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Daneshill House
Danestrete
Stevenage
Hertfordshire

13 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage on Wednesday, 21 October 2026 at the conclusion of the Special Council Meeting and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully

Tom Pike
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 22 JULY AND SPECIAL MEETING 22 JULY 2025

to approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Special Council and Council on 22 July 2026.

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3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive any communications that the Mayor may wish to put before the Council.

4. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

None received.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

In accordance with Standing Orders, a written answer to the following question will be circulated on a supplementary agenda:

What can the council do to increase opportunities for young people to access free

or affordable local activities?

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition shall be given the opportunity to raise one matter relevant to the Borough that has arisen since the last meeting of the Council. The Leader of the Council shall then have the opportunity to advise the Council of matters relevant to the Borough that have arisen since the last meeting.

9. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the recent activities of those Committees.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

In accordance with Standing Orders, the following motions have been received for consideration:

(1) Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

To be moved by Councillor Loraine Rossati

Council welcomes:

1. The Government's *National Plan to End Homelessness*, with its increased focus on prevention and ambition to halve long-term rough sleeping by the end of this Parliament and ultimately end homelessness and rough sleeping.
2. The Government's new £442 million Rough Sleeping Programme, taking planned national investment in homelessness and rough sleeping to more than £4 billion over three years, and its commitment that everyone sleeping rough who needs help should be offered a route off the streets this winter.

Council notes:

1. That rough sleeping and homelessness are distinct but connected issues, requiring different but coordinated responses.
2. That demand for homelessness advice and prevention in Stevenage remains high, with more than 1,300 approaches in each of the last three years; with common reasons including family exclusion, domestic abuse, loss of private rented accommodation, relationship breakdown, rough sleeping and 'sofa surfing'.
3. That Stevenage's Homelessness Prevention Action Plan already prioritises early intervention, trauma-informed and person-centred support, and partnership working, including work to strengthen housing pathways for people leaving hospital or prison.
4. That some groups face particular risks or barriers, including women experiencing hidden homelessness, families with children, those who have served in the Armed Forces, care-experienced people, older people, and

people leaving prison or with a history of offending; and that women sleeping rough are particularly likely to be missed because they often do not feel safe sleeping visibly.

Council believes:

1. With the Prime Minister, that “no one should be forced to sleep rough on our streets”, and that everyone should have access to a safe and secure home. Where someone is not ready or able to accept an offer of accommodation, support and engagement should continue without judgement.
2. That the Government’s shift towards prevention, early identification and assessment based on need provides an opportunity to reach people who may previously have been missed, and to better recognise and respond to the different experiences and barriers faced by women, care-experienced people, people who have served in the Armed Forces and others at greater risk of homelessness.
3. That preventing homelessness requires public services to work together, and that housing, health, social care, Probation and other services should identify people at risk early rather than waiting until they reach crisis.

Council resolves:

1. To review Stevenage’s Homelessness Prevention Action Plan in light of the Government’s National Plan, strengthening early identification and prevention, aligning our approach with the new national framework and making best use of the additional national investment.
2. To better identify and support women experiencing rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, including participating in the Women’s Rough Sleeping Census, using the Government’s new tools and guidance to develop safe, gender-informed support, and exploring local need for women-only temporary accommodation.
3. To build on existing work to strengthen early identification and homelessness prevention for people who have served in the Armed Forces, working with local Armed Forces organisations to support those at risk and connecting them, where appropriate, to the specialist housing and support services being expanded by Government.
4. To review the Council’s housing allocation and homelessness policies to ensure that the Council’s recognition of care experience as lifelong is properly reflected in the support available to care-experienced adults of all ages; and to request that the Cabinet Member for Housing write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government calling for changes to national legislation and policy to recognise care experience beyond the age of 25 within homelessness prevention and housing policy.
5. To work with the NHS and Hertfordshire County Council (including Public Health) to strengthen local prevention and support for people who are homeless or sleeping rough, including access to physical and mental healthcare, substance misuse services, and effective hospital discharge pathways; and to champion the Government’s proposed new duty on public services to collaborate in preventing homelessness.

