

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 24 February 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Robert Boyle, Jim Brown, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Rob Henry, Ceara Roopchand, Peter Wilkins and Jade Woods

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, nominations were requested for the appointment of a Chair for the meeting.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Ceara Roopchand be appointed Chair for the meeting. No other nominations were received.

It was RESOLVED: That Councillor Ceara Roopchand be appointed as Chair

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Brady, Andy McGuinness and Claire Parris

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY 2026

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January were agreed by the Committee, with the additional points included:

- Members asked officers to provide details of where cycling is permitted and prohibited in the town centre and local parks, the Director for Planning and Regulation agreed to report back to Members with this information
- Regarding light leakage from street lighting columns, it was noted that the angle of the light is now far narrower than before, could this be reported to Hertfordshire County Council as the highways authority to see if this is adjustable or can be remedied in any way
- Regarding the Infrastructure Delivery Plans Members asked how well integrated this was with the Local Plan? The Director for Planning and Regulation said that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan was last updated in 2024 and could be updated this year
- Members noted that there has been no effective monitoring of the 2018 Cycle

Strategy nor has there been any data collected, this would need to change as part of any update. Members noted that there had been some data provided from Beryl bike hire usage, but this was limited to just where users have hired the bikes from fixed points. There is some data available from the 2021 Census, but this underestimates the number of cyclists

- Officers to note that the South of the town seems to be missing a lot from the Arts and Heritage Trail
- Members asked for a report back on how the secure cycle parking at the railway station was performing and the Director for Planning and Regulation agreed to report back to Members on this, with a view to learn from this for future provision of secure cycle storage elsewhere in the town
- Members asked Officers to report back on what counts as a mobility aid and who can legally use the cycleways
- Regarding Beryl Bikes, Members asked for a detailed update be brought back to the Committee on usage and future developments
- Members noted that cyclists often can't cycle to their destinations. The cycleways were great for recreation and exercise but were limited for transport. There needs to be a north south route and into the town centre
- Members noted previous planning mistakes like the location of Tesco and Costco which broke up previous continuous sections of the cycleways
- Members noted that the cycleways don't go everywhere in the town, therefore cyclists need to use the roads which need to be safe for cyclists
- Members commented on the fact that cycle parking was no longer provided in the cycling prohibition area in the town centre, which causes a problem for those cyclists that carry shopping or want to have their cycle close to where they are shopping for security reasons
- Members noted that the current prohibition of cycling in the town centre excludes responsible cyclists from possible solutions as it focuses on those who ignore the ban
- Members stated that being able to cycle all the way to the cycle parking was a reasonable expectation

The following Recommendation wording to be amended as follows:

- **Cycling Access in the Town Centre & responsible use and management of the Cycle Network**

That officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, explore improvements to cyclist access up to the town centre, including safe routing around the town centre and appropriate secure cycle parking provision and that they engage with cyclists and relevant stakeholders to encourage responsible use of the

- network and consulting on parking and access issues within the town centre
- **Single Point of Officer Responsibility**
That a single, named officer (or dedicated role/Member champion) be identified to lead on implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the Cycling Strategy and associated action plan, and that the Cabinet Portfolio for Transport and the Director of Planning and Regulation investigate ways that this can be funded for a fixed period ahead of the new unitary authority being established under Local Government Reorganisation

3 **INPUT FROM CYCLING USER GROUPS**

The Chair introduced the item and explained that there were four cycling groups that had given feedback on the delivery of the cycle strategy action plan, focusing on two elements for development. The first was creating an implementation plan for cycling network improvements and maintenance, and the second was increasing the provision of secure and accessible cycle parking across the town, including e-bike charging points.

Wheels for Wellbeing

The Committee received a presentation from this organisation, run by and for disabled people. It was noted that the organisation's work operated across two main areas:

- Providing access to cycling
- Campaigns and policy

Members were informed that the organisation operated three inclusive cycling centres and managed a fleet of over 350 cycles, including a wide range of non-standard cycles. These centres enabled disabled people to learn to ride in a safe, off-road and disability-positive environment. The organisation also provided led rides on public infrastructure using loaned cycles and trained ride leaders.

The Committee noted that the organisation delivered training and consultancy across cycling, active travel, micromobility and multimodal journeys. It was reported that regular surveys of disabled cyclists were undertaken to identify barriers and enablers to cycling. All work was underpinned by a mobility justice approach, which prioritised transport investment for those with the least access to mobility options.

The Committee heard that there were several positive impacts of cycling for disabled people including:

- Essential day-to-day transport, helping to address gaps caused by inaccessible public transport and limited private transport access.
- Increased social participation and community connection.
- Physical activity and access to green spaces, supporting physical and mental health.
- Greater autonomy and independence.
- Enjoyment and improved wellbeing.

