but were still within target time The reason some cases will be open and active at the end of a quarter depends on when they were received. If a complaint is received on 30 September then the target date for response would not be until 20 working days later, that being in October
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial High Risk Actions	0	0	0	0	0			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Low Risk Actions	312	215	122	0	0			
RSH Number of Overdue Fire Remedial Medium Risk Actions	286	159	81	0	0			
RSH Number of Overdue Water Remedial Actions		71	59	27	22			30/09/2025 4x risks are overdue actions are awaiting Affinity Water. 7x risks are due to flexible pipes which have been installed, these risks will be managed and the team will ensure the pipes are changed every 5 years or upgraded to fixed piping where possible. 2x risks are due to the tank location, options are being looked at Remaining risk are due to access issues with residents. these are being actively pursued.
RSH Rep1: Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within target timescale	99.29%	99.08%	98.45%	98.30%	99.10%	99.00%	99.00%	30/09/2025 Performance for the quarter closed at **99.1%**, with 441 of 445 jobs completed within target. **100% of emergency jobs were** completed on time in September
RSH Rep2: Proportion of non-emergency (Routine and Urgent) responsive repairs completed within targe	88.90%	77.17%	91.45%	95.60%	94.60%	95.00%	95.00%	30/09/2025 Non-emergency performance concluded at **94.6%** for the quarter with 4115 of 4348 jobs completed within target. This follows a challenging August, which was affected by higher-than-usual levels of sickness, annual leave, and staff turnover. Performance rebounded strongly in September, with **99.68% of 934 routine jobs** completed within target timescales.

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
VED1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid EICR Electrical Certificate	99.14%	98.41%	99.61%	98.33%	98.86%	100.00%	100.00%	30/09/2025 Currently SBC are sitting at 98.8% compliant - with the missing properties due to access issues, we are currently following the council no access procedure. The Electrical Safety Standards (Amendment) Regulations 2025 is extending privates rented sector electrical safety rules to social housing landlords in England. From 1st November 2025 (new tenancies) and 1st May 2026 (existing tenancies) landlords must have electrical installations inspected and tested at least every 5 years and provide the tenants and LA the certificate also any defects must be corrected within 28 days. SBC already has our properties on a 5 yearly cycle. The new regs also state social landlords must PAT test any electrical equipment supplied to the resident as part of the tenancy. Non compliance now carries a maximum penalty of £40,000.

MORE SOCIAL, AFFORDABLE & GOOD QUALITY HOMES 2025/26 MILESTONES

		Milestones	Performance	Comments
Building New & Sustainable Homes	Bragbury End	* Planning permission and sale of 500 unit scheme at Bragbury End. * Public consultation * Planning permission submitted * Planning decision * Sales agent appointed		30 Sep 2025 Public consultation was held on the scheme in early August, with a Planning Application submitted in late August. The decision was made to market the land utilising internal resources, and work is underway to draw together necessary documents to go to market.
	Brent Court - Independent Living	* Delivery of 96 unit Independent Living scheme on site of former Brent Court Garages. * Gateway 2 submission made * Gateway 2 permission * Demolition of Garages * Foundation work completed		30 Sep 2025 The Gateway 2 Application is being made in early October following a review by the Council's appointed expert. Works are due to start this week on early enabling works for new parking ahead of demolition of the existing garage block.
	Burwell Phase Two	* Topping out of 20 homes for affordable rent.		30 Sep 2025 Work continues at pace at the site, with all foundation work completed and brick and block work underway.
	Cartref	* Delivery of land receipt and affordable homes.		30 Sep 2025 Contracts have exchanged on the land deal and affordable homes delivery.
	Courtlands	* Completion of 17 unit private sale scheme.		30 Sep 2025 Work is ongoing at site, with initial offers being received for units at the site.

		Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Defects	* Ongoing delivery of defects provision		30 Sep 2025 The end of defects period of Kenilworth Close is underway with final works being carried out. With Dunn Close completing, the defects period for this site has begun.
	Ellis Avenue	* Delivery of 11 homes for Council Rent. * Demolition Completed		30 Sep 2025 Ongoing discussions with HCC to resolve pre-commencement conditions to enable demolition to take place.
	Garage Sites Sales	* Cabinet approval for disposal of sites * Appoint architect for scheme development * Initial Design approval		30 Sep 2025 Cabinet have approved the progression of specific sites for disposal and received an update at October Cabinet. Two identified schemes have received pre-app guidance and are progressing towards a Planning Application.
	Kenilworth Phase Two	* Delivery of 24 home Private sale scheme, building on the completion of Phase One of the Kenilworth site. * Demolition of Walpole Court Completed * Foundation work completed * Estate Agent appointed		30 Sep 2025 The demolition of Walpole Court is completed, and an Estate Agent has been appointed to the scheme. Work is ongoing to discharge the pre-commencement conditions at the site to enable foundation works to begin.
	Locality Review	* Provision of strategy to meet Locality Review Requirements and design development of initial sites.		30 Sep 2025 Cabinet have approved the approach to the initial Locality Review sites. Architects have been appointed for two early schemes and initial feasibility assessments have been drafted.

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		Milestones	Performance	Comments
	The Oval	* Delivery of mixed used phase neighbourhood regeneration. * Contractor appointed * Demolition for phase 1 completed * Start on Site		30 Sep 2025 The contractor has been appointed for The Oval, and pre-commencement conditions have been submitted. It is anticipated that works will begin in October, with a full start on site anticipated in December.
Maintaining Good Quality Homes	Building & Fire Safety Compliance	* Delivery of the Building Safety Action Plan		30 Sep 2025 Building Safety is still maintaining a strong compliance position. The action plan is monitored and reviewed regularly.
	Decarbonisation (Wave 3.1)	* Procurement of works for a multi year programme linked to a 3 year funding allocation received from Warm Homes - Social Housing Fund * Start delivery of programme once procurement of a contractor has taken place.		30 Sep 2025 Procurement is complete and the contract has been awarded, initial meetings with the contractor has taken place. Mobilisation has started although works on site will be later in the year.
	Housing Asset Review	* Procure consultant support * Produce and provide performance data for input into the model * Staff workshops for perception measures * Data analysis and report * Agree recommendations and produce action plan * Report to EHWG on findings and recommendations		30 Sep 2025 Work is continuing with the consultant to update the current data held within the model. It is estimated that the final report will be back by the end of November on the outcomes from the review to EHWG.
	MRC Refurbishment	* Delivery of the final year of MRC - a refurbishment programme to the council's flat blocks (excluding high rises).		30 Sep 2025 This project is on track for completion of the MRC programme in 2025/26. All works to complete the project have now been issued.

	Milestones	Performance	Comments
New Legislation and policy	* Awaabs Law - Alongside changes to HHSRS Legislation will have a phased implementation from October 2025 (damp and mould) and extedended to other hazards during 2026 and 2027. * Consultation on a new Decent Homes standard and implications for Stevenage		30 Sep 2025 The policy has been reviewed to incorporate the requirements of Awaab's Law, the team are currently implementing changes to procedures and have developed a suite of KPI's to measure compliance with the new legislation. The team have submitted a response to both Decent Homes Standard and Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard consultations.
Provider Improvement Plan & Journey to C1	* Delivery of the actions outlined in the Regulator for Social Housing Provider Improvement Plan following inspection in September 2024.		30 Sep 2025 Work is progressing with the Regulator of Social Housing in relation to the PIP with quarterly meetings set to review actions.
Repairs (inc Disrepair and D & M) Service Improvement Plan	* Completion of all team process workshops and development of action plans * Easily accessible processes in place for all teams * Implementation of all action plans * Stakeholder mapping/touch points		30 Sep 2025 All workshops have now been completed, with action plans produced and worked through and production of a Team Guide to be published and shared shortly. Since the inception of the project, an additional initiative has commenced in collaboration with the Business Improvement Team. This new project focuses on consolidating all the work done on procedures and will work towards finalising process documentation. The upcoming pilot with CSC/Repairs will also contribute valuable insights to this work. All additional activities are expected to be completed within the current financial year.

		Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Resident Engagement & Scrutiny	* Delivery of the Resident Engagement Strategy and Framework. * Operating tenant panel and scrutiny panel in place		30 Sep 2025 The delivery of the Resident Engagement Strategy is underway, with a Resident Engagement Manager now in post. A formal Scrutiny Panel is being set-up but consultation is underway and pop-up scrutiny events are planned for late October 25 linked to the Caretaking Review for flat blocks.
	Service Review Temporary Accomodation	* Review the service delivery of the Temporary Accommodation Service.		30 Sep 2025 An action plan has been formed following a review of current policy and target operating model. A project manager has been assigned and work is underway to deliver the action plan.

TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2025/26 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target Quarter 3 2025/26 ytd	Comments
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in thirteen	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	60.0%	
Ni157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined in eight weeks	97.1%	98.5%	98.8%	100.0%	92.9%	70.0%	70.0%	
NI157c:Percentage of other planning applications determined in eight weeks	96.1%	97.1%	97.8%	100.0%	91.7%	70.0%	70.0%	30/09/2025 Performance has dropped slightly this quarter due to resource constraints within the team. Recruitment is taking place and it is hoped for a new officer will be in post midway through Quarter 3.

TRANSFORMING OUR TOWN 2025/26 MILESTONES

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Enterprise & Skills	Apprentice Programme	* Begin the delivery of new Apprenticeship & Leadership Development programmes, aligned with the new Workforce Strategy.		30 Sep 2025 The Council have successfully recruited for the six corporate apprenticeships and two additionally funded posts. The response to the advertisement was simply fantastic, with over 200 applications received. The roles range across a range of services and levels, with 3-degree level roles in Finance and Surveying. There are also roles in Environmental Health, Arboriculture and Health and Safety Interviews and pre-employment checks have been completed, and new postholders, who will be starting between September and November 2025.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Business Technology Centre Contract Renewal	* Explore options for Business Technology Centre Contract Renewal.		30 Sep 2025 • Soft Market Testing exercise completed. • Development of specification underway with formal procurement being launched in November/December 2025. • Timescales for project are tight with main project risks relating to any delays in procurement and potential complications around the development of the contract with new provider. • New contract start targeted for July 2026
	Pioneering Young STEM Futures - P2	* Secure Phase Two of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme with funding from M44. Begin delivery of Year One.		30 Sep 2025 Project delivery of Phase Two of Pioneering Young STEM Futures has now begun with the start of the new school year across all delivery projects following approval of Phase Two by Mission 44 Board and SBC Cabinet in Q1 25/26. The council continues to work closely with its key strategic partners: The University of Hertfordshire, North Hertfordshire College & Hertfordshire Futures in order to drive this work forward. Mission44 visited Stevenage in September to meet with two of our delivery partners: • Airbus Defence & Space - For an overview of Airbus' STEM skills ecosystem, with Stevenage as the place-based test bed for this approach. • STEM Discovery Centre - Delivering the 'Science Academy Challenge' run by North Hertfordshire College out of the centre.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Stevenage Works - Health & Social Care Expansion	* Establishment of supporting Governance Framework. * Establishment of a pilot cohort of care providers alongside partners. * Review of initial pilot cohort of care providers.		30 Sep 2025 Regular meetings continue between Stevenage Works and contractors working in the area, to track Social Value delivered against commitments made. This includes offering support and signposting where required. As Social Value has been written into contracts made with 6 Decent Homes companies, these have been added, with 2 yet to start. 2 contractors for Facilities and 2 from Repairs have also been added. The SW Impact Report for 2024 is complete, and currently with the Comms Team to review. The 2025 Impact Report is being added to as and when the information is received. Winners of funds from the SW Community Chest Fund are continually monitored to provide proof of spends, including receipts and photographic evidence. Donations for the 2025 fund are currently being requested and collated. Bidding opened in September, panel meetings will be held in November, with winners announced shortly after. The presentation event is scheduled to take place at The Council Offices on 9 January 2026.
	Stevenage Works - Social Value & Procurement	* Continue to leverage social value on contracts through Stevenage Works and deliver a similar approach across the organisation. * Create and publish the Stevenage Works impact Report. * Manage and deliver the Stevenage Works Community Chest Fund.		30 Sep 2025 Following the approval of the Terms of Reference at the SW Board meeting in June 2025, subsequent meetings have taken place between North Herts College, Job Centre Plus and other potential partners within the Care Industry. On 4 September 2025 two Group Information Sessions took place at the Stevenage Job Centre. HCPA and Hart Learning delivered presentations to JCP Customers about 'working in care'. 14 candidates started on the Pilot 2-week Care SWAP course that commenced on 22 September 2025. An update on the outcomes; review and next steps will follow .

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	* Deliver the 2025/26 extension of UKSPF. Establish plans for 2026/27 UKSPF replacement.		30 Sep 2025 Delivery of the 2025/26 tranche of UKSPF continues, with all delivery components now underway. This years fund is split three ways: • Hertfordshire Futures - to deliver a package of business and skills intervention and support tailored to Stevenage residents. • Pioneering Young STEM Futures - as a contribution to the £1.1m package agreed for Phase Two. • Neighbourhoods Allocations - A continuation of the neighbourhood funding provided as part of the previous tranche and delivered as part of the council's Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme. Beyond this year, UKSPF will be replace by several different funding streams. For those authorities with no devolution deals in place, this will be through Pride in Place funding, using a need based methodology. Unfortunately, Stevenage has not been selected as one of the 95 places which will receive funding in 2026/27. We will continue to monitor further opportunities should further Pride in Place funding be made available.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Regeneration	Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity - Arts & Heritage Trail	* Design and implementation of an Arts & Heritage Trail.		30 Sep 2025 A new, permanent piece of public artwork has been unveiled at the Stevenage Bus Interchange. Featuring stories and memories from the local community, including what brought people to Stevenage and their favourite things about the town, the mosaic sculpture is positioned directly in front of the entrance to the Bus Interchange. Local artist Donna Reeves has been working with Junction 7 Creatives (J7C) to collate these stories. This piece of artwork forms part of the Stevenage Heart Trails – 27 miles of traffic-free footpaths. The design of the Stevenage Heart Trails has been completed, Made by Landmark have since moved into the manufacturing phase. Installation dates are somewhat stalled due to Hertfordshire CC road safety audit, Officers are working with County to progress.
	Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity - Underpass Improvements	* Improvement works and installation of artwork on nine underpasses within the Arts & Heritage Trail.		30 Sep 2025 All underpasses are now completed and can be found at various locations throughout the town. With a variety of themes, from Remembrance to Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, the artworks celebrate the town and make the underpasses more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.
	Gunnelswood Road Infrastructure	* Introduction of new infrastructure to a key roundabout to support the GSK development.		30 Sep 2025 Developer Reef Origin continue to work through their masterplan design for the site as a whole and are anticipating the main works to begin mid-2026.
	Local Plan Review & Partial Update	* Partial update and review of the council's Local Plan.		30 Sep 2025 Submission to Secretary of State 15 August 2025. Examination in Public Hearing Sessions 2 - 10 December 2025. Likely Adoption Early 2026.

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MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Regeneration Comms & Marketing	* Regeneration communications and marketing strategy agreed for 25/26, including engagement and consultation.		
	SG1 - Plot A	* Phase 1A of the SG1 Programme - previous Swingate House site. * Completion of early works and drawdown of site * Design and procurement complete (SG1 Plot A)		30 Sep 2025 Construction is progressing well, with the topping out ceremony for Claxton House anticipated in December 2025. The scheme is on schedule, but the contractors have identified an opportunity for sectional completion, where 113 homes could be ready for sale in December 2026, approximately 5 months early.
	SG1 - Public Sector Hub	* Partner engagement and design of a civic hub offering a one stop location for public services in the heart of the town centre, including the new Museum		30 Sep 2025 A funding bid has been developed and submitted to Homes England, following the development of designs up to RIBA Stage 2. Partner engagement has continued, and further feasibility work is being undertaken with architects that will take into account potential implications of Local Government Reorganisation.
	Sports & Leisure Centre	* Finalisation of design, submission and approval of planning permission and construction to start on site.		30 Sep 2025 The Planning and Development Committee approved the planning permission in September. Further detailed design is continuing whilst authority for entering full contract and approving the business case is to be taken through governance structures during Q3.

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MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Station Gateway	* Activating the Station Gateway area by working with a developer to create a viable scheme. * Initial masterplan complete * Cabinet decision to enter into a Development Agreement * Enter into Development Agreement		30 Sep 2025 Officers continue to work through the Development Agreement which is programmed to be heard at the November Cabinet meeting.

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THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS 2025/26 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
CD1 Number of people engaged in Cooperative Neighbourhood 'Community & Place' initiatives	241	478	954	1,103	1,103	1,000	1,500	
RSH NM01(part1): ASB cases opened by or on behalf of the provider during the reporting year	37	64	107	44	74			30/09/2025 The Council received 42 cases of ASB this quarter with 30 cases involving an SBC tenant. ASB reported included various categories of ASB but there has been an increase in violent incidents towards staff, so we are reviewing the circumstances of these cases to ensure staff safety.
RSH NM01(part2) ASB cases that involve hate incidents opened by or on behalf of the provider during	1	3	4	1	4			30/09/2025 Of the 3 cases reported relating to Hate Crime only 1 person was wanting us to investigate their report. The other 2 cases asked that the information be recorded on the systems but did not want any investigations into the report and declined further support from Police.
# of neighbourhood improvements, events, projects, activities using UKSPF funding	36	54	138	0	0	0	10	30/09/2025 Whilst no spending has undertaken at year to date, there are no concerns that the funding will not be fully utilised before the end of the year. Following the local elections in may, two sets of ward walkabouts have been undertaken with ward members to determine priorities in their areas. Priorities have been established with funding allocated for local projects across the town. At the Cooperative Neighbourhoods Strategic Board in November 2025 these will be signed off by ward members for delivery. It should be noted that as funding for this is provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), reporting is based on annual rather than quarterly basis. Spending will be fully compared by the end of the financial year in order to ensure that none of the funding needs to be returned to MHCLG.
% of Graffiti Clearances completed	71.00%	81.82%	93.75%	100.00%	66.00%	80.00%	80.00%	30/09/2025 At the start of Quarter 2 there was a breakdown of the jet wash machine used for graffiti removal. This was for a couple of weeks whilst we awaited parts to be delivered. This impacted the number of jobs. Staffing resources have also been impacted by sickness. This has led to a drop in performance for Quarter 2.