(2) Thameslink and Great Northern services – First Class Carriages

To be moved by Councillor Tom Wren

The Council Notes That:

- Overcrowding on peak-time Thameslink and Great Northern services remains a major issue for commuters boarding trains at Stevenage.
- The network has transitioned into public ownership under DfT Operator Limited, meaning the government now directly runs the service rather than a private franchise.
- First-class areas typically restrict access to 26 seats that frequently sit empty while standard-class commuters stand in overcrowded trains.

The Council Believes That:

- Retaining any restricted premium sections on an intensive, government-run commuter route is an inefficient use of train capacity.
- Fully declassifying first class would immediately open up extra standard-class seats, as well as additional standing room, with little impact on revenue.
- Across the morning and evening peak windows alone, this simple operational change could provide an estimated 400 to 500 extra available seats daily for commuters using these services.

The Council Resolves To:

1. Write to the Secretary of State for Transport, urging them to use the government's direct operational control of the network to immediately declassify all remaining First Class areas on Thameslink and Great Northern services.
2. Write to the local MP for Stevenage, requesting their support for this proposal.

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

in accordance with Standing Orders, written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Councillor Sarah Mead

Following a request from a resident, please could floodlights be installed on the basketball court at Shephalbury Park to extend use in the winter months?

(B) Question from Councillor Phil Bibby

Given that the Government has announced a pause of Local Government Reform, in view of the wider legal challenges made based on, amongst other things, gerrymandering, how would the Leader of the Council respond to residents on SBC's proposals for the expensive option of 4 Unitaries, and how are these proposals likely to be amended?

(C) Question from Councillor Peter Wilkins

Can you tell me how many Solar panels and how many air source heat

pumps were fitted to council tenanted homes in the financial year 2025/26 (where the smart export guarantee benefits the tenants directly rather than serving a communal area.) and what the target was for the year?

(D) Question from Councillor Ricki Rands

The Comet reported on 23 September 2026 that council mowing at Shackledell Grassland removed a substantial area of habitat and threatened a rare cricket colony.

The site supports six species of bush cricket, three species of grasshopper, as well as butterflies, moths and wildflowers.

The site is managed by Stevenage Borough Council under a Biodiversity Action Plan and is the only known location in Hertfordshire for the scarce great green bush cricket. It has been alleged that approximately 80% of the grassland was mown, despite the Plan recommending that only one quarter be cut each year, resulting in the loss of one of the colony's principal breeding areas.

A similar over-mowing incident occurred in 2018, which the Council described at the time as an "honest mistake".

Will the Council provide a full account of how this incident occurred?

(E) Question from Councillor John Blackwood

The Council committed to providing a new community centre as part of the development at Bragbury End. For clarity, the community room within Brodie Court does not constitute the promised new community centre.

Will the Council confirm whether it remains committed to delivering this facility?

(F) Question from Councillor Matthew Hurst

The Grade II-listed farmhouse at Fairlands Valley Park is in a poor state of repair and the Council has recently submitted a planning application to demolish outbuildings on the site.

Will the Council confirm unequivocally whether it intends to retain and preserve the farmhouse, or whether demolition is being considered?

(G) Question from Councillor Jaysica Marvell

Recent incidents have raised concerns about online abuse, harassment and intimidation directed at people involved in public life in Stevenage, including councillors, council staff and young people participating in the Council's Youth Advisory Board.

Can the Leader set out what procedures the Council currently has in place for responding to and escalating such incidents?

(H) Question from Councillor Ellie Plater

With the increased public presence of the newly established Youth Advisory Board, and with details of its work and the young people involved being shared online, can the Portfolio Holder outline what the Council is doing to support and safeguard young people who choose to participate in civic life, and what more can be done to ensure that young people feel confident putting themselves forward without fear of online abuse or personal attacks?

