



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 28 January 2026

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: Leanne Brady (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Robert Boyle, Jim Brown, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Rob Henry, Claire Parris, Ceara Roopchand, Peter Wilkins and Jade Woods

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2025

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 24 November 2025.

3 – 6

3. NOTES OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE - 3 NOVEMBER 2025

To agree the Notes of the informal meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee on 3 November 2025.

7 – 10

4. FOCUS ON CYCLING STRATEGY

As part of the Committee's work programme, the Chair, in consultation with the Director for Planning and Regulation, has brought forward an item focusing on the Council's 2018 Cycling Strategy (see link below). The Director for Planning and Regulation will comment on the delivery of the Cycle Strategy Action Plan to date and focus on two elements for development (i) Create an implementation plan for cycle network improvements and maintenance (including signage and wayfinding) and (ii) Increase the provision of secure and accessible cycle parking across the town, including e-bike charging points. The Chair intends to invite representatives of various cycling interest groups to a future meeting of the Committee to hear these groups aspirations for cycling in Stevenage.

PowerPoint presentation slides will be published separately in a supplementary agenda.

[Stevenage Cycle Strategy - 2018](#)

[Stevenage Cycle Strategy - 2018 - Appendices](#)

5. FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW OF RECYCLING IN FLAT BLOCKS

To receive and note the final report and recommendations of the committee's review of recycling in flat blocks. The Committee considered the draft report at its meeting on 24 November 2025 and were sent an amended report for comment. No further comments or amendments were received, so the Committee are invited to note the final report.

11 – 22

6. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

7. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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.

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 24 November 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Cavendish Road Depot Meeting Room SG1 2ET

Present: Councillors: Leanne Brady (Chair), Robert Boyle, Jim Brown, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Claire Parris, Ceara Roopchand, Peter Wilkins and Jade Woods

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy McGuinness and Dermot Kehoe

2 MINUTES - TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Environment and Economy Select Committee meeting held on 7 October were approved and signed by the Chair.

3 DRAFT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW INTO RECYCLING IN FLAT BLOCKS

The Committee reviewed the draft report and recommendations regarding recycling in flat blocks. The officer presented the recommendations, followed by a discussion with members who suggested amendments and raised questions as outlined below.

Members stated that officers would need to be careful about selecting individuals as "Recycling Champions." The Head of Service, Environmental Operations, stated that regarding Recycling Champions there would likely be around 10 across the town, and it would be necessary to offer some form of incentivisation with possible awards as a means of recruiting. Officers would closely monitor the conduct of the Recycling Champions. The officer agreed to add a clarifying statement to the report.

Members asked if the coloured wraps to be used on bins would also indicate the types of items that can be placed in each bin. The officer showed members the proposed design for the stickers that will be placed on bin fronts and lids to provide this information.

The officer explored the option of coloured wraps for the lids of bins but clarified that such wraps are not currently available. Instead, stickers will be used on the lids for the flat blocks. Priority will be given to flat blocks that do not already have any

labelling information.

Members raised a question about how contaminated bins were identified during collection. The officer confirmed that collection teams open the lids to conduct a visual inspection. However, if contaminated items were hidden at the bottom of the bins, they may not be visible during inspection.

Members highlighted the need for CCTV at Bring Bank Sites to deter fly-tipping. The officer clarified that items placed next to full bins were considered as fly-tipping. Members also inquired about any concessions for low-income households regarding bulky waste collection. The officer confirmed a 25% reduction on bulky waste collection rates for low-income households.

Members expressed concerns about a previous report proposing a reduction in the number of Bring Bank Sites in Stevenage. Officers reassured the Committee that this will be reviewed after the new flat block recycling measures have been in place for 12-18 months. The data collected during this period will guide the review process. The Committee will be consulted at each stage of the review.

Members sought clarification on whether recycling information would be available in alternative languages. The officer confirmed that accessibility has been a key consideration. Information provided to residents will be largely pictorial to improve accessibility. Officers also confirmed that the new recycling information would be available in alternative formats upon request and Officers would investigate the provision of a braille version.

Members suggested that the wording of the recommendations be amended to explicitly address accessibility issues. The officer agreed to update the report to include this consideration.