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
CD2: Value (£) invested into Neighbourhood areas from UKSPF	129,005.00	142,423.64	266,365.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	13,000.00	30/09/2025 Whilst no spending has undertaken at year to date, there are no concerns that the funding will not be fully utilised before the end of the year. Following the local elections in may, two sets of ward walkabouts have been undertaken with ward members to determine priorities in their areas. Priorities have been established with funding allocated for local projects across the town. At the Cooperative Neighbourhoods Strategic Board in November 2025 these will be signed off by ward members for delivery. It should be noted that as funding for this is provided through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), reporting is based on annual rather than quarterly basis. Spending will be fully compared by the end of the financial year in order to ensure that none of the funding needs to be returned to MHCLG.
Contamination rate of recycling - calculated as estimated proportion that is rejected of total amoun	1.34	1.62	1.38	1.09	1.11	2.00	2.00	30/09/2025 Highest levels of contamination are still linked to food waste within the recycling - notably residues not washed out. Working with the Comms team to push videos on social media related to what should and shouldn't go in the kerbside recycling. Additional signage is planned for flat block to inform residents, but this will be a gradual rollout.
ES1: Percentage of residential bins collected	99.67%	99.67%	99.73%	99.70%	99.72%	99.00%	99.00%	30/09/2025 It is positive to see the number of missed bins is continuing to decrease as increased monitoring, instruction and education is improving the service delivered.
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	248.60	372.86	494.96	120.18		245.00	360.00	30/09/2025 This information is currently unavailable as we are awaiting data for Hertfordshire County Council. It is expected we will receive this mid-way through QTR3
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse,recycling and composting	40.30%	35.60%	32.00%	40.00%		40.00%	35.00%	30/09/2025 This information is currently unavailable as we are awaiting data from Hertfordshire County Council. It is expected we will receive this mid-way through QTR3.
CWLS1: EvAc - No of under 16 using facilities and outreach prog at least once p/w	19,833	17,468	19,715	26,395	19,586	19,500	17,000	

THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS 2025/26 MILESTONES

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Clean Neighbourhoods & Green Spaces	CCIN Policy Lab	* Two-year, £13,000 initiative led by Stevenage and Brent Councils, partnering with five other authorities, to strengthen community leadership and innovate local service delivery through cooperative, place-based approaches		30 Sep 2025 The project is just finishing phase 1 whereas partners are pulling together their stakeholder lists and starting to select the organisations they will be focussing their case studies on, there will be a partnership meeting in early November to look at the information gathered and plan for phase 2.
	Play Area Improvements	* Deliver capital programme of improvements to remaining sites and an options report to support future funding.		30 Sep 2025 The team are currently 80% through this project, 6 of the play area sites have been removed with improvement works have been completed with the remaining two finalised by end of November. Once this project comes to an end this capital programme will have been completed and a new bid will then be put forward for capital funding for future improvement works.
	Social Inclusion Partnership Formalisation	* Work with the Social Inclusion Partnership, made up of our key voluntary sector partners to formalise as a multi-stakeholder cooperative.		30 Sep 2025 The Social Inclusion Partnership is currently in the process of being formalised as Stevenage Co-operative Action Network, with draft governance documents under review by member boards and support from Co-operatives UK. Planned as a Community Consortium Co-operative, Stevenage CAN will operate on co-operative principles, with equal membership, shared decision-making, and resource-based contributions.
Community Safety TN	ASB Services Delivery Review	* Review of ASB case management, escalation procedures and partnership working, in line with Ombudsman spotlights, Crime & Policing Bill 2025 and Tenancy Standard. * Development of recording and case management framework and escalation procedures * Realignment of ASB patches with neighbourhood patches and identify what sits with housing officers and ASB officers		30 Sep 2025 The ASB Service Review has been concluded with recommendations. An action plan is currently being proposed in conjunction with other teams and agencies to support the outcome of the review and changes to operational delivery.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Evolve	* Work with domestic abuse perpetrators through the Evolve programme. Explore potential funding opportunities to expand this provision into young people.		30 Sep 2025 One individual has recently moved out of the accommodation and this is being checked ready for the next resident.
	Operation Educ8	* Educate young people around the impact of Grafiti on the local community.		30 Sep 2025 In line with the Council's Strategic Community Safety objectives, the team have worked with Leo Powell over the past three years to deliver impactful talks in schools. These sessions have helped raise awareness of complex issues. Building on this work, the aim is now to create a powerful and sustainable resource in the form of a film that can be widely shared with schools, young people, parents, and professionals to support awareness, prevention, and safeguarding efforts.
	SADA Safe Accomodation	* Obtain properties to use as dispersed accommodation for family dynamics that would not fit refuge provisions.		30 Sep 2025 During Quarter 2, SADA upheld its commitment to delivering safe and accessible accommodation as a valuable complement to other refuge options, providing housing for 13 families and single clients. The team also undertook the renewal of properties within its portfolio to maintain and strengthen the service’s capacity to offer high-quality, secure accommodation.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Culture & Leisure TN	Active Communities	* Everyone Active's AC programme brings physical activity to community venues such as community centres , pavilions and schools.		30 Sep 2025 **Community Outreach** Fitness Classes: in Q2 106 sessions were delivered with 637 attendances. These classes include Pilates and Yoga (Fairlands Valley Lakes Studio), Strength and mobility (Chells Manor Community Centre), Inclusive Adult Circuit Class (Symonds Green Community Centre), Senior Circuits Class (Shephall Centre), and seated exercise class (St Nicholas Community Centre). Everyone Active also deliver 5 Physical Activity Sessions every week to a range of independent living schemes: Fred Millard, Silkin Court, Southend Close, Pitt Court and Shaftesbury Court. In Q2 we had 215 attendances to these sessions. Family Fun Day at Bedwell Community Centre: During the summer holidays on Friday 8th August, the team hosted a family fun event at bedwell community centre. Roughly 60 attendees took part in a range of activities that included: Junior Multisport, Zumba, Pilates, Body Conditioning, Dance fitness and Thai Chi. Swing into Golf Festival: in partnership with Stevenage Sporting futures, the team hosted a golf festival at the Stevenage golf and conference centre for primary and secondary schools. This consisted of a carousel of activities including putting, chipping, driving and playing on the Par 3 course. There were 80 primary school children, and 34 Secondary school children that took part in the festivals

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Page 147	Arts & Culture Programme	* An ambitious programme of activity delivered in partnership between Junction 7 Creatives and Stevenage Museum.		30 Sep 2025 Bus Interchange Artwork Community engagement works made by school children have been displayed at J7C and are now on display at the museum. The sculpture was installed on 22 September – there was a slight delay due to wet weather. Professional photos were taking with members and stakeholders on the 29th. Underpass Murals Junction 7 Creatives were chosen to complete the Pride mural as part of works to add artwork to seven underpasses around the town. This artwork was completed in July Cultural Forum The museum invited members of the forum to act as a focus group for their upcoming plans for the 80th anniversary. We gained some interesting insights and will be making use of this going forward. Open Studios For the second year in a row, the museum welcomed an exhibition from J7C – this time showcase the artwork of Sandy Williams. As well as a well-attended opening event, Sandy also ran a free drop in session teaching others about her artwork and inviting them to have a go at making their own.
	PlayZone Programme	* Create an inclusive and accessible 3G pitch within King George V Playing Fields. As part of the PlayZone initiative, led by the Football Foundation, aims to create an inclusive, and accessible outdoor 3G pitch within KGV Playing Fields.		30 Sep 2025 The PlayZone project has been approved by the Football Foundation and final plans are being drawn up ready for submitting a planning application.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2025/26 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/25 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
CC1: Percentage of homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of Band C or above	64.43%	65.89%	66.46%	67.82%	67.82%	67.00%	68.00%	

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE 2025/26 MILESTONES

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MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Tackling Climate Change	Climate Action Street Plans	* Develop street plans led by Councillors, with the support of officers to deliver community projects		30 Sep 2025 This project has been rebranded into Green Neighbourhood Projects and CIL Green Projects. It has been presented to SLT for decision and currently a few project options are considered for delivery in the short term.
	Climate Change Community Fund	* Assess, support and advise on community-led climate projects, review alternative schemes of delivery.		30 Sep 2025 CCCF projects continue to be assessed, approved by the panel (CCPG), delivered, and monitored. This is an ongoing opportunity for residents and community organisations to present their sustainability project ideas.
	Low Carbon Skills Funding Application	* Submit an application for Low Carbon Skills Fund (LCSF) grant aligned with the Council's climate targets. This will assist with decarbonisation projects such as retrofitting public buildings.		30 Sep 2025 The Low Carbon Skills Funding has no funding allocated from UK Central Government this year. Because of this, this project cannot be delivered.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Simpler Recycling (including Flat Block Pilot)	* Review of kerbside collections in accordance with new government legislation and deliver programme of change. Deliver schemes to improve recycling rates at flat blocks.		30 Sep 2025 Progress is being made with the introduction of the weekly food waste service, scheduled for March 26. Vehicles, caddies and other capital items have been procured. New routes have been designed and the team will shortly be progressing with our Comms plan and recruitment. In addition, works to improve recycling facilities at flat blocks is currently being costed with comms and structural works to commence in Nov 26.
	Sustainability Business Support	* Deliver workshops, mentoring, coaching and supply chain support activities for Stevenage businesses across three projects: 1. Green Business Start Up Scheme. 2. Sustainable X Business Support Programme 3. Action Zero Programme (Wenta)		30 Sep 2025 Following on from the previous Sustainability workshops and two Meet the Buyers, we have recently launched the next phase of our Sustainability Support Programme in partnership with Sustainable X. SMEs in Stevenage will have access to a fully funded support programme which will include two hours of tailored, 1:1 consultancy with experienced business advisors who specialise in helping SMEs to receive support with: • Winning both public and private sector tenders with stronger responses • Improving operational efficiency and reduce unnecessary costs • Accessing discounted finance or grant funding applications • Building clear, confident messaging for clients and employees • Getting ahead of competitors in areas like supply chain and social value • Preparing for certifications or accreditations • Strengthening award entries with evidence-based results

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Tree Planting	*Micro Woods - Deliver new micro woods. * Canopy Cover - Plant new trees to support increasing tree canopy cover in areas of the town with deficiency.		30 Sep 2025 • Micro Woods - Deliver new micro woods. – we are planning to plant 5 new micro woods over the next 10 years (funding permitting) • Canopy Cover - Plant new trees to support increasing tree canopy cover in areas of the town with deficiency. – we are planning to plant over 100 trees this year (planting season)
	Warm Homes Local Grant Scheme	* Identify and support eligible households to improve energy efficiency, combat fuel poverty and reduce energy costs. Coordinate delivery of the Solar Together scheme in Stevenage.		30 Sep 2025 Delivery of the scheme have started, with communications being delivered. The uptake has been slow up to now, and the Council is exploring further communicational actions to reach eligible homes.

BALANCING THE BUDGET 2025/26 PERFORMANCE

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
% of Corporate Building Overall Completed Remedials	82.50%	76.54%	75.15%	85.85%	88.35%	80.00%	80.00%	30/09/2025 The Facilities Team has continued to progress with compliance remedial actions, reaching a completion rate of 88.35%, an increase of 1.23% from August's 87.12%. • **Outstanding**: 560 (11.65%) • **Completed**: 3,409 (70.90%) • **Not Required**: 839 (17.45%) This represents steady improvement, with 3,409 actions completed and 839 assessed as not required, leaving 560 remedials outstanding. Reporting on High/Medium/Low risks will begin from Quarter 3. The Facilities Team has a clear understanding of where risk sits across the estate. High and medium risk actions remain the priority for the coming period, supported by targeted workstreams and ongoing collaboration with service providers. Progress continues at pace and the team remains on track to reach the 90% compliance milestone.
% of Corporate Building Overall Compliance Inspections completed	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	63.11%	90.00%	99.21%	37.05%	61.47%	60.00%	89.00%	
BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	59.10%	85.50%	94.50%	32.09%	59.00%	60.00%	86.00%	30/09/2025 Although the current in-year collection rate of 59% is slightly below the 60% target, this shortfall is offset by an increase in number of chargeable properties and a reduction in discounts. Based on the latest tax base and bad debt provision, this has resulted in an overall improvement in the projected collection fund position.

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
CNM2g: Garage Voids (residential) as a percentage of stock	7.50%	8.04%	7.76%	7.87%	7.38%	7.26%	7.26%	30/09/2025 The residential garage void rate for Q2 is 7.38% against a target of 7.26%. There were 123 terminations in quarter 2 compared to 135 in quarter 1, an increase of 8% with main reasons cotninuing to be cost of garage and cost of living. There was a 23 increase in the offers during Q2 follwing a increase in demand for the service by 17%. The acceptance rate slightly decreased by 3% however a 100% acceptance rate was achieved during the 1 week of September. During Q2 there has been a continued approach to marketing initiatives with use of signage adding to the SBC Tipper Trucks, promotion at the Town Centre Outdoor Cinema and an advert in in the Hospital magazine with an aim to reach a wider market. The trial scheme "Refer a friend" was not successful as anticipate and other avenues are being explored to engage with Stevenage based Charities and that not be aware of the garage service that is on offer. The service are working at improving customer engagement through an E-Newsletter initiative and reviewing the duration of a garage licences to identify trends.
CompGF1: % of council service customer complaints responded to within deadline	87.00%	90.00%	77.40%	85.00%	86.00%	80.00%	80.00%	30/09/2025 Performance based on received complaints in July, August and September. 128 Stage 1 complaints received during Q2 20 Stage 2 complaints received during Q2 86% were answered within deadline 6.7% were late 7.4 % remain unresolved within target (response if due within Q3)
CR1: % of commercial rent collected from estates	91%	91%	91%	90%	88%	90%	90%	
CSC Sat: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	92.10%	93.10%	88.80%	93.00%	92.10%	80.00%	80.00%	
Dig2: Number of online payments	59,095	88,823	117,255	31,748	63,215	63,000	94,000	

	Actual - Quarter 2 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 3 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 4 2024/25 YTD	Actual - Quarter 1 2025/26 YTD	Actual - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 2 2025/26 YTD	Target - Quarter 3 2025/26 YTD	Comments
Garage/Commercial/Parking- income raised vs budget for the top 3 income streams of the General Fund	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	30/09/2025 All three income streams are on target to achieve full income by the yea end.
NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	7.82	5.39	2.01	5.89	6.31	12.00	10.00	
Rent collection rate	97.00%	98.60%	98.13%	93.28%	95.47%	95.00%	97.00%	30/09/2025 Income collection for Q2 of the 2025/26 financial year stands at 95.57%, slightly reduced compared to last year at 97%. This shortfall is primarily due to arrears carried forward from the previous financial year. When excluding these brought-forward arrears, in-year collection performance is strong at 98.93%. To further improve overall collection, we have implemented a series of targeted actions, including: • Focused arrears recovery initiatives • Enhanced customer engagement strategies • Improved data analytics to support account segmentation • Strengthened internal monitoring and oversight In addition, we will maintain our emphasis on reducing historical arrears and ensuring proactive management of all accounts

BALANCING THE BUDGET 2025/26 MILESTONES				
MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Balancing the Budget	Business Change & Digital Projects	* Community Advice & Support - Service Improvements to embed the activity-led Community Advice and Support (CA&S) team. * Localities - Service improvements for Business Units working in the local community. * Revenues & Benefits - Deliver service improvements and efficiencies jointly with East Herts.		30 Sep 2025 In addition to the ongoing financial benefits tracking, which is showing higher than expected savings, the Revenues and Benefits changes have delivered financial savings this year and work is underway to scope changes for future years, enabled by the step change in digital solutions and online services for residents and businesses.
	Business Change and Digital - Financial Returns	- Projects that deliver financial returns (increased income/commercial opportunities/tangible savings/cost avoidance)		30 Sep 2025 In addition to the savings options put forwards through the Star Chamber process work is underway on a key finance project aiming for cost avoidance and discovery work to support improvements in garages digital lettings has commenced. The Postage and Print project now has a defined scope and will seek cost reduction with key service areas and a proposal on advertising is being taken to the October meeting of the Commercial and Investment Working Group.
	Business Change and Digital - Service Improvements	– Projects that deliver improved service quality, customer experience and modern work processes that save time		30 Sep 2025 Following the September meeting of the Business Change and Digital Board, the Electronic Signing pilot in Housing was approved at SLT on 30th September and if successful, will be rolled out more widely across the organisation. Funding for a pilot for an AI generated website chatbot, was also approved and aims to provide helpful, detailed answers to residents questions based on website content.
	Commercial Culture Development	* Operating the Council in more of a business-like way by equipping staff with the right skills and engendering commercial behaviour.		
	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	* Adopt a CIL spending protocol to bring together commitments made and provide a structure around future spending decisions.		30 Sep 2025 Likely report to Cabinet in early 2026.

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MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Fees & Charges	* Review of fees and charges		30 Sep 2025 Cabinet approved a report in October for the proposed Fees and Charges for the financial year 2026/27
	General Fund & HRA Savings 2026/27	* Approve balanced budgets for 2026/27 for HRA in January 2026 and GF in February 2026.		30 Sep 2025 Majority of savings are on target to be delivered in 25/26 for GF while HRA is still showing budget pressures specially within repairs services. New savings target are being finalised part of HRA Business Plan review.
	HRA Business Plan	* Undertake a review of the HRA Business Plan to help ensure a sustainable picture for the HRA going forward.		30 Sep 2025 On track to deliver a new HRA Business Plan, with savings and growth options for November Cabinet.
	Review Insourcing Options	* As per the Insourcing Roadmap 2023-26, review of all services provided to or on behalf of the council by external supplier or third party.		30 Sep 2025 The team are in contact with service areas like economic regeneration, Estates, Leisure and economic development to understand potential insourcing possibilities and their potential commercially.