It was emphasised that designing infrastructure to meet disabled people's needs

benefitted the whole population.

The presentation also identified several barriers for disabled cycling, such as inaccessible infrastructure, lack of safe and secure cycle parking and storage, high cost of non-standard cycles, public hostility and limited opportunities.

The Committee noted that accessible cycling infrastructure and parking design must consider inclusive access from the outset and include maintenance planning. It was highlighted that improving accessibility for disabled cyclists would create a more inclusive, safer and more sustainable transport network for all residents in Stevenage.

In response to questions from members about disabled cyclists utilising local athletics tracks, learnings from cycling parking facilities already built and cycle racks in paved areas, the speaker clarified that there are at least 250 tracks around the country that are inclusive for all and a good starting point for those wanting to try cycling.

It was also noted that some other countries have underground parking facilities, and the officer would take this away to get a written response about how it could work for Stevenage. The speaker informed the committee that they would always recommend parking racks are situated on cycleways to help with accessibility.

In response to another member question, it was noted that Wheels for Wellbeing services are not currently being accessed by Stevenage residents and they have not worked with the Council previously.

Clarification was given that Beryl Bikes do not currently provide any non-standard cycling and officers agreed to take this up with Beryl to look at any opportunity of introducing them to the network.

It was further noted that Herts Disability Sports Foundation do provide Stevenage's inclusive cycling and have a wide range of bikes available.

Invis-Ability

The Committee received a verbal update from a representative of a disabled-led organisation based in Stevenage.

The speaker explained that the organisation operated within the local community and primarily supported disabled residents, as well as family members and friends who assisted them.

It was noted that many of their users regularly relied on the Stevenage cycle network to maintain independence, particularly where they did not drive, enabling access to the town centre and local shops.

The Committee heard that the organisation had developed a strong working relationship with Cycling UK and the local Cycling Hub, initially established following contact with a representative from Cycling UK who had observed the speaker using

a wheelchair with an electric bike attachment. This relationship had grown positively and had resulted in collaborative work, including a joint cycling session and a video produced to highlight potential obstacles, including raised or recessed ironworks and other surface hazards, so that participants using different mobility equipment could prepare accordingly.

Members were advised that user experiences of the cycle network were generally positive, particularly in supporting independence and physical activity. However, several recurring concerns were raised. These included:

- Sections of infrastructure being worn or in need of maintenance, particularly around ironworks.
- Crossing points and refuge islands being too narrow to safely accommodate larger mobility equipment such as scooters or tricycles.
- Problems with dropped kerbs and the camber of paths, which were reported to be consistently uneven and sloping. This was said to create difficulty and fatigue for manual wheelchair users and present risks for a range of users, including those with walking aids or pushchairs.
- Specific examples were given of uneven surfaces and raised lips causing near accidents, including a recent incident in the Old Town.

The Committee was informed that these surface inconsistencies required constant vigilance from disabled users, detracting from their ability to enjoy the environment. Concerns were also raised regarding signage on the cycle network. It was reported that some signs were faded, dirty, missing lettering, or absent altogether. This was highlighted as a particular issue for visually impaired users who relied on clear signage to navigate independently.

In relation to access points onto and off the cycle network, it was noted that steep cambers and drops could present safety risks, particularly in poor weather conditions, and for a wide range of users beyond wheelchair users alone.

The Committee further heard concerns regarding cycling parking provision. It was reported that existing cycle parking facilities were not suitable for larger adapted cycles, such as electric tricycles, and that there was currently no provision for charging adapted electric cycles. The suggestion was made that consideration be given to integrating charging provision for adapted cycles alongside existing electric vehicle infrastructure.

In closing, the speaker emphasised their strong personal support for the cycle network, noting that it had played a significant role in their rehabilitation and ability to exercise following becoming a wheelchair user. While expressing appreciation for the network and the partnership working to date, they stated that improvements were needed to ensure that disabled users could access all areas safely and equitably.

The Committee thanked the speaker for their contribution and noted the issues raised.

Cycling UK Stevenage

Representatives from Cycling UK's Stevenage presented their feedback to the Committee and noted they had been invited to provide constructive criticism. They stated their vision for Stevenage as a town where cycling was chosen because it was safe and convenient. They linked cycling to the Council's modal shift, climate targets, and reducing health inequalities.

Objective 1: Cycling infrastructure & maintenance

The intended outcome of a connected, world-class cycling network had not been achieved.

Key issues identified were:

- Incomplete network and poor access to key destinations.
- New developments not prioritising cycling in practice; driving remained easier.
- Poor surface quality, maintenance issues, and frequent punctures.
- Design barriers in the older network, including steep underpasses and flooding.

They stated that without improvements, cycling would remain limited to a motivated minority.

