

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (FORMERLY STEVENAGE TOWN FUND
BOARD)
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 10 July 2025

Time: 10.00am

Place: Zoom

Present:

Start / End Start Time: 10.00am

Time: End Time: 11.30am

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted by the following:

Clare Fletcher – Stevenage Borough Council

Norman Jennings – Herts Futures

Stephen Ward – Catapult

Greg Westover – Legal & General

Sarah Brierley – Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

Mary Hartley – Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust

John Lewis – Aecom

Ian Langley – Viavi Solutions

3 MINUTES - 8 MAY 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 8 May 2025 be approved as a correct record.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS

It was noted that Councillor Richard Henry, the Leader of the Council declared his role as Chair of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Development Board and the Hertfordshire Growth Board.

Councillor Steve Jarvis, Leader of the County Council, declared his role on the Hertfordshire Growth Board and Hertfordshire Futures.

These would be added to the declared conflicts of interest list.

5 INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The Chair introduced the item and outlined Hertfordshire's heritage and economic strengths, including sectors such as creative industries, life sciences, digital technologies, clean energy, defence, and financial services. It was noted how the County's capabilities aligned with the Government's industrial strategy, positioning Hertfordshire appropriately for national investment. Hertfordshire also played a key role in UK film and TV production and was part of the emerging Space East cluster.

The role of Hertfordshire Futures in supporting skills development was noted, and programmes such as HOP, Skills Bootcamps, and Step2Skills were highlighted. The positive impact of career hubs and enterprise initiatives on preparing the workforce was noted. Kit Davis from North Herts College welcomed the focus on skills development. Councillor Richard Henry supported the presentation and highlighted Hertfordshire's prominence in key government industrial strategy areas.

6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND DEVOLUTION

The Board received an update from Tom Pike, CEO of Stevenage Borough Council, who provided an overview on Local Government Reform work in Hertfordshire. Various structural options were currently under consideration and ranged from two to four unitary authorities. The joint submission was due with the Government by 28th November 2025.

It was noted that Public engagement was planned for the summer, and the earliest possible establishment of new authorities was projected for May 2028, though this remained provisional. Tom reassured the Board that Regeneration efforts in Stevenage would continue at pace and that strong partnerships including the Stevenage Development Board would be maintained throughout the reform process.

Presentation materials and strategic questions were being shared across councils to support consistent communication and stakeholder engagement.

The Chair thanked Tom for his update.

7 AIRBUS SUCCESSES

The Board received an update on recent achievements from Andrew Gardner from Airbus.

The Board heard about the successful launch of the Stevenage biomass satellite by the European Space Agency, designed to measure global forest biomass and contribute to climate modelling. This achievement had brought international recognition to Stevenage's space research capabilities.

Andrew highlighted Airbus' ongoing support for the local space ecosystem, including its accelerator programme for startups, which had seen two companies successfully launch products into space and others achieving significant progress. The

programme benefited from UK Space Agency funding to refurbish incubation space at the Stevenage site, with an opening planned for November.

Andrew also reported on the success of the We Build it Better programme, a STEM outreach initiative piloted locally. The programme improved student attendance and engagement, achieved gender balance, and fostered confidence and practical skills among participants.

The Chair thanked Andrew for his update.

8 TOWNS FUND PROJECT: CYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY

The Board received a presentation from Ross Hughes, Regeneration Manager SBC regarding cycling and pedestrian connectivity. The project involved maintenance and enhancement of approximately 22 underpasses across Stevenage in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council. 14 had been completed so far with efforts including whitewashing, lighting upgrades, and mural installations.

Board Members were pleased to hear that community engagement had been strong, with young people and teachers expressing enthusiasm about the artwork featured in the underpasses. Plans for the town's 80th birthday celebrations were also mentioned.

The Chair thanked Ross for his update.

9 TOWNS FUND PROJECT: SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE

The Board received a further presentation from Ross Hughes regarding the current position of the development of the new Sports and Leisure Centre.

Ross advised that the project had entered the full planning phase, with a committee decision expected in early September. The design had progressed to detailed stages, with work ongoing to keep the project within budget and aligned with community needs.

It was noted that renewable energy features had been incorporated, including air source heat pumps and solar panels, aiming for a 30% reduction in electricity costs compared to current facilities. Early works related to infrastructure were scheduled to begin soon.

The Chair thanked Ross for his update.

10 TOWNS FUND PROJECT: STATION GATEWAY

The Board received an update from Dave Wells, Assistant Director for Regeneration about the Station Gateway project.

Since the previous meeting, the proposals had been launched at the UKREiiF Conference in Leeds, in partnership with Muse and the English Cities Fund.

Heads of Terms had been agreed and were under legal negotiation, with signing anticipated in the Summer of 2025.

Dave was pleased to report that the launch had generated positive industry coverage and attracted visits from government departments. It was noted that additional funding was being sought to support a Strategic Outline Business Case.

The project's long history was acknowledged and Board Members expressed optimism about the project's transformative potential for Stevenage.

The Chair thanked Dave for his update.

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

12 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Thursday 25 September 2025 – 10.00am – Zoom

Thursday 20 November 2025 – 10.00am – The Cromwell Hotel

CHAIR