CROSS CUTTING 2025/26 MILESTONES

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	EDI Action Plan, Annual Report & EDGG	* Deliver on the 18 actions highlighted as part of the EDI Action Plan, report these through EDGG and the councils Equalities Annual Report.		30 Sep 2025 The EDI Action Plan has now been renewed for 2025-26 and includes 19 total actions. Quarterly updates will be collected on these actions, with the first being requested in October. An overview of these updates will be provided in an EDGG meeting in November. The annual Equality & Diversity report is also currently being compiled for 2024-25 and will be published in November.
	Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group	* Support the development of the Stevenage Equalities Commission Legacy Group, including its formalisation as a Multi-stakeholder Cooperative.		30 Sep 2025 Formalisation of the commission is ongoing. It is now in the stage of reviewing the documents that will form the governance of the co-operative. Once agreed, these will be passed onto Co-operative UK who will provide the legal guidance and support for the formalisation prior to commissioners being asked to sign up.
Health & Wellbeing	Age Friendly Communities	* Age-Friendly Communities is a collaborative programme with HCC and Age UK to deliver projects and events to support older residents in Stevenage.		30 Sep 2025 The Council have successfully delivered engagement with residents working with HCC on their AFC survey. The team delivered International Day of Older People with approx. 1200 resident interactions. The action plan continues to be reviewed and results for Stevenage from the Herts AFC survey to suggest some tangible actions moving forward.
	Dementia Friendly Communities	* Dementia Friendly Communities is delivered in collaboration with local organisation to support those living with dementia in Stevenage.		30 Sep 2025 The team continue to collaborate with organisations to support those living with Dementia. There are plans to deliver further Dementia Friends Training to colleagues and partners. Everyone Active is hosting a Dementia Support day on November 22nd for all partners to be involved including SBC Leisure & Health Team.
	Healthy Hub	* Funding received for a further two years of delivery through HCC Public Health.		30 Sep 2025 Healthy Hub continues to provide free advice and signposting to health services. This quarter has seen a total footfall of 1655 come into the HH. The HH continues to run programmes for Dementia, Pulmonary Rehab, Menopause Support, NHS Health Checks and weight management. Moving forward the team are looking to run Stop Smoking clinics through the HH.

MSEB Sub Priority	Project	Milestones	Performance	Comments
	Healthy Stevenage Strategy Revision	* A revision of the councils current Health Stevenage Strategy delivered in cooperation with HCC Public Health and other partners.		30 Sep 2025 Public Health Herts have shared a JSNA for Stevenage Health Inequalities. This outlines the key health inequalities as Obesity, Mental Health, Frailty and Dementia. Using this insight this will help shape the start of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy before engaging with health partners.
Technology & Innovation	ICT Strategy & Assurance	* Cyber First: Ensuring security, data-driven decisions, and adaptability. * Data-driven Decision-Making: Utilising data for strategic planning. * Innovate, Adapt, and Empower: Encouraging innovation and continuous learning.		30 Sep 2025 The IT strategy is also being developed to ensure it is LGR-proof, and it remains on schedule, with publication expected by March

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Activity/Action	Description	Status	Comments
1. People	Conclude recruitment to vacant and agency filled roles in the Damp and Mould team to ensure a permanent staffing establishment is in place to deliver and embed improvements.	Completed	3 x permanent appointments made with one role covered by agency pending new starter commencing in post.
	Recruit to an additional 1 x FTE Business Support Officer role to ensure robust and up to date performance data is available to demonstrate compliance. This post is to be funded within existing budgets.	Completed	New starter commenced in post in September 2025.
	A programme of HHSRS training delivered for all front-line teams.	Completed 2024/25	
	HHSRS training to be included on induction plan for new starters.	In progress – to be completed by Q4 2025/26	Included on induction checklist for Repairs staff. To be factored into corporate training programme to ensure all relevant staff across the wider housing service receive the training.
	Mandatory refresher training to be provided for all relevant staff at an agreed frequency.	In progress – to be completed by Q4 2025/26	To be included in training matrix for relevant Repairs staff. To be factored into corporate training programme to ensure all relevant staff across the

Activity/Action	Description	Status	Comments
			wider housing service receive the training.
2. Processes	Review and update processes to reflect target timescales for completion of: - Inspections - Issuing a report to the tenant - Completing works.	Completed	
	A workshop with relevant staff held on 15 May to identify issues within the current processes and an action plan developed. Follow-up workshops planned to finalise processes and embed change.	Completed	
	No-access process in place across the wider Housing service which has been informed by relevant teams.	Completed	A no-access policy is under development/review led by Housing to ensure meets needs of all service areas.
3. Procurement	Appoint support contractors to carry out specialist damp and mould related works. A report on the procurement of support contractors for Repairs and Voids was presented to	Completed	New contract awarded and contractor mobilised in July 2025.

Activity/Action	Description	Status	Comments
	Cabinet for approval in February 2025. The associated contract awards were approved by the Strategic Director (Richard Protheroe) in March 2025 and mobilisation commenced in late May/early June 2025.		
4. Policy	The Damp and Mould Policy has been reviewed and an updated version is available on the website [Damp, Condensation and Mould] However, the Policy will be further reviewed to ensure it is consistent with the secondary legislation and associated guidance.	Completed Completed	
	The current Repairs and Maintenance Policy was approved by Cabinet in December 2024. In light of Awaab's Law and in response to some recent Housing Ombudsman Service determinations the Policy has been	Completed Completed	An amended version of the Policy which highlighted the proposed amendments was approved by Cabinet in June 2025.

Activity/Action	Description	Status	Comments
	updated to include the following: 1. Definition of a routine repair and where a repair falls outside of that definition the target timescale(s) for completion. 2. Reference to vulnerabilities being reflected in the assessment of the priority to be awarded to a repair.		
5. Performance	In 2024/25 Damp and Mould KPI's were introduced as part of the corporate quarterly performance suite. The KPI's reflected the target timescales expected to be introduced under Awaab's Law at that time.	Completed	The KPI's introduced in 2024/25 have continued to be monitored and reported on during 2025/26 pending guidance being published and will be amended from Q3 onwards to reflect the target timescales introduced by Awaab's Law which are different to those being reported on to date.
	For 2025/26 the KPI definitions and parameters have been reviewed to ensure reporting reflects current performance and is aligned with the prescribed target timescales as set out in the secondary legislation.	Completed	It is proposed to use KPI's and associated definitions provided through the HQN from Q3 onwards of which 4 will be included in the corporate performance suite and others will be included as operational KPI's.

Activity/Action	**Description**	**Status**	**Comments**
6. Technology	To enable inspection reports can be provided to tenants within the 3 working day target following an investigation/inspection an app is being utilised as an interim solution.	Completed	
	In the longer term the plan is to have a system-based solution which will enable a case management approach to be more effectively implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the CSC following their scrutiny review of damp and mould.	Estimated completion 2026/27	This is included on the Housing Systems road map which will be implemented once the NEC migration to the Cloud project has been completed and the necessary system upgrades carried out.

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APPENDIX B

The table below sets out details of decisions issued within Q2 by both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, which relate to the Council's Housing Services. In all cases orders or actions have been completed. No further action is required in respect of any of these cases and this item is for information only.

Complaint No	Council Process Ended	Ombudsmen Decision	Issue	Determination/Outcome	Order/Action	Ombudsmen
5	Mar 2025	18 July 2025	Homelessness Application	Service Failure	• Written apology • Compensation £150 • Specific resolution actions to be completed	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
6	July 2025	18 July 2025	Allocations	LGSCO not progressing	• None	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
7	July 2025	22 July 2025	Right to Buy	LGSCO not progressing	• None	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
8	June 2024	25 July 2025	Aids & Adaptations	Maladministration	• Compensation £200Q2	Housing Ombudsman
9	Dec 2023	31 July 2025	Asset Management	No maladministration	• None	Housing Ombudsman
10	July 2025	01 August 2025	Anti-social Behaviour	LGSCO not progressing	• None	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
11	July 24	26 August 2025	Income	Ombudsman found reasonable redress in how Council responded.	• Compensation £150 (as already offered at Stage 2)	Housing Ombudsman
12	Oct 2024	4 Sept 2025	Repairs	No maladministration	• None	Housing Ombudsman

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 04 November 2025 18:49
To: Licensing
Subject: [External] Regarding the taxi rank outside lister

Not so against it being moved but I would ask is the big tree being cut down. If so i would highly suggest a big NO. Move it somewhere else where no trees or old trees will be cut down.
Kind regards
[redacted]

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Stevenage Borough Council Self-Assessment Form – April 2025

This self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (2024) has been completed by our Senior Strategic Complaints Manager, Business Improvement Manager and Special Projects Lead (Housing). It is a crucial part of our annual submission to the Housing Ombudsman Service and reflects our ongoing commitment to delivering a fair, accessible, and resident-focused complaints process.

It provides assurance to our residents, Councillors, the Housing Ombudsmen Service and the Regulator of Social Housing that we take complaints seriously, use them to drive service improvement, and continuously work to embed a positive complaints culture across the organisation.

The self-assessment has been reviewed at senior level to ensure transparency and accountability. The assessment along with the Annual Service Improvement Report will be published on the Council's website. We will also publish the Council's formal response.

Section 1: Definition of a complaint

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: *'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the landlord, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting a resident or group of residents.'*	Yes	Definition set out in point 4.1 of the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) corporate Complaints **Policy** Definition mirrors that of the Housing Ombudsman in the Complaints Handling Code.	
1.3	A resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. Whenever a resident expresses dissatisfaction landlords must give them the choice to make complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	Included in our **policy** under point 4.2 and Appendix A (Making and Escalating a Complaint).	
1.4	Landlords must recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This must be set out in their complaints policy. A service request is a request from a resident to the landlord requiring action to be taken to put something right. Service requests are not complaints, but must	Yes	Service request definition is set out in the policy under point 4.6. 'When a complaint won't be considered 4.6 Some contacts aren't actually complaints at all, but are 'service requests'. A service request is a contact from a resident	

	be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.		that brings a matter to the council's attention for the first time, and requests a service offered by the council, for example: • reporting a missed bin • raising a concern about food hygiene in a restaurant • reporting anti-social behaviour • reporting an adult or child safeguarding concern	
1.5	A complaint must be raised when the resident expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing. Landlords must not stop their efforts to address the service request if the resident complains.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.7.	
1.6	An expression of dissatisfaction with services made through a survey is not defined as a complaint, though wherever possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue a complaint if they wish to. Where landlords ask for wider feedback about their services, they also must provide details of how residents can complain.	Yes	New service wide guidance on transactional surveys has been developed and implemented; this includes the requirement that the following message or comment will be included in all surveys:- *if dissatisfied or very dissatisfied selected, following message to appear: in line with the Complaint Handling Code 2024, an expression of dissatisfaction with services	

			made through a survey is not defined as a complaint. If you would like to make a complaint you can do so through our website at www.stevenage.gov.uk. Whilst our Tenant Satisfaction Measures Perception Survey includes the following wording:- *'If you have a specific concern about the Council's housing services,* *please note this survey does not serve as a formal complaint. To make a complaint about* *the Council's housing services, please telephone 01438 242242, make a complaint using* *your My Stevenage online account, or use the online form accessed at https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/compliments-and-complaints'*."	

Section 2: Exclusions

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
2.1	Landlords must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so. If landlords decide not to accept a complaint they must be able to evidence their reasoning. Each complaint must be considered on its own merits	Yes	Covered in our policy under point 4.4	
2.2	A complaints policy must set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered as a complaint or escalated, and these circumstances must be fair and reasonable to residents. Acceptable exclusions include: • The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over twelve months ago. • Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.	Yes	Included in our policy under points 4.6 – 4.8.	

	• Matters that have previously been considered under the complaints policy.			
2.3	Landlords must accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring or the resident becoming aware of the issue, unless they are excluded on other grounds. Landlords must consider whether to apply discretion to accept complaints made outside this time limit where there are good reasons to do so.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.3 and Appendix A – Making and Escalating a complaint	
2.4	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman. If the Ombudsman does not agree that the exclusion has been fairly applied, the Ombudsman may tell the landlord to take on the complaint.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.4.	
2.5	Landlords must not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they must consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.4.	

Section 3: Accessibility and Awareness

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
3.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint. Landlords must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of residents who may need to access the complaints process.	Yes	Our Complaints Policy was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment before approval. Included in Appendix A of our policy, Making and escalating a complaint. Section 4.16 and 6 of our policy outlines our duty under the Equality Act 2010. Additionally, the Council's has a Reasonable Adjustment Policy that sets our approach to providing equal access to services.	Residents can submit a complaint: • on our website • Via their Online My Stevenage account • Via the telephone • In writing • And in person. • via a third party such as an elected member, advocate service or a family member. Where permission is needed to progress the complaint, the resident will be contacted for this to be arranged. If a resident does not have telephone and/or online services, they are able to visit our offices to use a

				council computer, or to book an appointment with an advisor.
3.2	Residents must be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff must be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the landlord.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.9 and 4.10. Guidance is provided to staff on the approach to be taken when receiving a complaint.	
3.3	High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain.	Yes	Section 1.2 of our policy sets out that we recognise that complaints give us the opportunity to improve our services and put things right.	Further to the policy, a monthly Complaint Clinic is chaired by a Director and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Complaints. The sessions are focussed on learning from complaints, prioritising service improvements and bringing together Housing Service Managers to discuss outcomes from complaints, best practice and agree support for complex case work. Our annual report shows a reduction in complaints this year, however, this is as a result of service improvements driven by

				high complaint volume areas and demonstrates the learning and improvements we have made from complaints. We are seeing higher complaints volumes when comparing against the national median averages published by Housemark. We are committed to understanding why our peers may be reporting lower complaints volumes, however we have highlighted that our volumes may be reflective of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process.
3.4	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the two stage process, what will happen at each stage, and the timeframes for responding. The policy must also be published on the landlord's website.	Yes	Complaints Policy 2024 published online in full, along with summary key information on the webpage, to guide customers in a simple format. Furthermore, customers can request translations, braille or large print versions of the policy document, as highlighted on the	

			front page of the policy document.	
3.5	The policy must explain how the landlord will publicise details of the complaints policy, including information about the Ombudsman and this Code.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.17.4 4.17.4 The council's Complaints Policy and details about how to make a complaint, contact the relevant Ombudsman, and details of each Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code will be published on the council's website.	Our annual Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report will be presented to our Council Cabinet, along with this self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code. These will also be made available to our residents on the Council's website, alongside information about the role of the Ombudsman in housing complaints cases.
3.6	Landlords must give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord.	Yes	This is covered in our policy under points 4.5 and Appendix A. It is also included in summary information on the 'Complaint Policy' webpage.	
3.7	Landlords must provide residents with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service and how the individual can engage with the Ombudsman about their complaint.		Outlined in the summary information made available on the 'Complaints Policy' webpage and in our policy under sections 4.12.13, 4.12.17 and Appendix A .	Our Contact Centre and Complaints team are well-versed in assisting customers in identifying the appropriate Ombudsman service for their complaints.

				The details of the Ombudsman are available on both Stage one and two complaint responses.

Section 4: Complaint Handling Staff

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
4.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent). This Code will refer to that person or team as the 'complaints officer'. This role may be in addition to other duties.	Yes	Evidence, including relevant job descriptions are available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman	In the Housing Service, there are four Strategic Complaints Manager (SCM) roles. These specialised roles independently investigate and address complaints while providing support to customers throughout the process. SCMs collaborate with service areas to enhance learning and improve service delivery. Additionally, the senior SCM coordinates information and communicates with the Housing Ombudsman regarding specific case work. This is also covered in our complaint handling procedure under roles and responsibilities.

4.2	The complaints officer must have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They must also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	Evidence, including relevant job descriptions are available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman.	The Strategic Complaint Managers have access to staff at all levels, including the Strategic Director for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Housing. Additionally, a monthly complaint clinic is chaired by a member of the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet member for Housing (who is the MRC). During these sessions, the focus is on learning from complaints, prioritising service improvements, and bringing together Housing Service Managers to discuss complaint outcomes, share best practices, and agree on support for complex case work.
4.3	Landlords are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff must be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and must be resourced to handle complaints effectively	Yes	Stevenage Borough Council is committed to building a positive complaint handling culture. In 2024, a new policy and procedure was introduced to meet requirements from the Housing Ombudsman and establish best practice.	A dedicated team of specialist complaint handlers (SCMs) operates within the Housing Service. Their primary responsibility is to conduct independent investigations into complaints and provide timely

				responses. Additionally, SCMs collaborate closely with service managers to identify areas for learning and service improvements.

Section 5: The Complaint Handling Process

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
5.1	Landlords must have a single policy in place for dealing with complaints covered by this Code. Residents must not be treated differently if they complain.	Yes	Complaints Policy 2024	
5.2	The early and local resolution of issues between landlords and residents is key to effective complaint handling. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	Our complaints handling procedure sets out the officer's responsibility under point 3.1. Our policy explains there is two stages to our complaints handling procedure, in point 4.12.	
5.3	A process with more than two stages is not acceptable under any circumstances as this will make the complaint process unduly long and delay access to the Ombudsman.	Yes	Our policy explains there is two stages to our complaints handling in point 4.12.	

5.4	Where a landlord’s complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor or independent adjudicator) at any stage, it must form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Residents must not be expected to go through two complaints processes.		Evidence of contract agreements and procedures are available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman.	Stevenage Borough Council records, investigates, and responds to all complaints related to contractors. When contractors are engaged in large-scale works, such as our Major Works Programmes, they appoint a Residents Liaison Officer. This officer works closely with residents to address onsite issues and guides residents to the formal complaints process.
5.5	Landlords are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	Yes	Evidence of contract agreements and procedures are available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman.	Our in-house SCM’s are responsible for ensuring a full investigation and response is given for all complaints relating to contractors.
5.6	When a complaint is logged at Stage 1 or escalated to Stage 2, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking. The Code will refer to this as “the complaint definition”. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification.	Yes	All complaints are reviewed, acknowledged and defined in-line with the complaint handling code. This is outlined in our procedure under point 3.3 and section 4 of the Complaints Policy 2024. Our standard templates include a section that sets out our understanding of the complaint, and where provided details of the outcomes that the	

			resident is seeking. This format is used in all cases.	
5.7	When a complaint is acknowledged at either stage, landlords must be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Yes	Covered in our procedure under point 3.3. In all cases we will set out details of which aspects are being considered as part of the complaint, and we will provide clarification and justification on aspects of the complaint as appropriate.	
5.8	At each stage of the complaints process, complaint handlers must: a. deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; b. give the resident a fair chance to set out their position; c. take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and d. consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.	Yes	Specialist Strategic Complaints Manager (SCM) roles within Housing are in place to undertake thorough and impartial investigations. Case notes and evidence will be used to support their findings.	
5.9	Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code, the landlord must agree with the resident suitable intervals for keeping them informed about their complaint.		Included in our complaint handling procedure under points 6.2 and 6.10. Included in our Complaints Policy section 4.12.3	As set out within our complaints procedure we do agree an update timeline with the complainant.