Members requested that signage be placed at recycling points to inform residents of the consequences and financial implications of fly-tipping. Additionally, they recommended that the most used bins be placed in prominent locations to discourage contamination. The officer explained that having only one type of bin at a location can contribute to contamination, as all types of waste may end up in that single bin.

Members acknowledged the difficulties of implementing different recycling procedures across the various flat blocks in the town. The officer explained that they are working on solutions tailored to each individual flat block. It was agreed that the recommendation would be amended from Douglas Drive to Vardon Road, as this is the affected block that should be referenced.

In response to concerns about non-residents using flat block bins, the officer explained that public highway bins will be fitted with combination locks. Operatives will have master keys to access all the bins.

The officer confirmed that a patent for the 3-wheeled bin mentioned in the report could not be obtained. However, officers are looking into the protection of the design and also commercial opportunities for the bin were currently being explored.

It was agreed by all members that signage should not be overly descriptive. The primary focus will be on encouraging positive behaviour and educating the public, rather than enforcing rules or regulations.

In the draft report, section 3.1.8, it is referenced that £700,000 had been secured through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). This figure is now £1.2 million and will be updated in the final report.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the report and noted that a final version would be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

4 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business

5 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Not required.

6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE INFORMAL MINUTES

Date: Monday, 3 November 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: MS TEAMS

Present: Councillors: Leanne Brady (Chair), Jim Brown, Robert Boyle, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Andy McGuinness, Claire Parris, Ceara Roopchand, Peter Wilkins and Jade Woods

Also in attendance: Portfolio Holder for Environment Councillor Rob Broom

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 8.00pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dermot Kehoe

2 **CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE**

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to note the actions taken and the progress made on the strategic themes from the 2020 Climate Change Strategy.

Officers explained the nine levels for the Climate Change Strategy. These were broken into:

Global Climate Action

- The Paris agreement and NDCs remained the cornerstone of global climate action.

National Climate Action

- The UK was aiming for an 81% reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) by 2035 and net zero by 2050 – one of the most ambitious targets globally.
- Emissions continue to decline, especially after the closure of the last coal power station in September 2024.

Members raised questions regarding national targets not mirroring regional targets and highlighted the challenges of reducing these emissions in the next five years.

Larger Businesses

- Stevenage hosts prominent businesses (aerospace, biotechnology, defence) which were on track to meet corporate net-zero targets.

- The Council continued to collaborate to share best practices and learning.

Regional/Countywide

- Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) was key for collaboration and investment at this level.
- Projects included:
 - Solar Together (Round 3): 33 installations complete with a 130kW capacity, with the scheme aimed at private homes.
 - Your Tree, Our Future: 5,831 trees planted, with the next phase due December 2025. It was noted that Stevenage had a 22% tree canopy cover, which was above the 19% threshold.
 - LEVI Programme: The national scheme aimed to increase Electric Vehicle (EV) provision. It was currently out for tender, with appointments expected in the coming weeks.
 - Hertfordshire Local Retrofit Strategy: Developing delivery model and finance options.

Discussions took place regarding how the Solar Together Project was being advertised and the low participation uptake in the project across the town.

Questions were raised about the monitoring of tree survival rates. It was noted that this would be for the Stevenage Direct Services Team to respond to. Tree planting targets were also discussed.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment noted that the Miyawaki tree planting method had been used across the town, with another four woods to be planted over the next two years.

Comments were raised regarding the uneven distribution of tree cover across wards, and it was suggested that data could be used to prioritise areas with lower coverage for future planning.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) highlighted the need for strong cross boundary collaboration and what impact this would have on the HCCSP.

Stevenage Level

- Stevenage achieved its lowest recorded emissions under the influence of the local authority in 2023, with steady decline since 2005.
- Transport and domestic sectors remained the largest emissions contributions in the town.
- Monitoring continued to ensure reductions were sustained and were not a by-product of higher energy costs affecting households or businesses.

Questions were raised regarding travel to work patterns for Officers of the Council. It was noted that a staff active travel survey was complete in 2023/24, but commuting patterns had not shifted. Officers explained the cycle to work scheme and EV car clubs offered to staff which had a low uptake.

Discussions took place regarding the local plan provision and the social, economic and environmental elements.

It was noted that further work was needed to make informed decisions regarding travel to work patterns, which Unison and Active Travel Working Groups were looking into.

It was noted that additional work was required to enable more informed decision-making on travel to work patterns, with Unison and Active Travel Working Groups currently examining this matter.