(I) Question from Councillor Jade Woods

Following the success of our International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) event, what plans do the Council have to build on this momentum and continue to support older residents throughout the year?

(J) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

What is the Council doing to support resident's access to key banking and postal services across our town?

(K) Question from Councillor Doug Bainbridge

Can the Portfolio holder for Housing confirm what specific work has been completed by Stevenage Borough council, outside of the armed forces covenant forum to prepare for the expanded armed forces covenant duty?

In particular which housing policies and procedures and operational practices have been reviewed against the draft statutory guidance.

(L) Question from Councillor Dermot Kehoe

Please can an update to Council be offered regarding the exploratory work on the electrification of larger fleet vehicles?

(M) Question from Councillor Robin Parker

Around the Borough there are a number of defibrillators and bleed control units. Please can consideration be given to making sure all of these are signposted with permanent arrows pointing to the nearest one?

(N) Question from Councillor Ashley-Wren

What plans do the Council have to improve their performance on addressing fly-tipping and support in dealing with the spate of seemingly abandoned vehicles across the Town?

(O) Question from Councillor Parris

The newly refurbished war memorial in the town centre looks fantastic, and I welcome the Council's support for the project. Can the Portfolio Holder

outline what other funding and initiatives are in place to support veterans and the wider Armed Forces community in Stevenage?

(P) Question from Councillor Wren

Most supermarkets now offer a service for the recycling of soft plastics. Can the council consider introducing a soft plastics recycling collection at it's neighbour recycling banks and what impact does the council think this service could have to reduce landfill waste in Stevenage?

12. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

To approve the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2025/26

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13. AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION - PLANNING SCHEME OF DELEGATION

To consider amendments to the Council's Constitution to ensure that it reflects and is compliant with the new National Scheme of Delegation which the Government is introducing via the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

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14. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

To note the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16 September 2026.

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 22 July 2026

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Lloyd Briscoe (Mayor), Jackie Hollywell (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Doug Bainbridge CC, Jan Bainbridge CC, Philip Bibby, John Blackwood, , Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Jeff Bullock, Forhad Chowdhury, Nazmin Chowdhury, Lynda Guy, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Rob Henry, , Matthew Hurst CC, Dermot Kehoe, Lin Martin-Haugh, Jaysica Marvell, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Liam Morrell Phillips, Ellie Plater, Tom Plater, Ricki Rands, Loraine Rossati, Wendy Rouse CC, Peter Wilkins, Nigel Williams, Jade Woods and Tom Wren

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 10.10pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Leanne Brady, Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Andy McGuinness and Graham Spencer.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 HONORARY ALDERMAN - STEPHEN BOOTH

Council considered a Motion to confer the title of Alderman on Stephen Booth.

Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren in moving the motion paid tribute to Stephen Booth and spoke in support of conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on Stephen in recognition of his long-standing service to the Stevenage community. Councillor Ashley-Wren advised that Stephen had represented both Chells and Longmeadow wards and requested that this be recognised.

Reference was also made to Stephen's encouragement and support for young people throughout his public service, including his significant contribution to education through his role as a governor at Barnwell School from 1986 and as Chair of Governors from 1994, where he consistently placed the interests and wellbeing of students at the heart of decision-making.

Councillor Ashley-Wren stated that although he had stepped down as a councillor in May, she was sure that Stephen would continue to support the town in which he had lived for over 50 years.

Councillor Peter Wilkins formally seconded the Motion and endorsed the comments made by Councillor Ashley-Wren regarding Stephen Booth's contribution to the community and public service. He advised that Stephen had been an exemplary councillor with a positive influence both within the community and across political parties.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provisions of the Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, this Council confers the title of Honorary Alderman on Stephen Booth who has rendered many years eminent service as a Councillor including as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group supporting education and lifelong learning and representing residents' concerns in the Longmeadow and Chells Wards.