5.10	Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review.	Yes	As set out in our Complaints Policy section 4.16.	
5.11	Landlords must not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless it has valid reasons to do so. Landlords must clearly set out these reasons, and they must comply with the provisions set out in section 2 of this Code.	Yes	Complaints will not be refused unless there is a valid reason to do so, usually due to an alternative route as set out in points 4.4 - 4.8 and 4.12. in our policy.	
5.12	A full record must be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports or surveys.	Yes	Casework evidence available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman.	The Council uses the Govmetric Casetracker IT System; an online system which allows complainants to complete the online form, receive notifications, updates and responses to their complaint. Where complainants do not use the online system, officers will input cases, and include contact details, and if suitable contacts are provided, residents can access the system directly.

				In all cases, the complaint is logged and managed within our Digital Platform. The system will date and time stamp the complaint and associated actions. The system will also hold documentation relating to the complaint, investigation, and the response.
5.13	Landlords must have processes in place to ensure a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Landlords must ensure appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation.	Yes	We are committed to making things right at all stages of the complaint process. When responding to any complaint, we will address the details of any remedies offered, See section 4.12 of Complaints Policy 2024.	We are currently reviewing and updating our approach to Compensation and Remedies, to reflect latest best practice and new contractual arrangements that we now have in place. This will enhance consistency, transparency and build on learning.
5.14	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.	Yes	Unacceptable Behaviour Policy with references made within Complaints Policy at Section 4.18. Evidence of procedures are available at the request of the Housing Ombudsman.	Cases of unacceptable behaviour are processed through an internal online form for review and all decisions/actions are reviewed quarterly.
5.15	Any restrictions placed on contact due to unacceptable behaviour must be proportionate and demonstrate regard	Yes	Included under section 4 of the Unacceptable Behaviour policy.	

	for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.			

Section 6: Complaints Stages

Stage 1

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.1	Landlords must have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further investigation. Landlords must consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the resident is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the resident.	Yes	Our complaint handling procedure sets out the expectation of reviewing complaints and taking action in point 6.1.	
6.2	Complaints must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure **within five working days of the complaint being received**.	Yes	This is included in our policy under point 4.12	Our Complaints team will formally acknowledge a stage 1 complaint within 5 working days, providing a unique reference number, the complaint definition and a target response date.
6.3	Landlords must issue a full response to stage 1 complaints **within 10 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Our policy states response time for a stage 1 complaint in point 4.12, confirming a written	

			response within 10 working days of acknowledgement.	
6.4	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Our policy covers extension timescales in point 4.12.3 of the Complaints Policy. Details are also set out within our complaints procedure.	
6.5	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	This is covered in point 4.12.3 of our Complaints Policy.	
6.6	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	This approach is set out in point 6.5 of our complaint handling procedure. Our Complaints Team manage our Complaints Action Tracker which records agreed actions, assigned responsibility and timelines for action. Residents are updated as appropriate.	
6.7	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant	Yes	Our policy, section 4.9.5 addresses this point of the code. Additionally, our complaint handling procedure, outlined in	

	policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		Section 7, provides best practice for responding to complaints.	
6.8	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these must be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the stage 1 response has been issued, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being investigated or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues must be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	This is covered in point 4.13 of our policy.	
6.9	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 1 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.4.	

Stage 2

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
6.10	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage 1, it must be progressed to stage 2 of the landlord's procedure. Stage 2 is the landlord's final response.		Included in points 4.12.5 of our policy.	Escalation details are provided to customers within both Stage 1 and 2 responses.
6.11	Requests for stage 2 must be acknowledged, defined and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	This is included in our policy under point 4.12.5	Our Complaints team will formally acknowledge a stage 2 complaint within 5 working days, providing a unique reference number, the complaint definition and a target response date. . We will elaborate on section 4.12.5 of our Complaints Policy, to ensure it captures what a complainant should expect to see included in their acknowledgment letter.
6.12	Residents must not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Landlords are expected to make reasonable efforts to understand why a resident remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	Yes	The Complaints Policy in 4.12.4 & 4.12.5 states that cases can be escalated if the complainant is not satisfied with the stage 1 response, no further justification is required.	
6.13	The person considering the complaint at stage 2 must not be the same	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.6.	

	person that considered the complaint at stage 1.			
6.14	Landlords must issue a final response to the stage 2 **within 20 working days** of the complaint being acknowledged.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.5	
6.15	Landlords must decide whether an extension to this timescale is needed when considering the complexity of the complaint and then inform the resident of the expected timescale for response. Any extension must be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) must be clearly explained to the resident.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.7	
6.16	When an organisation informs a resident about an extension to these timescales, they must be provided with the contact details of the Ombudsman.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.7	
6.17	A complaint response must be provided to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned promptly with appropriate updates provided to the resident.	Yes	This approach is set out in point 6.11 of our complaint handling procedure. Our Complaints Team manage our Complaints Action Tracker which records agreed actions, assigned responsibility and timelines for action. Residents are updated as appropriate.	
6.18	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for any	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.4. additionally, our complaint handling	

	decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.		procedure outlines best practice in responding to complaints in Section 7.	
6.19	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: a. the complaint stage; b. the complaint definition; c. the decision on the complaint; d. the reasons for any decisions made; e. the details of any remedy offered to put things right; f. details of any outstanding actions; and g. details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman Service if the individual remains dissatisfied.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.12.4.	
6.20	Stage 2 is the landlord's final response and must involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	Our policy states a senior manager is responsible for a Stage 2 response in point 4.12.5	

Section 7: Putting things right

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
7.1	Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.15 and our complaint handling procedure in section 7.	

	intends to take, to put things right. These can include: • Apologising; • Acknowledging where things have gone wrong; • Providing an explanation, assistance or reasons; • Taking action if there has been delay; • Reconsidering or changing a decision; • Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum; • Providing a financial remedy; • Changing policies, procedures or practices.			
7.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.15 and our complaint handling procedure in section 7.	
7.3	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.15.1 and our complaint handling procedure in section 7.	
7.4	Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.	Yes	Included in our policy under point 4.15.1.	

Section 8: Self-assessment, reporting and compliance

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
8.1	Landlords must produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge, which must include: a. the annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. b. a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance. This must also include a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept; c. any findings of non-compliance with this Code by the Ombudsman; d. the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; e. any annual report about the landlord's performance from the Ombudsman; and f. any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord.	Yes	Approach to reporting and governance set out in our policy in points 4.17. Our self-assessment against this code and our Housing Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report will be published on our website annually, upon submission to the Housing Ombudsman, together with other key complaints information.	

8.2	The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.	Yes	Our approach to sharing the annual report and self-assessment is included in point 4.17 of our Complaints Policy. The response of our Governing body will be captured in the report.	
8.3	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Yes		Self-assessment will be reviewed in-line with significant organisational, legislation and policy change.
8.4	Landlords may be asked to review and update the self-assessment following an Ombudsman investigation.	Yes	Evidence will be provided to the Ombudsman following all investigation outcomes.	We will review and update the self-assessment to comply with any recommendations or orders from the Ombudsman.
8.5	If a landlord is unable to comply with the Code due to exceptional circumstances, such as a cyber incident, they must inform the Ombudsman, provide information to residents who may be affected, and publish this on their website Landlords must provide a timescale for returning to compliance with the Code.	Yes	Business continuity plans are available for the inspection of the Ombudsman.	The Council's Business Continuity arrangements for Housing and Customer service includes notifying the Housing Ombudsman and residents. Updates will be published, along with expected timelines for returning to normal operations.

Section 9: Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement

Code provision	Code requirement	Comply: Yes / No	Evidence	Commentary / explanation
9.1	Landlords must look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Yes	SBC is committed to improving service delivery for all residents. This is highlighted in the policy through points: 1.2, 4.17, 4.17.2, 4.17.3 and Appendix A.	Additionally, the SCM's collaborate with Service Managers to ensure lessons learned from complaints are put into practice, and they oversee reviews of HOS findings. This can include changes to policies, procedures and practices.
9.2	A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes. Landlords must use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	Yes		The council has prioritised complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. This has been recognised through additional resources to support complaints investigations and regular focused case review meetings. The Housing Complaint Clinic provides strategic and operational insight and oversight, with a clear focus

				on learning and service improvement.
9.3	Accountability and transparency are also integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as residents' panels, staff and relevant committees.	Yes	Included in the policy, point 4.17..	We have strengthened our governance structure by enhancing oversight through regular reporting, monitoring and senior scrutiny, ensuring greater accountability and learning at all levels of the organisation. Our annual report, which is shared with residents, captures our achievements and commitments, which are feedback led.
9.4	Landlords must appoint a suitably senior lead person as accountable for their complaint handling. This person must assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	Included in the policy, point 4.17.3.	
9.5	In addition to this a member of the governing body (or equivalent) must be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This person is referred to as the Member	Yes	Included in the policy, point 4.17.3.	

	Responsible for Complaints ('the MRC').			
9.6	The MRC will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight on the landlord's complaint handling performance. This person must have access to suitable information and staff to perform this role and report on their findings.	Yes	Included in policy points 4.17.1 and 4.17.3	TSM related Complaint data along with feedback and outcome of all Ombudsman cases are report on a quarterly basis as part of the Councils Corporate Performance Framework. This report is considered by the Councils Strategic Leadership Team which includes the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer as well as the Cabinet which includes the Leaders of the Council and the MRC.
9.7	As a minimum, the MRC and the governing body (or equivalent) must receive: a. regular updates on the volume, categories and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance; b. regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; c. regular updates on the outcomes of the Ombudsman's investigations and progress made in complying with orders related to severe maladministration findings; and	Yes	Included in policy point 4.17.3	

	d. annual complaints performance and service improvement report.			
9.8	Landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties that reflects the need to: a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments; b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others; and c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body.	Yes	Included in staff annual objective setting. Strategic Complaints Management team Implementation of Housing Complaint Management Clinics.	Our Strategic Complaints Managers lead by example and provide support across all housing service areas, to ensure consistency of approach and maintaining our ethos for proactive complaint handling. Our Clinics were implemented to give clear oversight of our complaint handling and an opportunity to proactively respond to trends and promptly implement improvements based on our learning from complaint feedback, and the engagement wider picture. There is representation from each service area within housing in recognition of cross-cutting and the need for accountability in effective complaint management and optimum customer service.

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Stevenage Borough Council's Housing Annual Report 2024/25

Introduction

We are pleased to present our Housing Annual Report, which provides a comprehensive overview of our performance, priorities and achievements over the past year as a registered social landlord. It also outlines our plan for the year ahead as we continue to build a more sustainable housing future for all.

Our focus this year has been on strengthening compliance, improving tenant experience, and embedding accountability across all areas of housing management.

In April 2024, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) introduced a new regulatory framework and started to inspect social landlords to assess how well they were delivering against the outcomes of the Consumer Standards: Neighbourhood and Community, Safety and Quality, Tenancy, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability.

Stevenage Borough Council was inspected in the Summer 2024 and awarded a C2 grade, the second highest, which confirms the council has provided assurance that it meets the Consumer Standards in many areas. Nonetheless, the Regulator has identified there is more work to be done and reassuringly we were already working on the areas identified as requiring improvement.

As part of the Regulator's new regime, it has introduced new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). These are a suite of 22 measures used to give our tenants greater transparency over our performance and to inform the RSH of our compliance with the Consumer Standards.

We continue to make improvements to the way we manage our housing stock in accordance with the requirements of the new regulatory regime, and through closer collaboration with our tenants and local communities.

We remain fully committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for our tenants and leaseholders, providing a stable foundation for thousands of residents in the Borough.

Regulatory Judgement

This year we were subject to a planned inspection, which took place over the summer of 2024 and judged our performance against the new Consumer Standards. Following inspection, the RSH grade landlords ranging from C1 (top) to C4 (lowest). In November 2024 the Council was notified by the RSH that it has been awarded a C2 grade.

In common with all landlords who have been inspected, we have developed a Provider Improvement Plan (PIP), which focuses on areas where we need to develop services, specifically relating to the Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard; and approved by the RSH. This plan is reported to Cabinet as part of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Framework.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

These were introduced in 2023/24 as a Regulatory requirement for all Registered Social Landlords in England, and consist of:

- 12 perception measures
- 10 management information measures

There are five key themes that the measures relate to:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Effective handling of complaints
- Responsible neighbourhood management

Tenant Perception Measure Results 2024/25

These measures focus on how tenants feel about the services they receive and help us to identify issues that data alone might miss.

The Council commissioned Housemark to conduct the tenant perception surveys, in line with the regulatory requirements and the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

The survey questions are prescribed by the Regulator of Social Housing and respondents are given five options for their response, across all survey areas. In addition to the prescribed questions, our tenants were given the option to provide additional free-text information, and we used this qualitative feedback to help inform and implement wider service improvement work across service areas.

These results have been obtained through a quarterly survey and are based on 988 responses, collected by combination of online survey (120 responses) and telephone interviews (868 completed).

Based on a total of 7,794 properties and the 988 responses received this year, the overall margin of error for the survey is +/-2.91% (compliance requiring +/-4.0%). The overall response rate was 12.8%.

Whilst the Tenant Perception Survey is largely made up of prescribed questions, scores reported to the Regulator may vary significantly dependent on landlord context and the survey method used. As such, it is important that scores are interpreted carefully when comparing across providers.

Housemark has generally seen lower satisfaction results for online surveys compared to telephone surveys for the social housing providers it is supporting. The survey results are presented in **Appendix D** for both last year and 2024/25, along with details of the percentage change for each measure.

As the data shows there has been an improvement across all twelve measures compared to the 2023/24 data, with cumulative overall satisfaction at 66.9% representing an increase of 10.9%. The highest increase relates to satisfaction with speed of repairs, which is now 64.4%, an increase of 12.0%. Tenants are most satisfied with being provided with a home that is safe at 76.4%, representing an increase of 6.5%.

As part of the survey tenants are able to use free text to provide additional detail. Feedback from the surveys is being used to help inform specific development and improvement work across service areas. Of the tenants that provided a reason for overall satisfaction and have given permission for their responses to be shared, 33% of these have been reported to individual teams for further contact to be made. 51% of the follow-ups requested are in relation to repairs (including damp and mould).

Whilst the perception surveys are a useful tool, it should be noted that in some cases households are asked about specific reporting or services that they have accessed. However, on reviewing the data we are aware that there is a mismatch in some cases between the survey results and actual reporting. For example, we are aware that a number of households who have said that they were unhappy with their handling of their complaint had not made a formal complaint but had raised a repair request or other issue. Feedback from Housemark has confirmed that such issues are not only a factor for SBC. Therefore, when looking at service development we use data from this and other sources, including actual transactional surveys.

Housemark's full report presenting the findings of the Tenant Perception Survey can be found in **Appendix E.**

Management Information Measure Results 2024/25

The table presented in **Appendix F** provides the scores of each measure per quarter as well as the annual figures for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. The arrows highlight the direction of travel when comparing scores across the last two years. The colour coding system, that has been developed locally as part of the Council Corporate Performance Framework, indicates if the performance is within tolerance (green), nearing tolerance limits (amber) or outside of the acceptable tolerance range (red).

Of the 14 figures reported across the 10 TSM Management Data measures, 7 have shown positive change, 3 have reduced, and 4 have remained unchanged. The four unchanged figures fall within the Building Safety category and are attributable to last year's results already being at 100%.

Several areas have recorded significant gains, demonstrating improvement. This is most notable within the Complaints Handling category, where the percentage of complaints responded to within the required timescales has increased to 94.62% for Stage 1 complaints (up from 77.14%) and 81.18% for Stage 2 complaints (up from 69.32%). The council has also observed a meaningful reduction in the proportion of homes not meeting the Decent Homes Standard, which has decreased to 3.36% (down from 5.89%). Similarly, there has been a strong increase in the percentage of emergency repairs completed within target timescales, now at 98.93% (up from 87.01%).

These measures have shown a reduction compared to last years' figures; these are:

NM01: Both general anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases and those involving hate crime have seen small increases this year, with ASB cases rising from 107 to 108 and hate incidents from one to four. While the numbers remain relatively low, we recognise that every incident matters to those affected. It is also important to note that part of this change reflects improvements in data collection methods, which allow us to capture and respond to issues more accurately.

RP02: This measure has seen a slight decline in respect of non-emergency repairs completed on time, although the change is not significant. It is worth noting that while RP02 in respect of non-emergency repairs has seen a slight decline, RP02 in respect of emergency repairs has recorded a marked improvement. In the 2023/24 reporting year, the completion rate for emergency repairs had fallen below that of non-emergency repairs. Consequently, the council prioritised emergency repairs, resulting in substantial improvement in this area. As the service continues to refine resource allocation and demand management, further improvement is anticipated for RP01 in respect of non-emergency repairs, in the next reporting cycle.

Overall, the performance across the TSM Management Data demonstrates a positive trajectory, with several key areas showing marked improvement and others maintaining consistently high standards. While a small number of indicators reflect minor reductions, these are not considered significant and are being actively addressed as required.

As part of the new Regulatory framework the Council is required to submit this data to the Regulator of Social Housing each year, and this has now been completed. The data is also published on our website and is shared with residents through the quarterly newsletter, social media and it will also be included in our Housing Annual Report to tenants.

Looking ahead, the council remains committed to building on this success in the coming year as it continues to deliver against the Regulator for Social Housing's Performance Improvement Plan and begins the journey toward improving its current C2 grade.

Transactional Survey Results

We have introduced transactional surveys across a range of our housing services, including complaint handling, ASB and Repairs. This insight will dovetail with our performance data and our wider engagement feedback to help build a rounded picture of the tenant experience and how our services are operating, enabling us to direct improvements, where it matters most to our tenant and leaseholders.

This year we will be rolling out a programme of satisfaction surveys across a wider selection of housing areas, and we have been developing a Satisfaction Survey Framework that will provide a consistent, structured approach to gathering and analysing feedback across services, ensuring results are reliable and comparable.

We remain mindful of the risk of survey fatigue and are taking steps to ensure our approach is proportionate and targeted, whilst making better use of existing feedback channels to avoid overwhelming residents while still gathering meaningful insights. This forms part of our commitment to embedding customer feedback at the heart of service design and delivery.