Officers explained that SBC's emissions had dropped by 61%, which was driven by zero carbon tariff electricity and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) biofuel, in comparison to the 2018 baseline.

The challenge of setting targets within the Council's boundaries was discussed. It was noted that work from home emissions should fall under Scope 3, as the organisation does not have direct control over them, making it difficult to establish a baseline for these emissions.

Members acknowledged that although the Council did not directly manage working from home emissions, transparency remained important. Members discussed the hybrid shift in work arrangements, and it was agreed that data collection on the impacts of hybrid working would be useful for future reporting and decision making.

The Chair questioned about the Scope 3 emissions related to the transport of waste abroad. It was noted there was issues with the quality of waste data, and discussions around a strategy needed to improve data collection from partners.

Local Engagement

- Ongoing events and presentations with stakeholders.
- Educational resources shared with schools and communities.
- CCCF projects (2024/25) supporting waste reduction, biodiversity, water, and climate adaptation.

Council's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Accounting and Emissions

The objectives included:

- To produce an accurate GHG Accounting Report for 2024/25, which would include Scope 1,2 and partial Scope 3 emissions.
- Update the baseline to 2023/24 to track reductions.
- Improve data collection and storage for future reporting.

Officers explained the progress so far on the report and it was noted that over 600 assets had been reviewed and categorised.

Officers then discussed the eight strategic themes at the Stevenage Level.

1) Businesses

- 147 local businesses had joined the Wenta Zero Action Programme.
- UKSPF Sustainable Business Programme
- £70k from the Green Business Grant Scheme supporting eight businesses.

2) Homes

- Major retrofit schemes in place to improve 620 council homes.
- An aim to reach EPC Band C by 2023 for all council homes - £11.4 million required for remaining upgrades.
- Warm Homes Local Grant open for private homes.

3) Waste and Recycling

- Campaigns on sustainable living and recycling.
- Flat block recycling and food waste collections expanding.

4) People

- Climate Change Champions.
- Climate Adaptation and Risk Assessments.

5) Construction and Regeneration

- Ongoing regeneration of the new Leisure Centre, Public Services Hub and indoor market.

6) Transport

- HVO fuel switch and six EVs added to the Council's fleet.
- New cycle hire scheme, EV charging infrastructure and active travel initiatives.

7) Energy and Water

- Zero carbon electricity tariff and site energy audits.
- Lighting and building upgrades across council sites.
- Water efficiency and monitoring projects underway.

8) Biodiversity

- Tree and woodland projects progressing (target 4,000 trees by 2030).
- Biodiversity Action Plan and volunteer work ongoing.
- Trees and Woodland Strategy
- Green Spaces Strategy

The Chair thanked officers for their presentation and asked Members to email across any further questions.

Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item:

Meeting **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE**

Portfolio Area Environment & Planning Policy

Date **28 JANUARY 2026**



FINAL REPORT – RECYCLING IN FLAT BLOCKS REVIEW

Author – Stephen Weaver Ext No.2332

Contact Officer – Stephen Weaver Ext No.2332

Contributors – Councillor Leanne Brady, Chair of Environment & Economy Select, Lead Assistant Director supporting the Committee, AD Stevenage Direct Services, Steve Dupoy, Head of Environmental Operations, Stevenage Direct Services, Kris White.

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the report and recommendations of the Environment & Economy Select Committee Scrutiny review into the recycling in flat blocks.

2 BACKGROUND & SCRUTINY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

- 2.1 When Members considered their work programme for the 2025-26 Municipal Year at its meeting on 14 January 2025 and affirmed on 11 June 2025 it was agreed to include a review of the Council's recycling provision in Council housing stock low rise flat blocks.