Objective 2: Secure and accessible cycle parking across the town

Key issues identified were:

- Insufficient secure residential cycle storage was highlighted; demand exceeded current provision.
- The town centre lacked accessible, secure cycle parking.
- The cycling ban in the town centre reduced convenience, particularly for short, multi-stop trips and student access.
- Convenience must outweigh driving to enable behaviour change.
- While policies identified the right ambitions, implementation, monitoring, and accountability were lacking.

They proposed setting a clear target to double cycling trips within five years, supported by automatic cycle counters. They emphasised that increasing cycling rates would require difficult decisions and firm leadership.

The group reaffirmed their willingness to work collaboratively with the Council. They offered lived experience, survey data, and resident panel feedback to inform improvements. They concluded that the Committee's work could be pivotal in delivering a positive cycling legacy for Stevenage.

Stevenage Cycling Hub

The Committee noted that Cycle Hub was established during the 2020 lockdown, which created initial operational challenges. Strong support was received from SBC and Herts County Council. Despite limited initial experience, the team had developed services successfully and demonstrated steady growth.

Cycle Hub provided cycle training from age two upwards, refurbished cycles for sale and hire (including a cargo bike), a small retail offer, led rides, and maintenance courses. Members were asked to support promotion of the Stevenage Community

Chest-funded adult sessions.

In the previous year, delivery included balance biking, beginner and fun skills sessions, Bike ability courses, government-funded “Happy Camps” for children on free school meals, and 171 one-to-one lessons (primarily for children). Attendance reflected increasing geographic reach. The children’s club remained popular, with lower winter participation

The workshop refurbished 15 donated cycles, most of which had been sold, with unusable bikes passed to partner charities. Community engagement included organising the Stevenage Recycling Festival, supporting local Cycling UK rides, and national campaigns.

Key development needs identified included:

- Increased mechanic hours
- Clearer visibility and signage for the building
- Extended weekday opening (subject to funding)
- Additional park cycle routes
- A nearby surfaced training area
- Website and administrative support
- Funding to train additional ride leaders.

Members were encouraged to visit the Hub and observe its work within the community.

At the end of the presentations the Chair invited Members to ask questions or provide comments to the speakers.

A Member queried how progress against the Council's modal shift objective is currently monitored. Officers confirmed that there is no systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation in place for the existing strategy. Concerns were raised regarding the absence of outcome measures and limitations in baseline data. The potential use of cycle counters to establish a more robust baseline was highlighted.

Members discussed issues relating to:

- Loss of previously safe routes within the town centre due to redevelopment.
- Poor connectivity to retail parks and out of town centre shopping areas.
- Steep gradients at underpasses, creating accessibility barriers.
- The need for inclusive design reflecting modern accessibility standards.

It was noted that accessibility standards have evolved since the network’s original 1960s design, and that greater engagement with disabled users is required when developing solutions. Representatives advised that some retail destinations are not safely accessible without significant detours, limiting independent access for some disabled residents.

Officers clarified that:

- The Council is responsible for cleaning cycleways.
- The County Council is responsible for structural maintenance.

Where defects are reported on Council-owned assets, repairs can be arranged. Reporting issues via the website was raised as a concern, and officers agreed to follow this up outside the meeting.

In response to a question regarding whether current issues stem from historic design or lack of investment, it was considered that both factors contribute. The original network design has not been sufficiently modernised, and maintenance has not fully aligned infrastructure with current standards.

A potential location for a pump track was identified in Fairlands Valley Park behind the Stevenage Cycling hub.

Members queried officer capacity to support proposals presented at the meeting. Officers advised that:

- The Committee may make recommendations to the Executive.
- Operational matters can be reviewed where resources allow.
- There is no dedicated cycling officer.
- The Director for Planning and Regulation agreed to look at the 8 points that the Cycling Hub raised in their presentation to see where the Council can lend its support to help them achieve their mission
- Officers would investigate why the fault reporting feature to report damaged cycleways on the website was not working

The previously discussed option of appointing a Member Champion for cycling was referenced as a potential means of providing leadership in the absence of dedicated officer resource.

It was RESOLVED that

- Officers to report back on how the Council is measuring the modal shift objective
- Officers should investigate the costs and mechanisms to establish baseline data potentially using a third-party using cycle counters as a methodology for establishing a baseline
- Officers collate all the actions and recommendations from the two meetings focusing on cycling and present these to the HCC, SBC Cabinet Portfolio holder for transport for a response and work with cycle groups to work towards the agreed outcomes
- With regard to underground parking facilities that officers would take this away and provide a written response about how this could work for Stevenage
- With regard to Beryl Bikes, officers would contact Beryl to investigate the possibility of providing some non-standard cycle hire for disabled users on the Stevenage network

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