The following satisfaction scores reflect resident feedback across some housing areas where transactional surveys have been implemented:

Complaint Handling - Nearly **37%** of complainants were satisfied with the handling of their Stage One or Two complaint. This is slightly higher than the satisfaction reported in the TSM Tenant Survey.

We are committed to improving satisfaction in complaint handling and have set a target of 40% satisfaction for the coming year. Alongside this, we have outsourced these transactional surveys to an external, independent organisation to ensure that our service-users feel comfortable to respond honestly, adding credibility to the results.

Customer Service Centre (CSC) - Over **88%** of our customers are satisfied with the CSC, as per survey results captured through an external research organisation. Qualitive feedback indicate that staff are found to be polite, helpful and effective in resolving their issues where possible.

Repairs - Over **91%** of our customers are satisfied with our repairs service, exceeding last year's satisfaction score of 87% and our target of 90%.

We are exploring the feasibility of capturing repair satisfaction via an external provider, who would carry out deeper analysis work. This would help us triangulate insights with the data collected via TSMs.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) - Our Housing Management service survey both complainants and alleged perpetrators when closing ASB cases. This year, an average satisfaction score of 77.25% was achieved, with higher satisfaction seen amongst complainants.

Income Service Team - This year, our Income Services Team has introduced transactional surveys, carried out independently by Voicescape. Every tenant the team has had contact with in the previous week, will be contacted to gather timely feedback on their experience, which we will use to shape and improve services.

Specialist Support Services - Our Specialist Support Service conduct satisfaction surveys at different stages of the resident journey. Feedback is used both to address any issues promptly and to assess how well our services are meeting resident expectations. Last year, over 93% of customers felt that the service helped them to live more independently in their home, while nearly 99% felt that the alarm service made them feel more safe and secure.

Conclusions

Overall, our performance across the full TSM suite demonstrates a broadly positive trajectory, with several key areas showing marked improvement and others maintaining consistently high standards. While a small number of the management information indicators reflect minor reductions, these are not considered significant and are being actively addressed as required.

It is encouraging to see that tenant satisfaction has increased this year across all of the tenant perception measures, however it is clear that there remains room for improvement in some areas, when comparing against peer medians. Nonetheless, it is encouraging to see that in the areas where we have concentrated our efforts, e.g. repairs and complaints, we are now competing with – and in some cases outperforming – our peers, demonstrating that our targeted improvements are making a tangible difference, and that tenant insight is helping us drive through these improvements.

As we work to define our transactional survey regime further, as part of our commitment to improving customer experience, we hope to be able to expand insight beyond these headline satisfaction scores, allowing for more granular, timely and actionable insight, following service specific interactions.

In response to these findings, we will now reflect on our approach to the provision of our services in 2024-25, and how this has contributed to our improved performance and tenant satisfaction. We view the gains made this year as a positive step forward, but not the final destination. As such, we will also share our plans for the coming year as we strive to continue to build upon this positive momentum. We remain focused on making meaningful progress, addressing challenges and continuing to build a housing service that delivers consistently for all.

Our approach can be split across four key themes:

- Property
- Housing Management
- Supporting People
- Engaging with People

Property

76.4% *of tenants are satisfied that they are provided with a home that is safe* (TP05), with 100% compliance across all safety management information measures (Gas, Fire, Water, Lift and Asbestos).

70.8% *of tenants were satisfied with the overall repairs service in the last 12* months (TP02), with **64.4%** *satisfied with the time to complete their most recent repair after reporting it* (TP03).

Whilst an improvement on last years' scores, these scores still sit below national and peer medians. Our management information measures mark an improvement in the average time taken to complete emergency repairs, however a slight reduction in the average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs. We have also continued to reduce the number of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard and this now stands at just 3.36% of stock.

67.7% *were satisfied that their home is well-maintained* (TP04) and **64%** *satisfaction with communal areas being kept clean and well-maintained* (TP10). These scores sit above peer medians but there is still significant room for improvement when benchmarking against peer high scores. A review of Caretaking Services is underway and we will consult further with tenants and leaseholders on their expectations for this service.

Insights from Key Driver analysis confirm that TP04, TP02 and TP05 are considered to have a strong impact on overall satisfaction.

In the last 12 months, we have:

- ✓ Surveyed **2,866** properties as part of our Stock Condition Survey Programme
- ✓ Upgraded approximately **240 homes** through Wave Two of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (SHF) Programme to achieve a minimum of EPC Band C, resulting in **66.46%** of council homes now rated Band C or above.

- ✓ Increased the proportion of our homes deemed ‘Decent’ from 94.11% to **96.64%**

- ✓ Continued to deliver the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC), bringing the total to 477 flat blocks with completed communal works to enhance their structure and appearance.

- ✓ Invested in our homes to provide: -

    - 443 Boiler replacements
    - 18 Kitchens
    - 74 bathrooms
    - 13 heating systems
    - 3 window replacements
    - 14 door replacements

- ✓ Implemented new policies covering the areas of Responsive Repairs and Maintenance, Aids and Adaptations, Fencing, Voids Management and the Lettable Standard

- ✓ Delivered **639** home adaptations ranging from minor works such as grab rails to more complex installation including through-floor lifts

- ✓ Procured a new specialist contractor to deliver the majority of our adaptions, enabling us to accelerate programme delivery

- ✓ Completed 98% of emergency repairs and 91% of non-emergency repairs within target timescales

- ✓ Fixed **95.72%** of repairs first time

- ✓ Completed over 80% of Damp, Mould and Condensation cases on time

In the next 12 months, we will:

- Examine a variety of approaches for optimising the Council's housing stock and identify where future investment will deliver the greatest value

- Deliver the Decent Homes Programme to achieve 100% of our housing stock meeting national decency standards including the installation of:-

  - 3936 heating upgrades
  - 1316 new kitchens or bathrooms
  - 1014 window or door upgrades
  - 379 properties will receive energy efficiency works over the next 3 years

- Review existing processes within the Repairs team and work with our new contractors and in-house team to drive improvements across the service, including preparation for the implementation of Awaab's Law

- Ensure that all of our homes have had a stock condition survey within the last 5 years, with a spotlight on the importance of the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

- Procure new contracts for works and services inclusive of Fire Risk Assessment remedial actions, fire door repairs and replacements, electrical testing, servicing of life saving equipment, and works to void properties

- Work on reintroducing an in-house team to carry out works to void properties

- Finalise refurbishment plans for the 5 high rise blocks, including building safety related works and commence works subject to the necessary consents and procurement of a suitably qualified contractor and in consultation with residents.

- Deliver the Building Safety Action Plan to ensure 100% compliance with legal and regulatory requirements

- Commence delivery of Wave Three of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (SHF) Programme, which is a three-year programme involving works to 379 homes to improve energy efficiency and support decarbonisation

- Deliver the final year of MRC by completing communal works to the remaining 33 flat blocks

Housing Management

63.1% of tenants are *satisfied that Stevenage Borough Council keeps communal areas clean and well-maintained* (TP10); an improvement of over 10% on last year's score.

Respondents reported **over 64%** satisfaction that *we make a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.* (TP11). Again, a significant improvement on last year's score of over 15%.

57.9% of respondents are *satisfied with our handling of anti-social behaviour*, compared with 49.5% of respondents from last year (TP12).

In the last 12 months, we have:

- ✓ Let **293** general needs and **195** specialist accommodation properties
- ✓ Implemented our new Allocations Policy to optimise use of housing stock and ensure fairer and more transparent allocations
- ✓ Published a summary version of the Allocations Policy in response to requests to feedback asking us to make clearer
- ✓ Regenerated our downsizing scheme and supported **51** home moves making best use of our housing stock
- ✓ Conducted **1417** Tenancy Audits, **115** Settling-In Visits and **125** 8-Month Visits, building stronger relationships with our tenants and helping to sustain tenancies
- ✓ Collected over **98%** of rent due; a 0.67% increase on last year; while developing tailored payment arrangements in collaboration with customers with outstanding debt
- ✓ Dealt with **107** cases of ASB, ranging from low to high level, with **94%** of cases resulting in successful enforcement action

In the next 12 months, we will:

- Produce a Lettings Data infographic, to share routinely with customers, on lettings activity including number of lets, applications to join the Housing Register, and direct lets including those for adapted properties
- Gather and use tenant information more effectively to ensure our strategies, plans and service improvements are driven by their views and needs
- Utilise improved insights into the needs and preferences of our customer base, to tailor service provision, accordingly, ensuring a more responsive and person-centred approach
- Provide effective, timely and relevant information to residents who have reported ASB issue, to help manage expectations and to help maintain trust in the process

Supporting People

73.3% of tenants agree that *Stevenage Borough Council as their landlord treats them fairly and with respect* (TP08); an increase on last year's result of 70.2%.

We recognise that TP08 is a strong driver of overall satisfaction and improvements in our scores reflect the progress we are making in building positive relationships with our tenants.

In the last 12 months, we have:

- ✓ Provided more than 7,900 households with safe, affordable and secure social housing, offering a stable foundation for their future
- ✓ Introduced a new Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- ✓ Supported all parties involved in ASB cases, including alleged victims and perpetrators, harnessing collaborative working with partner agencies including the Police and Herts County Council
- ✓ Improved the support that we provided to households who need to move to more suitable accommodation by recruiting a Decant Officer
- ✓ Set in motion our 'Know our Tenants' initiative; a comprehensive programme of home-visits to help build stronger relationships with our tenants, whilst assessing vulnerability and improving understanding of support needs.
- ✓ Responded to over 32,000 calls and carried out nearly 21,000 homes visits to tenants living in our Supported Housing schemes, helping them to maintain their independence
- ✓ Attended to a total of 1126 calls from our Care Connect 24/7 service users, enabling them to remain safe and independent within their communities
- ✓ Assisted our tenants in 1022 welfare benefit related cases, helping to safeguard tenancies and reduce financial pressures

In the next 12 months, we will:

- Work with residents to ensure that we can access their homes to make sure they remain safe and healthy
- Deliver our Tenant Profiling Improvement Plan, to strengthen how we collect and use tenant data, ensuring services are better tailored to their needs
- Make sure our Independent Living Service continues to provide the right level of support and assistance to our community, and allows people to remain living independently

- Work to identify any groups of residents who may not be sharing their ideas and experiences with us, and identify how we can encourage and support them to become involved

- Strengthen our understanding of tenants' needs and priorities to refine and optimise the services they rely on

Engaging People

61.6% of tenants report *they are satisfied with being kept informed about things that matter to them* (TP07), while **55.1%** report they are satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon (TP06); again, these results mark a significant improvement on last year's results.

Key Driver analysis of our TSM survey results tells us that how tenants feel about TP06 has a strong impact on their overall satisfaction (TP01). This means that as well as getting our services working well, we can improve perception with good communication.

In the last 12 months, we have:

- ✓ Strengthened our approach to tenant and leaseholder participation, influence and scrutiny based on 'engaging, listening and acting', by developing and implementing our new Resident Engagement Strategy, Framework and Improvement Plan, in collaboration with the Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and residents.

- ✓ Integrated tenant feedback more effectively into service design and delivery by appointing a Resident Engagement Manager, putting the tenant voice at the centre of our work

- ✓ Shared clearer and more consistent updates with residents, supported by a new Communication Plan, that sets out how we will keep them regularly and meaningfully informed

- ✓ Kept out tenants informed, engaged and connected throughout the year by launching a quarterly tenant newsletter

- ✓ Sough residents' views on building safety works, through a dedicated High Rise Resident Engagement Plan

- ✓ Engaged with our residents on our high-rise Capital Investment Programme, and our Repairs and Maintenance Policy, helping us to shape our priorities and influence decision making

- ✓ Ensured residents have the opportunity to help shape outstanding strategies and policies captured in our forward plan, following the development and approval of a comprehensive Strategy and Policy Register

In the next 12 months, we will:
○ Capture resident feedback through a wide range of channels as we continue to evolve our dynamic Resident Engagement Strategy and Framework ○ Enable tenants to directly influence improvement actions plans for housing services, through the introduction of dedicated scrutiny groups, this will include continued work on our high rise development proposals, caretaking and sheltered housing. ○ Give residents clear visibility of our performance as a landlord, through the publication of quarterly performance data ○ Ensure residents can access clear information on staff roles, responsibilities, and named leads for meeting legal and regulatory standard ○ Give residents' certainty over how their involvement shapes change, through an annually agreed forward plan of scrutiny, aligned with service reviews and housing transformation work streams

Closing remarks

This year's improved performance marks a positive step forward and reflects the hard work and commitment of our teams. However, we recognise that there is still work to do as standards and regulation continues to develop and evolve and we are committed to building on this positive momentum, to meet the standards that our residents expect and deserve.

Looking ahead, the Council remains focused on building upon this progress over the coming year. We are determined to deliver the commitments set out in this report, continue to make strides against the Regulator of Social Housing's Performance Improvement Plan, and working towards a C1 rating.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) – Annual Tenant Perception Survey 24/25

TSM	Description	Annual 2023/24	2023/24 # of responses	Annual 2024/25	2024/25 # of responses	Direction of Travel	
TP01 Overall satisfaction	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from their landlord.	**56.0%**	560	**66.9%**	988	**+10.9%**	↗
TP02 Satisfaction with repairs	Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the overall repairs service.	**62.7%**	379	**70.8%**	610	**+8.1%**	↗
TP03 Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair.	**52.4%**	314	**64.4%**	601	**+12.0%**	↗
TP04 Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is well maintained.	**59.2%**	575	**67.7%**	959	**+8.5%**	↗
TP05 Satisfaction that the home is safe	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is safe.	**69.9%**	682	**76.4%**	955	**+6.5%**	↗
TP06 Satisfaction that the landlord listens to views and acts upon them	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them.	**44.9%**	382	**55.1%**	849	**+10.2%**	↗
TP07 Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps them informed about things that matter to them.	**50.9%**	460	**61.6%**	886	**+10.7%**	↗
TP08 Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	Proportion of respondents who report that they agree their landlord treats them fairly and with respect.	**70.2%**	664	**73.3%**	940	**+3.1%**	↗
TP09 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling.	**22.8%**	66	**34.1%**	249	**+11.3%**	↗
TP10 Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.	**53.3%**	185	**64.0%**	344	**+10.7%**	↗
TP11 Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.	**47.7%**	401	**63.1%**	804	**+15.4%**	↗
TP12 Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with their landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.	**49.5%**	270	**57.9%**	592	**+8.4%**	↗

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) – Management Data 24/25

TSM MEASURE	Description	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual 2024/25	Direction of Travel	2023/24 Result
BS01: Gas Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	→	**100**
Number of dwelling units owned for which all required gas safety checks were carried out and recorded as at year end		7181	7172	7180	7179	7179		7185
Number of dwelling units owned for which gas safety checks were required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		7181	7172	7180	7179	7179		7185
BS02: Fire Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	→	**100**
Number of dwelling units owned within properties that required an FRA for which all required FRAs were carried out and recorded as at year end		2742	2742	2742	2742	2742		2742
Number of dwelling units owned within properties for which an FRA was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		2742	2742	2742	2742	2742		2742
BS03 - Asbestos safety checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	→	**100**
Number of dwelling units owned within properties that required an asbestos management survey or re-inspection for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections were carried out and recorded as at year end		498	495	494	492	492		2542
Number of dwelling units owned within properties for which an asbestos management survey or re-inspection was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		498	495	494	492	492		2542
BS04 - Water safety checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	↗	**96.65**
Number of dwelling units owned for which all required legionella risk assessments (LRAs) were carried out and recorded as at year end		1973	1972	1972	1972	1972		1907

Number of dwelling units owned for which an LRA was required to have been carried out as at year end (multiplied 100)		1973	1972	1972	1972	1972		1973
BS05 - Lift safety checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	→	**100**
Number of dwelling units owned within properties with communal passenger lifts for which all Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) inspection reports were carried out and recorded as at year end		31	31	31	32	32		725
Number of dwelling units owned within properties with communal passenger lifts as at year end (multiplied 100)		31	31	31	32	32		725
CH01 - Complaints relative to the size of the landlord STAGE 1 (per 1000 homes)	Number of: 1. stage one complaints and 2. stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes:	**27.60**	**18.44**	**20.51**	**22.18**	**88.73**	↘	**102.10**
Number of stage 1 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year		214	143	159	172	688		818
Number of dwelling units owned of the relevant stock type at year end (multipled 1000)		7754	7754	7754	7754	7754		8012
CH01 - Complaints relative to the size of the landlord STAGE 2 (per 1000 homes)		**2.71**	**1.93**	**2.71**	**3.61**	**10.96**	↘	**10.98**
Number of stage 2 complaints made by tenants in the relevant stock type during the reporting year		21	15	21	28	85		88
Number of dwelling units owned of the relevant stock type at year end (multipled 1000)		7754	7754	7754	7754	7754		8012

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Part I – Release to Press

Agenda item: ##

Meeting Cabinet

Portfolio Area Resources and Performance

Date 10th December 2025

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2025/6-27/28

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To present the Digital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 which covers the development of online services ensuring the Council delivers improvements to help residents access digital services quickly and easily.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet approves the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025/6 -27/28 (Appendix A).

2.2 That Members note the four key priorities to: develop digital solutions, improve the website and intranet, adopt AI, and drive the use of digital services.

2.3 That Members note the Digital Strategy strengthens resilience, standardisation, and digital capability to ensure the Council is ‘fighting fit’ for Local Government Reorganisation and supports the Corporate Plan priority of Balancing the Budget.

2.4 That Members note that significant opportunities have been identified to further utilise digital services in high priority services, to continue to provide non-digital support and service access for vulnerable people who require it, and that lessons have been learned from digital development work already completed.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council's Digital Strategy 2025/26-2027/28 sets out a clear vision for how technology will be used to improve services, support residents and businesses, to make the organisation more efficient and resilient. It builds on the progress made through previous digital initiatives, including the introduction of self-service options, improved online transactions (such as the digital reporting of missed bin collections and garage lettings), and greater use of data and automation to enhance service delivery.

3.2 The Strategy has been developed in alignment with the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027, particularly its priorities around balancing the budget, improving customer experience, optimising technology and enabling innovation. It also reflects national frameworks such as the Local Government Association's Digitalisation Framework and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's Blueprint for a Modern Digital Government.