2.2 Scope and focus of the review

- 2.2.1 The Committee met on 11 June 2025 [E&E Select Committee - 11 June 2025 - Scoping Document](#) to agree the scope for the review, and it agreed should consider the following areas:

- 2.2.2 Scope for the review:

- 2.2.3 Members noted that the topic had previously been touched upon and now warranted a dedicated focus. Waste and Recycling in Flat Blocks had been identified as a key concern due to the increasing number of such developments in Stevenage.
- 2.2.4 It was agreed that the review would include site visits, a presentation from officers, comparative analysis with another authority, Dacorum Borough Council were subsequently approached to provide external insight, given their prior experience in similar initiatives, and close engagement with officers. The review would focus on recycling in flat blocks and also address the related issue of recycling at bring banks. Members also wished to look at communications and recycling rates.
- 2.2.5 During discussion of the scope for the review it was noted that the review had a fairly narrow focus on recycling in low rise flat blocks. Members had identified wider issues affecting recycling that they would like to visit in the future but were not included in the review these included:
- a request for data on the Council's own waste from events and public spaces (e.g. Stevenage Day), as waste appeared not to be segregated
 - regarding capturing tenant voices, proposing resident surveys as part of the evidence-gathering process
 - consideration of more recycling bins in public areas such as parks and footpaths
 - an audit of recycling practices within the Council's own buildings

2.3 **Process of the review**

- 2.3.1 The Committee met formally on 6 occasions in 2025 and informally with two site visits on 21 July and 12 September to undertake the review and received input from the following groups and people on the following dates:
- 27 February 2025 – PowerPoint Presentation on the SDS recycling service [27 02 27 - Waste and Recycling Services Presentation](#)
 - 11 June 2025 – draft scoping document and PowerPoint Presentation presented by SBC Stevenage Direct Services [11 June 2025 – Draft Scoping document for Recycling in flat blocks](#) .
 - 21 July 2025 – Site visit to Flat Blocks with Stevenage Direct Services Officers [21 July 2025 - Notes from Member site visit to recycling in flat blocks](#)
 - 1 September 2025 – SDS Officer Presentation - [Recycling in Flat Blocks](#).
 - 12 September 2025 – Site visit to Cavendish Road SDS Depot and Recycling collection service with SDS Refuse and Recycling staff
 - 7 October 2025 - Interviews with Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Planning Policy, Cllr Rob Broom and written input

from Dacorum Borough Council [Agenda for Environment & Economy Select Committee on Tuesday, 7 October 2025, 6.00pm](#).

- 24 November 2025 – Draft report and recommendations of the Recycling in Flat Blocks review
- 28 January 2026 – Final report and recommendations of the review into recycling in flat blocks

2.3.2 Photos from the site visit to flat blocks on 21 July 2025:



Sites visited by Members were: 189-199 Vardon Road • 11-77 Douglas Drive
• 64-70 Derby Way • 71-77 Sefton Road

2.3.3 The following officers and members provided input into the review:

- *Cllr Rob Broom, Portfolio Holder, Environment & Planning Policy*
- *Steve Dupoy, AD Stevenage Direct Services*
- *Kris White, Head of Environmental Operations*
- *Colin Littlechild – Operations Manager*
- *Claire Nicholls – Project Manager – Waste*
- *Claire Murrell - Environmental Policy, Strategy & Projects Officer*
- *Claudia Jones – Dacorum Borough Council*

3 REVIEW FINDINGS

3.1 As part of the review Members noted the following details regarding the collection of refuse and recycling in Stevenage:

- 3.1.1 Approximately 8,000 flats exist in Stevenage, representing 21% of the housing stock. Many were built in the 1960s and 1970s before modern waste systems, creating long-term challenges.
- 3.1.2 Key issues included lack of space for bins, difficult access and stairs, and higher rates of contamination compared to houses.
- 3.1.3 Refuse chutes in high-rise blocks were often abused or blocked, creating fire risks and requiring daily attendance from caretaking teams.
- 3.1.4 Borough-wide contamination rates stood at 1.2%, but flats contributed disproportionately due to misuse and limited information.

- 3.1.5 Case studies from Matalan, Turpin's Rise and Monument Court (see images below) showed excess cardboard, dumping beside bins and residents using bin stores incorrectly.