3.3 The Council's digital ambitions are also informed by the changing national and local landscape. The Government's plans for Local Government Reform (LGR) and increasing expectations for online services present both challenges and opportunities. Stevenage Borough Council is well placed to respond, with strong digital foundations, a skilled workforce, and partnerships across the sector.

3.4 The Strategy outlines four key priorities around how the Council will:

- Develop modern digital solutions and increase automation
- Continue to improve the website and intranet
- Adopt artificial intelligence responsibly to improve efficiency and accessibility
- Encourage the use of online services whilst promoting digital inclusion for all residents

3.5 The previous Transformation report published 20th September 2023 (BD1) affirmed that telephone and face-to-face support will remain crucial, ensuring that no one is excluded from accessing help particularly if they are vulnerable or need extra help.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Adoption of the Digital Strategy 2025/6-27/28 will provide a clear and coordinated framework for how the Council will continue to modernise, deliver value for money, and improve outcomes for residents, businesses, and staff.

4.2 The Strategy sets out how technology will be used to achieve the ambitions of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan 2024–2027, in particular by improving efficiency, enhancing the customer experience, and enabling innovation across all services. It provides the foundation for future investment decisions, supports good governance and accountability, and ensures that digital activity is targeted where it can have the greatest impact.

4.3 Residents, businesses, and partners increasingly expect public services to be as straightforward and responsive as those in other sectors. The Strategy focuses on making every interaction with the Council easy, intuitive, and accessible—whether online or in person. By simplifying customer journeys, improving the website, and expanding online self-service options, the Council can meet demand more efficiently and consistently.

4.4 Inclusive design, adherence to accessibility standards, and a continued focus on assisted digital support will ensure that all residents—regardless of age, ability, or digital confidence—can benefit from modern, high-quality services. The Council recognises that some residents' needs cannot be met through digital channels alone and will continue to provide non-digital support and service access for vulnerable people who require it.

4.5 Digital change is central to the Council's commitment to Balancing the Budget and using resources effectively. By expanding automation, improving integration between systems, and promoting digital-first processes, services can reduce manual tasks, minimise duplication, and release staff capacity to focus on complex or high-value work or reduce costs.

4.6 The period covered by the Strategy includes Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) which potentially could see a new Unitary Council in 2028/29 up to that point the Strategy will help ensure Stevenage Borough Council remains agile, adaptable, and able to respond to changes.

4.7 A coordinated approach to digital delivery —aligned with ICT (Information and Communications Technology), Business Change, and other services — will reduce operational risk, improve cyber resilience, and ensure that the Council's systems and workforce are ready for any future reorganisation or shared service models.

4.8 The Digital and ICT Strategies are designed to operate in tandem, delivering secure, efficient, and customer-oriented digital services whilst ensuring that technology investments yield optimal results. The revised ICT Strategy is dedicated to establishing reliable and secure technological foundations, whereas the Digital Strategy leverages these foundations to provide modern and effective services for both staff and residents. A new AI policy will establish clear guidelines to define acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI, aiming to protect residents, staff, and maintain the integrity of Council services.

4.9 The Digital Strategy enables the Council to explore and adopt new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, intelligent telephony, and data-driven decision tools, in a measured and responsible way. The use of piloting and evaluation will be used to test innovations safely, ensuring that new tools genuinely improve outcomes for customers and staff. Customer experience continues to be a key focus in digital development. Data derived from online analytics, surveys, and feedback will drive the ongoing enhancement of services.

4.10 Strong governance and adherence to data protection, transparency, and ethical standards will underpin all activity. This ensures innovation enhances, rather than replaces, the human interaction that residents value.

4.11 Whilst digital modernisation offers great potential, it must work for everyone. The Strategy commits the Council to supporting residents who face barriers to digital participation, whether due to skills, confidence, or access, and will ensure that non-digital support for residents remains for the people who need it most. This will be delivered through face-to-face assistance in Customer Services and utilising opportunities for digital inclusion projects, potentially through grant funding.

4.12 This approach aligns with the Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan (2025) and strengthens the Council's role as a trusted community leader in promoting inclusion and opportunity.

4.13 The success of digital change depends on people. The Strategy places emphasis on supporting staff and Members to develop the digital skills, tools, and confidence needed to deliver efficient, modern, and customer-centred services.

4.14 By embedding digital awareness and ownership across teams, the Council can maintain a "One Team" culture—encouraging collaboration, learning, and innovation at every level. This approach will enhance job satisfaction, improve productivity, and strengthen the organisation's overall capacity to deliver.

4.15 The Strategy complements both local and national agendas for digital government, including the Local Government Association Digitalisation Framework and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's Blueprint for Modern Digital Government. It positions Stevenage Borough Council as a proactive, forward-thinking authority, ready to contribute to regional collaboration and innovation across Hertfordshire and beyond.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 Investment in digital technology and AI will be made following the approval of detailed business cases that consider a range of implications, including financial and ethical. The impact of the new technology on residents will also be evaluated through comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments. Delivering digital improvement is a shared effort. Some changes are driven directly by the team, and others are delivered as part of wider improvement plans. The expertise of external technical specialists and partners is harnessed where needed, ensuring the Council can respond to the wider environment and evolving context. By combining what can be delivered internally with what can be commissioned, impact is maximised and this ensures that digital services remain robust, innovative, and fit for the future.

5.1.2 The Council has a Business Change reserve which can be utilised to fund pilots and digital investment, any business case needs to address the funding of any future on-going costs.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any projects taken forward under the Strategy will need to comply with relevant legislation, including data protection. The government has indicated its intention to bring forward a more comprehensive regulation of AI in due course, and the Council is developing an AI Policy.

5.3 Risk Implications

5.3.1 Implementation carries some inherent risks, including data protection, cyber security, system reliability, and change-management challenges. These will be mitigated through established information governance arrangements, compliance with the IT Security Policy, and oversight by the Business Change and Digital Board.

5.4 Climate Change Implications

5.4.1 While AI increases computing demand, it can also reduce carbon impact through smarter scheduling, automation, and reduced paper use and travel.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

5.5.1 The Strategy supports workforce development by strengthening digital skills and confidence, influencing future training needs and role design. This increased skillset will be beneficial for staff when transitioning into a new structure as part of LGR.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.6.1 The Strategy promotes inclusion by ensuring digital services meet accessibility standards and by maintaining alternative channels for those unable to access services online. Projects will use Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) to support implementation where required.

5.7 Service Delivery Implications

5.7.1 The Digital Strategy will support services to be more efficient. The automation of simple tasks will allow staff to focus on more complex activities whilst providing a better service for residents.

5.8 Information Technology Implications

5.8.1 The ICT service will play a vital role in driving the organisation's modernisation and fostering a culture of continuous improvement by leveraging its technical skills and leading the development of an AI policy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:

BD1 Future Council 2025 Transformation Programme Savings Update, Sept 2023

BD2 Local government digitalisation framework: Missions, principles and enablers | Local Government Association

BD3 Digital Inclusion Action Plan - GOV.UK

APPENDICES

A Digital Strategy 2025-28

Digital Strategy

2025-28

Harnessing digital technology to make Stevenage even better for everyone.

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Contents

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1. Foreword

In December 2025, Stevenage Borough Council launches its Digital Strategy for 2025–2028, a blueprint for harnessing technology to make Stevenage even better for everyone. This strategy has been shaped by our Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan for 2024–2027, national digital frameworks, and informed by feedback and insight from our residents, staff, and partners.

Digital transformation is at the heart of our ambition to deliver efficient, inclusive, and customer-focused services. We are committed to making every interaction with the Council simple, intuitive, and accessible—whether online or in person. Our digital improvements will help residents access services quickly and easily, support staff with better tools and training, and ensure our organisation is agile and ready for the future. We recognise that there will always be vulnerable customers whose needs cannot be fully met through digital channels, and by digitising services for the majority, we can free up capacity to support those who most need it.

This strategy comes at a pivotal time, as local government faces new opportunities and challenges. With the Government's plans for local government reform, Stevenage is determined to be "fighting fit"—ready to adapt, collaborate, and lead in a changing landscape. Our strong partnerships position us to shape the future of public service delivery, both locally and regionally.

We are investing in digital solutions that drive efficiency, improve our website, and encourage the use of online services. From self-service and automation to AI-powered chatbots and intelligent telephony, we are embracing innovation to make life easier for our residents and businesses. At the same time, we are committed to digital inclusion, ensuring that everyone in Stevenage can benefit from new technologies, regardless of background or ability.

Our approach is collaborative and evidence-based. We listen to feedback, pilot new ideas, and refine our services to meet real needs. By working together—across teams, with partners, and with our community—we will deliver digital services that are robust, secure, and future-ready.

Successful implementation of this strategy will mean better outcomes for everyone: improved customer experience, greater efficiency, and a digitally skilled workforce. Every digital project will be measured against our commitment to value for money, transparency, and supporting the residents, communities, and businesses of Stevenage.

I am proud to present this strategy as a testament to our Council's dedication to innovation, inclusion, and continuous improvement. Together, we will build a digital future that works for all.

Councillor Jeanette Thomas
Deputy Leader of the Council - Cabinet Member - Resources and Performance

The new Digital Strategy applies Council wide and is aligned with the Making Stevenage Even Better (MSEB) Corporate Plan, as well as national plans.

2. Strategic Context

MSEB Corporate Plan

Priority - Balancing the Budget
Making service delivery more efficient

Alignment to national plans

LGA Local Government Digitalisation Framework
Digitally delivering inclusive services

DSIT Blueprint for Modern Digital Government
Harnessing AI and prepare for GOV.UK One Login

DSIT Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps
Making sure everyone is included in our digital world

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3. Vision

Stevenage Borough Council's digital strategy aims to enhance customer experience, improve efficiency, and use technology to drive innovation and inclusivity. The strategy prioritises customer-focused service delivery with simple, intuitive interactions and first-contact resolution. Online services should be designed to be accessible and efficient, making them the preferred choice for residents.

The vision is shaped by clear evidence of resident needs and preferences. The latest Residents Survey shows 48% of people prefer to use the website for Council information, yet two-thirds aren't signed up for a customer account. Council housing repairs are the most common reason for phone contact, but online reporting is underused, ranking only around 40th in website visits. These insights highlight real opportunities to increase digital engagement, improve access to services 24/7, and focus staff time on supporting those with more complex needs.

Digital improvements also play a vital role in supporting staff and internal operations. By streamlining workflows, reducing manual tasks, and improving system integration, the strategy enables teams to work more efficiently and focus on delivering high-quality services. Staff benefit from better tools, clearer processes, and enhanced digital skills—creating a more agile and empowered workforce.

A key aspect of the strategy is boosting digital efficiency through self-service, automation, and workflow optimisation. The Council is committed to assessing workforce digital proficiency, addressing skill gaps through training and recruitment, and helping staff adapt confidently to new technologies. Investing in staff capabilities is essential to achieving digital success and sustaining service excellence.

It is also recognised there will always be a need for a physical and human interface with residents that are not digitally enabled, and the Council is committed to ensuring accessibility for all.

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4. Local Government Reorganisation and Government Strategy

This strategy also prepares the Council to be fighting fit for Local Government Reform. Following the Government's December 2024 white paper on local government devolution, there is uncertainty around the future shape of public services—but also a significant opportunity to rethink and redesign how digital services are delivered. Stevenage aims to be at the forefront of this transformation, collaborating with neighbouring authorities and contributing to regional thinking on organisational design and digital planning. As this is a three-year strategy, it may cover part of the period during which a shadow authority or new local authority is established.

By delivering digital services through its in-house team, the Council is well positioned to navigate the complexities of reorganisation. Relationships with the Local Government Association, Local Digital, and other authorities will support digital change at a crucial time.

Ultimately, the focus for digital is on building a digitally skilled workforce and delivering efficient, high-quality, and inclusive services—internally and externally—while ensuring the Council is ready to lead and adapt in a changing local government landscape.

As digital technologies evolve, the digital strategy will be kept adaptable by tracking trends in AI, digital identity, and IoT, supporting this with pilots and sector engagement. Working with councils, engaging in sector initiatives, and following guidance from the Local Digital team, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Government Digital Services (GDS), and Local Government Association (LGA) helps ensure alignment with national priorities and established practices. Relevant strategies include the Blueprint for Modern Digital Government (A blueprint for modern digital government (HTML) - GOV.UK) and the Digital Inclusion Action Plan (Government Digital Inclusion Strategy - GOV.UK).

Develop Digital Solutions | **Improve the Website and Intranet** | **Adopt AI** | **Drive use of Digital Services**

5. Priorities

1. **Develop Digital Solutions:** maximising the ability to utilise self-service, automation, and case management to be more efficient and provide customers with modern services, using business cases for further investment in new technology where necessary

2. **Improve the Website and Intranet** reflecting the need to constantly modernise and build engagement to meet customer expectation

3. **Adopt AI:** to drive efficiency and deliver smarter, modern services that genuinely improve outcomes for residents and staff

4. **Drive use of Digital Services:** encourage use of online services through nudge messages, updating letters and other communications, triage approaches, and further promotion.

6. Digital Delivery

Digital delivery within Stevenage Borough Council is built on collaboration, clarity, and purpose. Projects are delivered through a unified approach that brings together the Digital Team, IT, frontline services, and strategic suppliers. This ensures that every solution is designed for operational reality, technical resilience, and measurable customer value.

Governance and prioritisation are overseen by the Business Change and Digital Board, ensuring that resources are directed toward initiatives which best support corporate priorities and deliver tangible benefits for residents and staff. This approach maintains transparency, accountability, and a clear connection between digital activity and organisational outcomes.

Delivering digital improvement is a shared effort. Some changes are driven directly by the team, and others are delivered as part of wider improvement plans. The expertise of specialists and partners is harnessed where needed, ensuring the Council can respond to the wider environment and evolving context. By combining what can be delivered internally with what can be commissioned, impact is maximised and this ensures that digital services remain robust, innovative, and fit for the future.

Opportunities to pursue grant funding and discounted pilots to try new technologies will be explored as they become available.
Delivery is grounded in agile and pragmatic methods. Work is delivered in small, focused increments that provide early value while allowing flexibility as needs evolve. Innovation and experimentation are encouraged, balanced with a practical focus on sustainability, security, and proportionality to the Council's capacity.

Customer experience remains central to digital development. Insight gathered from online analytics, surveys, and contact centre feedback informs the continuous improvement of services. A "test, learn, refine" approach is applied, enabling controlled pilots of new ideas, evaluation of their impact, and wider adoption only where measurable benefits are achieved. This evidence-based model ensures services evolve in response to real user needs and remain focused on delivering positive outcomes for residents and staff.

The Council's Digital Team brings together skills in developing processes, enhancing user experiences, and integrating systems to build services that are easy to use, reliable, and efficient. Meanwhile, the ICT team provides specialised support for essential software such as Housing and Revenues and Benefits systems, and oversees moving these to the cloud. Both teams work closely together, complementing one another and helping fulfill organisational goals, with additional support from business analysts and project managers from the Business Change team.

Development of the GovService digital platform forms a major part of this work. The platform underpins many of the Council's online services and is continually enhanced to improve forms, workflows, and customer journeys.

All digital solutions are designed and tested to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards, supporting inclusive access for all residents and compliance with public sector accessibility requirements.
New technologies are adopted responsibly, ensuring that innovation remains grounded in practicality and long-term maintainability. Digital transformation is a collective effort across the organisation.

The Council's One Team culture, underpinned by values of collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement, promotes shared ownership of digital progress. A culture of openness and learning is encouraged, enabling staff to contribute ideas, challenge assumptions, and work together to deliver effective, inclusive, and future-ready digital services.

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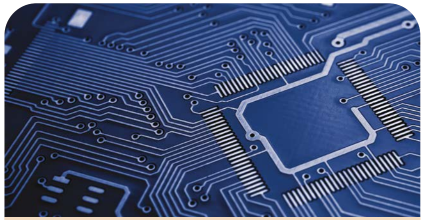

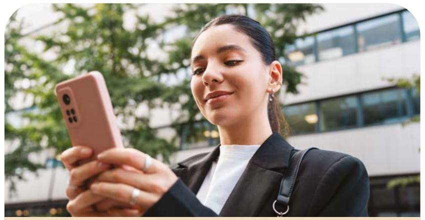

ICT Strategy

- Infrastructure
- Security
- Data governance
- Staff skills
- Operational resilience

Digital Strategy

- Digital Services (web, self service, automation)
- Customer experience
- AI and innovation
- Digital inclusion
- Service transformation

Strategic Alignment

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7. Technology

To maintain the safety, efficiency, and adaptability of our digital service, it is necessary to actively manage system lifecycles. By incorporating horizon scanning, the Council will evaluate product roadmaps, contract renewals, and market trends to align technology choices with evolving conditions. Accordingly, strategy coordination with IT and AI initiatives enables a consistent approach across digital and technology services.

The Digital Strategy serves as a complement to ICT Strategy by prioritising customer experience, efficiency, and digital uptake. The ICT Strategy ensures the underlying technology, infrastructure, and governance are robust, secure, and capable. Together, these strategies foster the development of innovative, efficient, and future-ready services.

8. Measures of Success

In addition to corporate KPIs used to assess performance, the varied nature of the Council's services requires the development of a comprehensive dashboard to monitor digital service usage over time and across different platforms. Piloting projects will apply appropriate metrics to evaluate their progress and demonstrate effectiveness.