- 3.1.6 Lessons from phase 1 pilot sites showed large increases in recycling rates following the introduction of improved bin stores, new signage and leaflets. A sustained increase was maintained over the following year.
- 3.1.7 Phase 2 pilots were being prepared with further sites selected across the town.
- 3.1.8 Government funding of £700,000 had been secured through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to support works to upgrade infrastructure and provide recycling facilities required by the March 2026 'Simpler Recycling' deadline.
- 3.2 Frequency and Capacity issues
- 3.2.1 Regarding Frequency and capacity of collections Members queried if large blocks such as Monument Court had adequate capacity. It was confirmed that refuse was collected weekly and recycling fortnightly. New build flats such as Monument Court had substantial bin capacity, and discussions with housing providers were ongoing to expand provision ahead of food waste collections.
- 3.3 Population density and capacity calculations
- 3.3.1 Regarding population density and capacity calculations capacity is calculated per property, not per person. Standard allowances are for 180 litres refuse bins, with larger bins provided for households of six or more.
- 3.4 Misuse and external dumping
- 3.4.1 Members noted that, on some occasions, non-residents were depositing waste in bin stores. However, most misuse came from residents themselves. Newer blocks had coded or gated stores to limit access. CCTV was limited but effective where used.
- 3.5 CCTV coverage
- 3.5.1 With regard to the proportion of blocks that had CCTV. It was noted that modern flat blocks like Monument Court had CCTV, but most older blocks did not. Some blocks acted as public cut-throughs, increasing the risk of misuse.

3.6 Affordability of bulky waste charges

- 3.6.1 Regarding the handling of bulky waste, Members highlighted challenges for residents without cars. It was noted that a bulky waste collection service was available for £49, but this would not suit everyone. It is possible that cardboard could be disposed of over several weeks, though this was difficult to store in small flats.

3.7 Fly tipping at Bring Bank sites

- 3.7.1 Members noted that residents often believed leaving items beside overflowing bins at the bring bank sites was acceptable. However, it was emphasised that this was still fly tipping. Campaigns were underway to change perceptions, and there were concerns about commercial misuse of Bring Banks.

3.8 Consistency of Bring Bank provision

- 3.8.1 Regarding the size of the recycling facilities at each bring bank site it is noted that provision varied by site size. Larger sites, such as The Oval, had more bins. Around 40% of the townwide fly tipping was linked to Bring Banks.

3.9 New legislation and deadlines

- 3.9.1 'Simpler Recycling' required every household to have access to recycling by March 2026. Surveys showed 74 blocks had no recycling, 41 of which were Council-owned and required substantial works. Solutions included ramps, new stores, or using car parking bays.

3.10 Ramps, bin stores and new bin design

- 3.10.1 Members raised the difficulty of installing ramps. Officers said solutions would be site-specific. The new three-wheeled bin worked well for short, shallow steps (up to five) but was unsuitable for larger blocks. The innovation had attracted national media coverage.

3.11 Funding and costs

- 3.11.1 Officers confirmed £1,198,918 of government funding had been secured through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). Early estimates suggested costs might be lower than expected, though some blocks would still require major investment.

3.12 Pilot outcomes and communications

- 3.12.1 Members asked about monitoring. Officers reported recycling increased by 185% after improved bin stores and new signage and leaflets were introduced and remained 85% higher a year later. Phase 2 pilots were underway with four additional sites. Communications materials were redesigned to be clearer and more accessible.

3.13 Resident feedback on intervention

- 3.13.1 Members suggested that residents should be asked which methods (signage, leaflets, bin design) had been most effective in encouraging participation. Officers responded that this had not been included in phase 1, but confirmed it would now be considered for incorporation into phase 2 surveys as a result of the suggestion.

3.14 Introduction of food waste collection

3.14.1 The Committee discussed the forthcoming government mandated introduction of food waste collections. Officers confirmed that while the Council needed to meet a minimum standard by March 2025, there was an ambition to exceed the minimum government standards. It was noted that approximately 25% of food in the UK was wasted, and that the introduction of separate food waste collections would significantly help to improve recycling rates.

3.15 Different service options for low-rise social blocks, high rise social blocks and higher density high rise private blocks

3.15.1 Members are aware that building heights will have an impact on the recycling solutions that are able to be delivered at each location, as there are the differences in recycling capacity between low-rise social blocks and higher-density private blocks.

3.16 Feedback from Member site visit on 21 July 2025

3.16.1 To assist with the review some Members from the Committee carried out a site visit to various flat block sites around Stevenage, including Vardon Road, Douglas Drive, Derby Way and Sefton Road as well as the Bring Bank site at the Oval Shops. The [notes from the site visit](#) can be found at the link. In Summary the key findings from the site visit were:

3.17 Vardon Road

3.17.1 Enhanced lighting would be required at the proposed new bin store area (part of the exiting car park). This site may be difficult for residents with mobility issues to use as it is accessed via a steep set of steps. Other options for storage at a lower level in the communal garden area may need to be considered.

3.18 Douglas Drive

3.18.1 Members recommend the consideration of creating an aesthetically pleasing bin store area with planting and fences utilising some of the amenity land on the large pedestrianised paved area.

3.19 Derby Way

3.19.1 It is proposed that a bin store area could be created into the bank which would require the shrubs in the current location being removed and replaced with a purpose-built bin store area which could be screened with replacement shrubs.

3.20 Sefton Road

3.20.1 The flats at Sefton Way have a ramp built in from the communal garden area up to the gate access/exit leading to a car parking area. There are currently 4 or 5 large wheely bins for communal recycling. There could be capacity for a few more bins if the current space is at capacity.

3.21 Bring Bank Site at the Oval Shops

3.21.1 There are issues with fly-tipping at these sites. The sites are provided to assist residents in flat blocks above the shops who currently have no capacity to

recycle. The fly tipping is, in part, from commercial premises nearby who leave tubs of used cooking oil. The sites are cleared 3 times a week. Members discussed the use of CCTV to monitor the fly tipping issues and whether this could be assisted by AI technology to target potential fly tipping abusers.

3.22 Other issues raised by Members at the site visit

3.22.1 Members made the following observations:

- Whatever offer officers consult on they will need to be simple and attractive to residents to encourage them to take part in any new recycling schemes.
- In time a recycling champion/lead resident at each block could be established to help encourage other residents to use the new scheme.
- Members recognised the difficulty of this task due to the nature of each block needing a personalised plan.
- In areas like Douglas Drive where there are currently no recycling bins, an option could be to provide large plastic bins that residents put their recycling into and then the refuse operatives could move up to the exit/ car park area to the freighters using light fabric sacks – they currently manually lift general waste plastic sacks.
- Some consideration would need to be given to the receptacles that would need to be provided to collect recycling in individual flats in addition to the food waste caddies.

3.23 Interview with and input from Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Planning Policy, Councillor Rob Broom

3.23.1 In advance of the interview session the Chair had provided Cllr Rob Broom with some written questions:

- What are your priorities for improving recycling in Stevenage?
- What target are you setting for Stevenage regarding improved recycling and over what time period?
- What do you perceive to be the biggest barriers for improved recycling?
- What are your thoughts on encouraging recycling with a recycling champion for a flat block or area?
- Do you see LGR as a possible threat to keeping a direct refuse and recycling service or could it be a benefit to local residents?
- What would you hope recycling in Stevenage would look like in 5 years time? What about 10?
- What does a successful recycling infrastructure look like to you?
- How do you think we should measure the success? E.g. by volume of recycling, residential engagement, etc

3.24 Focus on Improved recycling rates - In response to a question about priorities for improving recycling in Stevenage, Councillor Broom explained that the current focus was on food waste and recycling within flat blocks. It was noted

that the aim was to reduce contamination and increase recycling rates through clearer communication and engagement with residents.

- 3.25 Councillor Broom stated that he was reluctant to set a specific numerical goal regarding the percentage increase in recycling but expected to see an increase in recycling rates by next year. It was noted that the data would be reviewed in Summer and Autumn 2026 to assess progress.
- 3.26 Officers noted that the Council had a long-term target to achieve a 60% recycling rate by 2030. This would be supported by national measures such as the 'polluter pays' principle and efforts to reduce non-recyclable packaging.
- 3.27 Following a question to Councillor Broom about the barriers to improved recycling rates. In response, it was highlighted that resident engagement and participation were key challenges.
- 3.28 Focus on Recycling Champions and improved resident participation in recycling - Members discussed the concept of introducing recycling champions within flat blocks. Councillor Broom and officers supported the concept, noting it had been trialled successfully in a pilot scheme, but had low participation. Members suggested introducing incentives, such as recognition through local awards for adult and junior champion categories, to encourage involvement.
- 3.29 Members sought clarification on the role of a recycling champion. Officers explained that, in the pilot scheme, a resident acted as a liaison between the Council and tenants, promoting recycling and achieving positive outcomes.
- 3.30 Members highlighted the need for recycling literature and leaflets to be available in translated formats and better education around safe battery disposal. Officers noted that work was underway to address the safe disposal of batteries. This was in response to national concerns about waste-related fires, with a focus on public awareness and operational safety.
- 3.31 Members also suggested engaging schools and incorporating recycling information into new tenancy inductions. Officers noted that engagement work had been undertaken in local schools through assemblies to encourage recycling among children, with the aim of influencing positive behaviour within households.
- 3.32 Members highlighted the need to consider community dynamics when selecting Champions to ensure positive engagement within flat blocks. Officers acknowledged this and noted that clear expectations and guidance would be important for any future recycling champion's scheme.
- 3.33 Possible Impact of Local Government Reorganisation - A question was raised to the Portfolio Holder to ask if he perceived Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as a possible threat to keeping a direct refuse and recycling service. It was noted that he did not see an immediate threat and supported the Council's current direct delivery model, as it offered local accountability and flexibility compared to outsourcing to third-party contractors.
- 3.34 Members commented that future LGR could potentially lead to reduced standards. It was noted that a joint waste contract for North and East Herts