9. Target Outcomes

The Digital Strategy has been developed to help projects target a number of business outcomes which are also addressed by projects in the wider Business Change and Digital unit:

	Improvements in service quality and customer experience
	Increased income and the facilitation of commercial opportunities
	Tangible savings or cost avoidance through improvements
	Modern and efficient work processes that maximise the use of technology and save time
	Compliance with legislation and regulation

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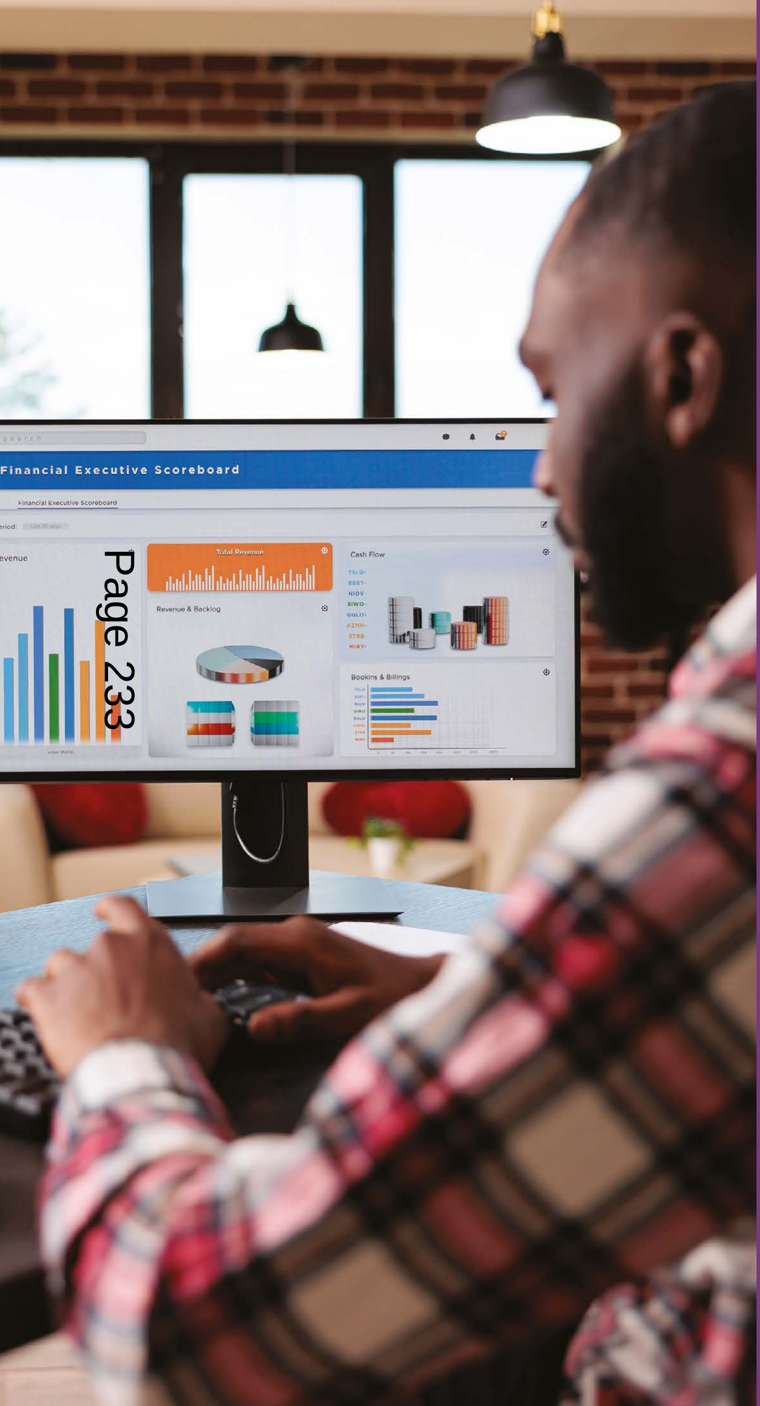

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10. Priorities and Delivery Themes

Developing Digital Services

The Council adopted a digital-first approach in 2022, aiming to promote the use of digital services where feasible, in order to allocate staff resources to customers and services with higher needs. Ongoing identification of opportunities for new or enhanced digital services in a changing technological environment supports this strategy. This approach also aligns with the Business Change and Digital project on postage and print opportunities that seeks to reduce reliance on paper and print, to support sustainability and financial objectives.

For local authorities, developing digital services can increase accessibility, efficiency, and organisational resilience. Digital access allows residents to use services at any time, decreases the need for in-person contact, and facilitates inclusive design for individuals with disabilities or limited digital literacy. Digitisation of services reduces demand on frontline staff, allowing greater focus on complex or vulnerable cases. Digitisation can streamline operations, automate certain tasks, and reduce operational costs, which is relevant given budget constraints. It can also provide improved data insights to inform decision-making and service adjustments. Digital platforms may support organisational reform by enabling flexible delivery and modern work practices, and can encourage inclusion through targeted initiatives and community engagement tools. Overall, digital services are positioned as a way for councils to adapt to ongoing changes and future requirements.

Particular focus will be given to how the digital strategy can support Housing and the biggest universal services, and how support will be given to ICT to deliver changes.

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11. Developing Digital Services: Action Plan

Ambition	Activity	Outcome
To fully automate processes; no manual intervention required	Develop end-to-end automated digital workflows through the GovService platform, integrating with back-office systems where possible	• More efficient and accurate processing • Faster customer turnaround times
To ensure queries and requests are covered by digital services	Identify and build “missing” digital processes to cover high-volume requests currently handled offline	• Increased digital coverage • Fewer email or phone contacts • Improved customer convenience
Prevent digital processes creating failure demand*	Undertake failure demand analysis to identify where digital journeys break down, followed by redesign of those services	• Lower repeat contact • Clearer communication and improved customer trust
Reduce desktop-only design	Implement responsive design and mobile-first development as standard	• Encourages digital service use • Improved satisfaction and accessibility
Prevent multiple customer accounts being required for different services	Develop single sign-on or shared identity solutions across digital platforms. Opportunity to use Gov.uk One Login	• Simpler customer experience • Reduced login confusion and support queries • Encourages digital service use
Improve inconsistent or outdated design styles	Refresh digital service templates and update visual design to align with the Council’s corporate identity and accessibility standards	• Consistent and accessible user experience • Improved brand trust and usability

**Failure demand is work created because a service failed to do something, did it wrong the first time, misdirected, or set the wrong expectation, requiring the customer to make contact again to get the issue resolved*

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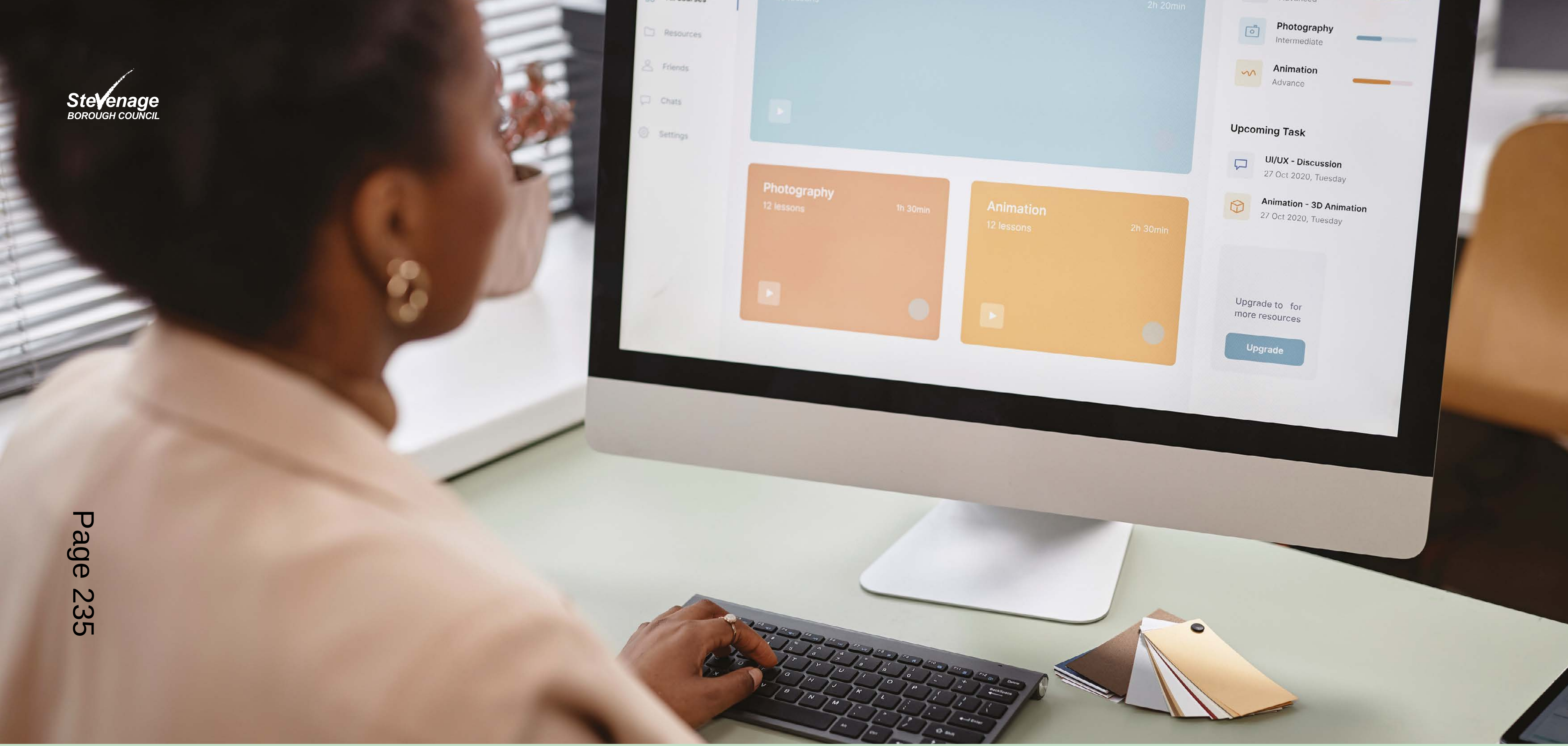

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12. Improve the Website and Intranet

The Council's website plays a vital role as the digital front door to the organisation, serving a wide range of purposes for residents, businesses, and visitors. It is a primary channel for answering customer questions and directing them to digital services 24/7. Beyond service delivery, the website is also a platform for transparency and accountability, publishing democratic information such as meeting agendas, decisions, and Councillor details. Additionally, it supports communication and engagement by promoting news, consultations, and community initiatives, helping to build trust and connection between the Council and the public. To ensure that website improvements reflect community needs, Stevenage residents will be involved in user testing. This local perspective will help to deliver a digital front door that works for everyone.

12. Improve the Website and Intranet: Action Plan

Ambition	Challenges addressed	Outcome
AI chatbot	•Information can be too technical to understand or split across different pages • Website search is only effective for keywords and if they're correctly spelled	• Helps people in plain language • Overcomes limitations of current website search • Answer enquiries that cut-across multiple service areas • Can promote use of digital self-service • Opportunity to further develop to provide more services
Redesign homepage	• Homepage could be better at helping people navigate the site and finding key services • Missing opportunities to promote the Council's commercial services	• Easier to find key services and promote digital services • Better showcase the full range of Council services • Fresh look and feel • Better promotion of the Council's income-earning services
Refresh page layout and improve use of pictures and video	• Pages can be un-engaging • Extra choices for page layouts can make them more interesting and easier to understand	• Makes browsing more enjoyable and brings services to life • "A picture tells a thousand words; a video a million"

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The intranet remains a vital resource in supporting efficient working practices across the Council. As the central hub for staff information and internal digital support services, it plays a key role in keeping colleagues connected and informed. There are significant opportunities to further enhance the intranet by embracing seamless integration with the Microsoft 365 ecosystem. Making the most of the powerful tools already available—such as Teams, OneDrive, and Outlook—will enable staff to enjoy a more joined-up and intuitive digital experience. This approach supports increased productivity and greater flexibility in how teams collaborate and work together, ensuring the intranet continues to meet the evolving needs of the organisation.

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13. Adopting AI

AI offers significant potential to transform how digital services can be delivered, making them faster, smarter, and more accessible. By adopting technologies such as chatbots, intelligent telephony, and automated workflows, AI can reduce routine tasks, improve customer experience, boost efficiency, and allow staff to focus on more complex, value-added work.

A clear opportunity lies in expanding AI-powered chatbots to provide instant, accurate answers at any time, while learning from user interactions to improve over time. Similarly, AI in telephony and digital processes can enhance call handling, automate routine tasks, and support better data-driven decisions across the organisation. To work effectively AI systems require access to accurate, up-to-date data and content—such as well-maintained web pages and reliable internal information sources—so projects must ensure this is considered and tested during delivery.

The AI landscape is evolving quickly. New suppliers are entering the market, and established systems are adding built-in intelligence. To make informed choices, solutions will be piloted in low-risk areas, with clear success measures covering usability, accuracy, accessibility, and customer satisfaction. This “test, learn, refine” approach will help us assess value, customer perception, and where human oversight remains essential.

AI also brings new risks — from data privacy and bias to the perception that it replaces human contact. This will be addressed through openness about when AI is in use, strong governance and data protection, and clear escalation routes for complex or sensitive queries.

As AI becomes increasingly common across society, residents and staff will come to expect it as part of normal digital experiences. The aim is to adopt AI responsibly and confidently, ensuring it enhances—not replaces—the human service that customers value.

To ensure AI delivers genuine public value, there will be the strengthening of data quality, governance, and workforce capability, and collaboration with partners across the sector. This will allow the Council to innovate responsibly, learn from others, and ensure every AI deployment is ethical, transparent, and grounded in evidence. Governance, oversight, and the use of tools like Copilot will be guided by the IT Strategy, with an AI policy developed in collaboration to ensure safe and effective implementation. The policy will set out clear boundaries for the use of AI, defining what is and is not appropriate, to safeguard residents, staff, and the integrity of Council services.

13. Adopting AI: Action Plan

AI are likely to present themselves rapidly and the capabilities are changing like no other technology before, although the following currently present themselves as opportunities:

AI Ambitions	Outcomes
AI Website Chatbot	• Significantly improved 24/7 support for residents • Reduced call/email volumes • Improved insight into customer queries quicker responses; data insight into common queries; improved accessibility and customer satisfaction
Intelligent Telephony (speech recognition, call routing)	• Increased 24/7 self-service over the phone, freeing up Customer Services capacity for more complex enquiries • Improved routing of calls so that customers speak to the right person first and boosting efficiency • Reduced call length from features like automated call summarisation
AI automated Digital Workflows (e.g. processing online forms, routing service requests)	• Automation of human-like decisions • Improved efficiency and turnaround times • More ability to scale service volumes
AI additions to existing business systems Key opportunity – Planning Application assessments	• Automation of a range tasks within existing systems • Improved efficiency and turnaround times • Likely to provide more insight for managers
Contract and procurement tools	• Make it easier to understand and search contract documents and manage contracts • More efficient collation of business requirement for procurements and comparisons against suppliers

Continued on the next page >>>

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13. Adopting AI: Action Plan continued...

AI Ambitions	Outcomes
Document Summarisation and Search Tools (AI search for policies, minutes, records)	• Quicker staff access to information • Improved compliance and knowledge sharing
AI-Driven Insight Dashboards (pattern spotting from existing data)	• Quicker evidence-based decision-making • Reduces bottlenecks on skilled analytic staff
AI-Based Fraud or Anomaly Detection (e.g. housing, benefits, procurement data)	• Early detection of irregularities • Reduced financial loss • Increased deterrence
AI Support for Repairs and Maintenance Scheduling	• Optimised scheduling efficiency • reduced missed appointments
AI-Enabled Accessibility Tools (voice, translation, summarisation)	• More inclusive services
AI Policy	• Clear governance with defined roles and decision making • Establish clear boundaries for AI use, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with ethical and legal standards

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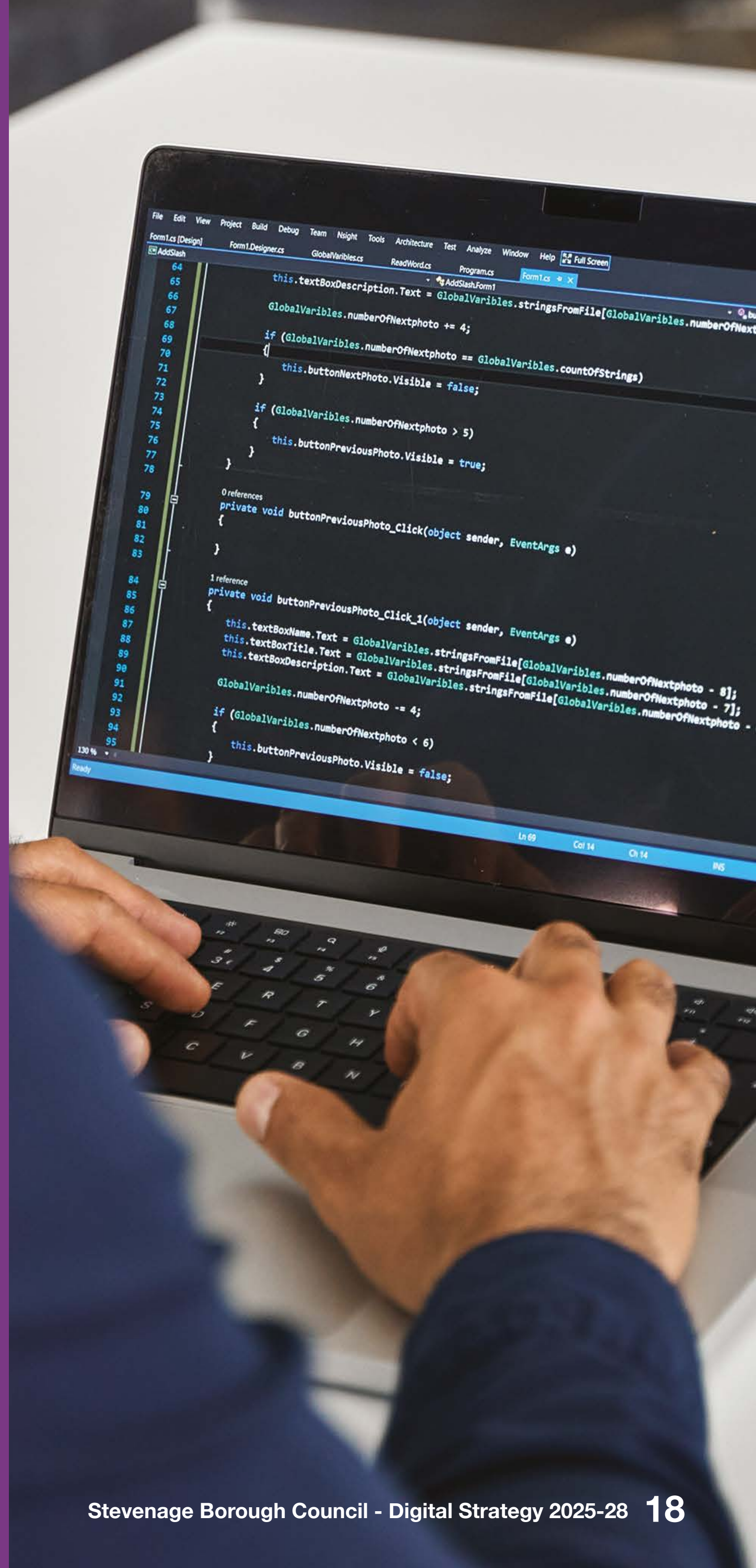
14. Driving the use of Digital Services

To maximise the adoption of digital services, it is essential to create an enabling environment. Challenges such as limited awareness, the continued promotion of non-digital channels, and user-unfriendly digital tools may hinder engagement. When there is low uptake of digital services or poor customer feedback, targeted actions can help to understand the issues and boost usage.