had been recently re-procured. Officers explained that existing arrangements typically remained in place during reorganisation processes, with future service structures depending on the priorities and approach of new authorities.

- 3.35 It was noted that benchmarking key performance indicators (KPIs) and costs against outsourced services would strengthen the Council's case in any future discussions, particularly if it could demonstrate comparable or better value.
- 3.36 Direction of travel for recycling in Stevenage - In response to a question regarding the future of recycling in Stevenage, it was noted that the Portfolio Holder hoped to see significant improvements over the next five to ten years. This would be supported by the initiatives such as food waste collections in flat blocks and the anticipated inclusion of low-density polyethylene recycling.
- 3.37 Councillor Broom considered Stevenage's current recycling infrastructure to be effective, with ongoing improvements in areas developing. It was noted that there had been a progress in reducing vehicle emissions by using hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) as fuel.
- 3.38 The Portfolio Holder was asked how the Council should measure success. In response, it was noted that measurements could be made through increased recycling rates, improved resident engagement and the delivery of low carbon and environmentally sustainable services.
- 3.39 Members discussed the importance of increasing the percentage of recycling while encouraging residents to produce less waste overall, in line with the waste hierarchy. Officers highlighted the role of the Council in promoting repair and reuse schemes and communicating these opportunities to residents.
- 3.40 It was noted that government initiatives and producer responsibilities, such as packaging taxes, were also contributing to reducing non-recycling waste.
- 3.41 It was noted that Members discussed the ongoing challenges of waste management and fly tipping. Members asked the Portfolio Holder to consider introducing a community collection scheme for bulky waste items each month to help reduce fly tipping, but the Portfolio Holder stated that he was not in favour of providing a free service but would consider other ways to tackle this issue.
- 3.42 These challenges were acknowledged, and it was confirmed that fly tipping enforcement would be considered in a forthcoming meeting. Councillor Broom noted that fly tipping and the practice of leaving items marked "free" outside properties negatively affected the appearance of neighbourhoods.
- 3.43 The Portfolio Holder highlighted existing enforcement including CCTV and warning letters, and stressed the importance of resident responsibility, noting that concessionary bulky waste collections were available at a set fee.
- 3.44 A question was raised regarding if the Council tracked any recycling outside council services such as at supermarket collection points. Officers confirmed that this was not currently monitored, and data could be obtained from the Environment Agency.

- 3.45 Members highlighted that while education and awareness supported responsible recycling, capacity issues at bring bank sites may pressure residents into fly tipping. It was noted that these sites were predominantly for recyclables, not residual waste, and that future monitoring, enhancements to flat block recycling, and targeted enforcement would help manage misuse.
- 3.46 Members noted that the Council could signpost retailers offering appliance recycling, which would provide residents with convenient options and potentially encourage more retailers to offer this service. Officers noted that Hertfordshire County Council had a “Recycle Now” tool which allowed users to find local retailers offering recycling as well as recycling centres. Officers would ensure that this resource was clearly linked on the Stevenage Borough Council’s website.
- 3.47 A question was raised about an update on the physical modifications to the flat blocks, including ramps and bin bays. Officers reported that approximately 23 sites had been revisited with engineers, and that drawings and pricing had been completed. A meeting was scheduled with officers from multiple departments, including leasehold resident services, to review all plans.

3.48 **Dacorum Borough Council – Summary Report Review**

- 3.48.1 Members reviewed the Recycling in Flats Summary Report provided by Dacorum Borough Council. It was noted that the findings aligned with Stevenage’s current approach. Members thanked the officer from Dacorum for providing the information to their review.
- 3.48.2 Key points included common barriers such as limited space, restricted bin access, low resident engagement, and challenges engaging privately managed flats.
- 3.48.3 The Council’s communications strategy, including leaflets, social media, and food waste campaigns, was highlighted. Differences from Dacorum’s rollout were noted, such as Stevenage Council not using bin apertures due to unintended issues like fly tipping.
- 3.48.4 Overall, Stevenage Borough Council was considered well placed to implement improvements due to the smaller scale of flat blocks across Stevenage.
- 3.49 **Summary of key issues relating to recycling in flat blocks:**
- There is not a ‘one size fits all approach’ that can be adopted – each flat block and location requires a bespoke approach, making it complicated to deliver
 - A campaign to engage with residents to take up recycling is required including identifying recycling champions and targeting young people via campaigns in schools
 - The introduction of food waste recycling would provide opportunities to improve the recycling rates in Stevenage and reduce the amount of residual waste going for incineration
 - The funding that the Council will receive from central government from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding should provide

the necessary capital funding to deliver recycling facilities across the Council's flat block housing stock

4 REVIEW RECOMMENNDATIONS

- 4.1 **Recommendation 1 – (i) Recycling Champions** - It is recommended that regarding recycling champions officers would be asked to consider encouraging recycling with awards and recognition for the areas with the most recycling, promote with young residents, consider smiley stickers on bins etc.
- 4.2 **Recommendation 2 –Infographic stickers on the bins** - It is recommended that SDS Officers consider using large infographic stickers on the bins to differentiate different recycling bins, this would be a cheaper and easier option than multiple-coloured bins.
- 4.3 **Recommendation 3 – Mobile CCTV at Bring Bank Sites** - (i) Regarding Bring Bank sites, Officers consider using mobile CCTV of sites with signage saying CCTV in operation and where fly tipping can be evidenced follow up with education and civil prosecution and (ii) Regarding any future plans to rationalise the Bring Bank Sites Members asked to see the plans for early consideration ahead of any public consultation as there were concerns over reducing the capacity.
- 4.4 **Recommendation 4 –Use of Signage in bin stores** –That any signage used should not be overly descriptive, the primary focus should be on encouraging positive behaviour and educating the public, rather than enforcing rules or regulations.
- 4.5 **Recommendation 5 – Use of easy to understand and easy to do recycling methods at flat blocks** - Members recognise the challenges of implementing recycling provision across such a diverse range of flat blocks and that there is not one single solution that can be rolled out across the flat blocks. (i) It is recommended that whatever offer officers consult on they will need to be simple and accessible to residents to encourage them to take part in any new recycling schemes and (ii) ensure that the literature is available in different formats including other languages, on request (noting however that the literature is mostly pictorial) and in braille.
- 4.6 **Recommendation 6 – A possible solutions to collection of recycling at Vardon Road Flats and similar flat blocks** - It is recommended that in areas similar to the Vardon Road flats, where there are currently no recycling bins, an option could be to provide large plastic bins or large strong flexible sacks that residents would put their recycling into and then the refuse operatives could move up to the exit/ car park area to the freighters using light fabric sacks (the SDS refuse operatives currently manually lift general waste plastic sacks up a set of steps to the refuse freighters)
- 4.7 **Recommendation 7 – Meassures to counter fly tipping around bin stores by non-residents** – It is recommended that Officers ensure that all new bin stores have locks of some sort and existing ones are also made secure to stop incidents of fly tipping from non-residents.

- 4.8 **Recommendation 8 – Use of innovative 3 wheeled bin.** Members commend Stevenage Direct Services Officers for the innovation of their own designed 3 wheeled bin. (i) Members recommend that a survey of flat block sites be carried out to see where this bin can be utilised in recycling collections around the town and (ii) That SDS work with the Assistant Director, Business Change and Digital regarding the business opportunity for protecting the design.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 Funding to implement Member recommendations could be resourced via the central government funding award to SBC via the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Nothing specific in relation to the report.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 Regarding Age and Disability any new recycling options in flat blocks would need to take into consideration the ability of elderly and disabled residents' ability to engage in any new recycling schemes.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS – Hyperlinks have been provided to all relevant meetings related to this review.