The UK Digital Inclusion Action Plan (2025) introduces the first national strategy in over a decade to address the digital divide. It focuses on supporting local efforts, improving skills, reducing device/data poverty, enhancing service accessibility, and strengthening evidence, while aiming for long-term systemic change and increased confidence. Local authorities are pivotal due to their community trust and ability to integrate digital inclusion across sectors, but progress is hindered by fragmented, short-term funding. Key barriers include poor rural connectivity, unaffordable devices and data, low digital skills—especially among vulnerable groups—and poorly designed digital services. Overcoming these challenges requires coordinated investment, sustained funding, and locally driven solutions led by councils.



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14. Driving use of Digital Services Action Plan

Ambition	Activity	Outcome
Build digital inclusion	Deliver targeted skills and confidence building projects with our community partners . Maximise use of external funding	Increased digital capability for residents and reduced reliance on assisted channels
Communications encourage digital contact	Review and rewrite standard letters, templates, and web content to promote digital self-service first	Consistent messaging to prioritise digital services and reduce unnecessary calls
Digitally confident members and staff	Provide training and guidance for members and staff to promote digital options confidently and consistently	Increased advocacy of digital channels and consistent messaging to customers
Enhance user-friendly online services	Apply usability testing and customer feedback to improve key customer journeys	Easier, faster transactions that work on mobile, and improved satisfaction
Improve use of customer feedback and insight	Strengthen capture and use of customer feedback across digital and assisted channels	Evidence-led service design and deeper understanding of service use and customer needs
Increase customer awareness of digital services	Implement targeted promotional campaigns such as through social media, newsletters, and contact centre prompts	Greater awareness and usage of existing online services

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15. Summary of Progression and Opportunities 2025-2028

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Digital Strategy 2025-28

Completed Work

- Online housing repairs reporting
- Garages digital lettings
- Self-service scanning
- Digital end-to-end waste processes
- Basic website chatbot

Year 1

- Upgrade to Cloud housing system
- Electronic signing and sealing pilot in Housing
- Website homepage redesign
- Pilot advanced AI website chatbot
- Smarter scheduling of grounds maintenance
- Automation of common Council Tax tasks for Revenues and Benefits
- Upskill staff and Members
- Digitisation of records in Planning and Building Control

Benefits for residents

- Increased 24/7 access to services
- Faster, simpler processes
- Easier to find online answers
- Clearer updates and notifications
- Better mobile experience
- Continued non-digital support where needed

Years 2-3

- AI verification in Planning
- Updated webpage layouts
- Mobile working for housing officers
- New digital self-service for housing
- Maximise use of Microsoft 365
- Build digital inclusion

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16. Utilising Lessons Learned

Through experience with digital change projects, the Council have come to truly appreciate the dedication and resilience of everyone involved in adapting to new ways of working. It is recognised that embracing change within such a complex environment isn't always easy, and it's natural to encounter challenges along the way. That's why the Digital team are committed to providing thoughtful, tailored support—so that together, these barriers can be overcome to make positive, lasting improvements for everyone.

Category	Situation	Support
People & Culture	Staff are on a journey to improving their digital skills and confidence	Digital skills survey, training, positive communication of achievements
	Staff perspectives on digital change reflect a need for greater involvement, clarity, and confidence-building	Pace change realistically, positive communications, staff engagement, utilise local leadership
Ownership & decision making	Clearer roles and responsibilities can empower teams and improve delivery, especially for cross-service processes	Define and document responsibilities within processes
	Some processes involve subjective decisions, which can be refined to support smoother digital transformation	Review and revise process and policy to enable a digital first approach where possible
	Greater clarity in service standards helps to manage customer expectations	Publish clear standards when updating processes
Systems & insight	Better access to data and insight can strengthen business cases, solution design and service improvement	Develop reporting capabilities for digital services and expand use of customer feedback
	System diversity can lead to inconsistent customer experience and project complexity	Robust project discovery, use of system integration to provide better digital outcomes for staff and customers

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Appendix A - Case Studies

Develop Digital Solutions

Example 1 – self-service scanning

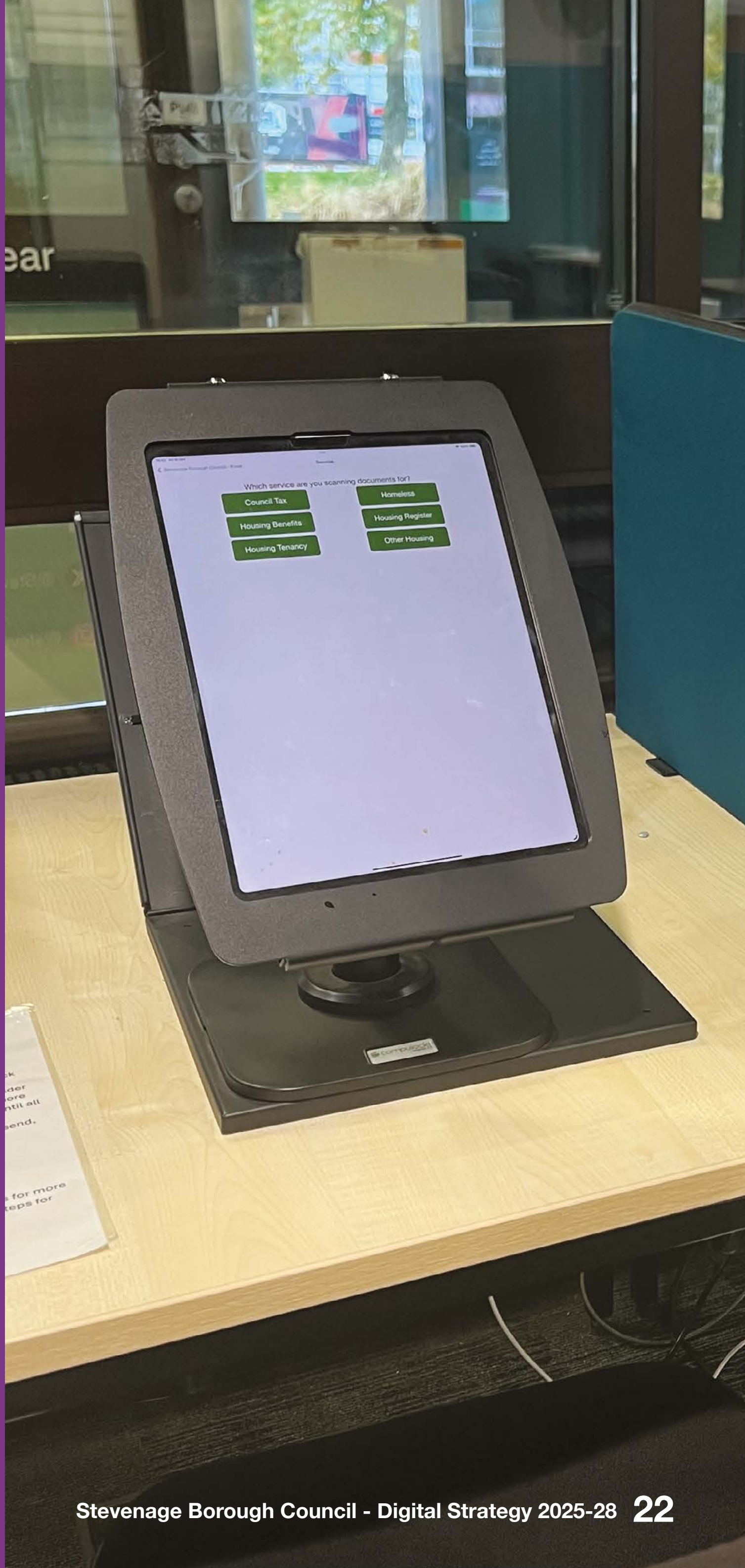
Stevenage Borough Council's Digital team, in collaboration with Customer Services, Housing, and Benefits Services, developed a self-serve scanning solution for customers at the Main Reception of Daneshill House. This digital application, accessible via a smart tablet, allows residents to submit documents required for Council services such as benefits and council tax support. Customers select the service, complete a form with their details, and use the tablet to scan and submit their documents.

Outcomes

Around half of the documents arriving in Daneshill that require scanning are now being scanned by the customer themselves using the self-service tool. As well as freeing up staff capacity for more complex enquiries, it means customers are in control of their original documents reducing the risk of loss.

Further Opportunities

A range of opportunities exist to avoid needing the document to come to the Council's office in the first place. The same technology that powers this scanning device could be used online to allow customers to submit electronic documents from home, for those not requiring in-person authentication. It could also be developed into a mobile-friendly form for staff who need to scan documents while working around the town or in people's homes, simplifying and speeding up existing mechanisms. Moreover, when reviewing processes there may be options to avoid the need for documentation by electronically checking eligibilities with other internal systems or government sources.



Appendix A - Case Studies

Develop Digital Solutions

Example 2 – Stevenage Day applications

Stevenage Borough Council’s Communities and Neighbourhoods team faced challenges with the traditional stallholder application process for Stevenage Day. The process involved paper submissions and multiple payment methods, leading to delays and administrative burdens. To modernise this, they implemented a digital pitch booking service using GovService.

Outcomes

This new system eliminated paper submissions and manual data entry, allowing quick access for reviewing, amending, and approving applications. Customers now receive automated emails with payment links, ensuring timely payments. The transition to card payments only has simplified the process and improved security. This digital transformation has significantly enhanced efficiency, reduced errors, and provided a more convenient and secure platform for customers.

Further Opportunities

By rethinking existing paper and spreadsheet-based processes, many can be turned into self-served channels with a range of functionality including payments, document submissions, workflow, case management and bookings.

Appendix A - Case Studies

Develop Digital Solutions

Example 3 – Digital Garage Lettings Process

Stevenage Borough Council's Garage Lettings process used a waiting-list serviced through manually intensive administration, making it inefficient to operate and missing opportunities to rent void garages. The Garages and Digital teams worked together to develop a digital lettings platform in early 2023. This new system publishes a weekly list of available garages and allows customers to view, bid and sign a contract on the property of their choice.

Outcomes

The solution quickly freed up staff time in the Garages team, significantly reduced the void rate and increased income. A big surprise was that many garages previously considered "hard to let" are now quickly being let; demonstrating the power of a different lettings approach.

Following the success of the digital service, additional developments such as garage photos have been added, and new ideas continue to be developed such as adding location maps. This project has shown the benefits of an iterative development approach in which starting simple and building over time helps to simplify and de-risk new initiatives while enabling them to grow through feedback and learning.

Future Opportunities

Digital services offer new ways to package and sell income generating products, so that they're easier for customers to find, understand and buy, while minimising costs. By starting with simple solutions and developing iteratively they provide a way to start more quickly and scale up to optimise customer demand.

Appendix A - Case Studies

Develop Digital Solutions

Example 4 – Automated Telephony

Customer Services were still receiving high volumes of calls about transactional services already available online. To free Customer Service staff up to work on more complex enquiries an automated telephony solution was implemented. Through button presses customers can get recorded answers to common questions and can receive hyperlinks to online services via text message for waste and recycling, grounds maintenance, benefits and council tax. The service is entirely hosted by the supplier meaning it could work with existing phone systems.

Outcomes

The automated telephony answers 40-50% of calls for the services it handles, freeing up valuable staff time and assisting customers with online services. The call options have continued to be developed based on usage data that ensure it remains effective.

Further Opportunities

This solution could be effective for most services where a high proportion of customer calls have standard answers or could be transacted through digital self-service. Newer telephony solutions offer even more versatile functionality including Natural Language Processing to enable customers to talk to the automation instead of pressing buttons, and the ability to build processes into the automation (such as reporting a missed bin).

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix A - Case Studies

Improve the Website

Example 1 – Gracie Chatbot

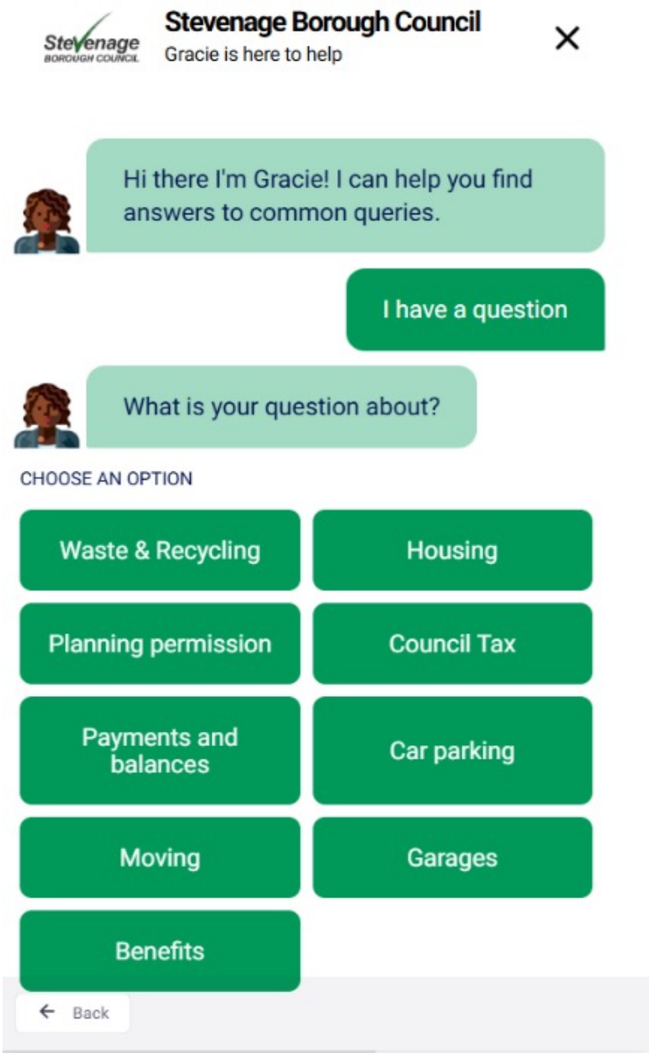
While most customers reach the Council's website from a Google search, others navigate using the website's own search or navigation links, some people can still struggle to find what they're looking for. To help with this, the Gracie Chatbot was built to provide another way to answer common queries.

Outcomes

Gracie has continued to have topics reworded and added in response to customer feedback and for topical queries such as weather-related disruption. The Chatbot assists 66 people per day (around the same as a Customer Services Advisor) for less than £1000 per year.

Further Opportunities

Extra features can continue to be built into this simple decision-tree powered Chatbot, and bots to provide answers on specific topics could also be created, for example to give cost of living advice. At the same time, the advent of generative AI enabled more modern technologies to interact conversationally to help find answers on nearly anything, limited only by the data sources they're connected to. The Council is now looking to upgrade its website Chatbot to this more modern technology.



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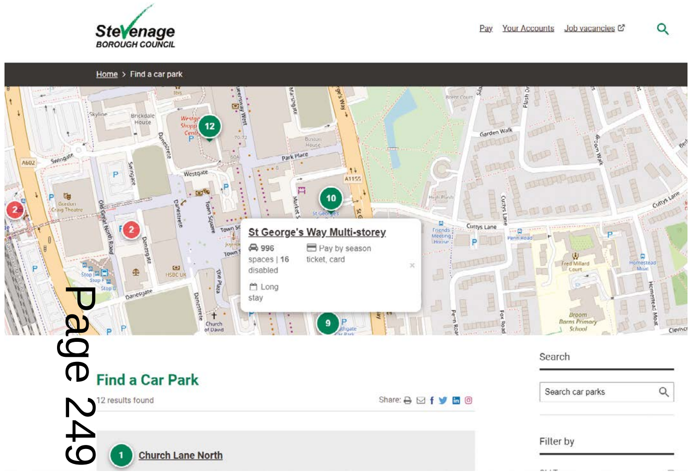
Appendix A - Case Studies

Improve the Website

Example 2 – Find a Car Park

Visitors come to Stevenage for all sorts of reasons including work, shopping, and using the train station. In many of these cases they are looking for somewhere to park, and look to the Council's website to find this information. To make this as easy as possible a map based Find a Car Park page was created which provides key headline information (like number of spaces and accepted payment methods) and links to more detail (like the hourly charging rates).



Outcomes

The Council's Find a Car Park page is one of the most popular on the website (25 pageviews in July 2023-June 2024), eclipsing pages on missed bins and the Autumn fireworks display. At the same time Customer Services receive very few enquiries about this topic, supporting the evidence that the website is successfully telling people what they want to know.

Further Opportunities

Instead of pages of text, rich display can be used in a huge variety of ways to support customer journeys that benefit from alternative presentation and make them more engaging, such as: step-by-step wizard on home composting or recycling, video or animation to explain the Housing Options and Homeless support the Council can and cannot provide, an online calculator to support home budgeting, data dashboards to make Council performance transparent, and interactive consultations to engage the public and improve feedback.

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix A - Case Studies

Drive use of Digital Services

Example 1 – Web Wizard

The Kickstart jobs programme funded a 6 month placement of a “web wizard” in Customer Services to engage and support customers one-to-one to use self-service computers or a tablet. The idea was to provide quick assistance to walk-in customers who needed basic support or pre-book more lengthy sessions with people where they need more of a training approach.

Outcomes

The web wizard proved most popular assisting people who already had some limited digital skills but benefited from assistance to build confidence and someone on-hand to answer questions. It also enabled us to learn more about digital exclusion. As the timing of the Kickstart scheme hit a low point in face-to-face contact with customers, the web wizard was used less than there was capacity for.

Further Opportunities

A lack of digital skills and confidence continue to be a barrier preventing people from using digital services, as well as other issues such as connectivity, literacy and learning difficulties. An evidence-based digital inclusion action plan would identify the most significant issues and focus efforts, with opportunities to use external funding and deliver through partners.

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Digital Strategy
2025-28

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Agenda Item 14

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