3 **HONORARY ALDERMAN - MAUREEN MCKAY**

Council considered a Motion to confer the title of Alderman on Maureen McKay.

Councillor Lin Martin-Haugh, in moving the motion, noted Maureen's service as a councillor for Pin Green Ward and previously Martins Wood Ward. Councillor Martin-Haugh paid tribute to her dedication and commitment, recognising her hard work as a member of the Council and her continued contribution to the Labour Party. It was further stated that Maureen remained active in local political and community affairs, demonstrating considerable energy and enthusiasm.

Councillor Claire Parris advised that she was honoured and privileged to formally second the motion for her friend Maureen McKay to become Alderman of the Borough.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provisions of the Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, this Council confers the title of Honorary Alderman on Maureen McKay who has rendered many years eminent service as a Councillor including as Chair of the Licensing, General Purposes and Audit Committees and representing residents' concerns in the former Pin Green Ward.

4 **HONORARY ALDERMAN - MARGARET NOTLEY**

Council considered a Motion to confer the title of Alderman on Margaret Notley.

Councillor Phil Bibby in moving the motion noted Margaret's more than 20 years of service to both the town and the Council. Members heard that she had been a longstanding supporter and colleague to fellow councillors and had worked collaboratively across the years. Tribute was paid to Margaret's extensive community involvement, including her work with the Symonds Green Community Centre, her contribution to the Town Twinning Association, including visits to Kadoma at her own expense, and her role as Chair of the local Scout Group. It was noted that Margaret's commitment to Stevenage and its residents had been evident throughout her public service, and Councillor Bibby expressed wholehearted support for the motion.

Councillor Jackie Hollywell formally seconded the Motion and noted that, in addition to representing Woodfield Ward, Margaret had previously served as a councillor for Symonds Green Ward. Councillor Hollywell spoke warmly of Margaret's commitment to the local community and highlighted her involvement as Chair of the Community Association and her work with the local Scout Group.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provisions of the Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, this Council confers the title of Honorary Alderman on Margaret Notley, former long-serving Councillor for Woodfield Ward, a twice-serving Mayor of Stevenage, and a well-known local figure whose council service spanned several decades particularly in the Symonds Green and Woodfield Wards.

5 **HONORARY ALDERMAN - JEANNETTE THOMAS**

Council considered a Motion to confer the title of Alderman on Jeannette Thomas.

Councillor Richard Henry in moving the motion paid tribute to Jeannette Thomas and spoke in support of conferring the title of Honorary Alderman on her in recognition of her outstanding service to Stevenage. It was noted that during her time on the Council, Jeannette had held a number of senior positions, including Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with responsibility for a range of portfolios, including Community, Health, Older People, Housing and Housing Development, and Resources and Transformation. Councillor Henry referred to Jeannette's strong commitment to housing, community wellbeing and public service, noting her contribution to increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting vulnerable residents and driving regeneration projects across the town. He paid tribute to her leadership, knowledge of local government and dedication to the Council and its residents, and it was noted that her lengthy service had left a lasting legacy for both the authority and the communities she represented.

Councillor Tom Plater formally seconded the Motion and advised that it had been a pleasure to serve alongside Jeanette as a ward colleague over the previous two years. He paid tribute to Jeannette's dedication to public service and her steadfast advocacy on behalf of local residents. Councillor Plater commended Jeannette's contribution to the community and expressed his wholehearted support for the nomination.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provisions of the Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, this Council confers the title of Honorary Alderman on Jeannette Thomas who has rendered many years eminent service as a Councillor including as Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing as well as Resources and Performance representing residents' concerns in the Almond Hill and formally Pin Green Wards.

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 22 July 2026

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Lloyd Briscoe (Mayor), Jackie Hollywell (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Doug Bainbridge CC, Jan Bainbridge CC, Philip Bibby, John Blackwood, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Jeff Bullock, Forhad Chowdhury, Nazmin Chowdhury, Lynda Guy, Jody Hanafin, Richard Henry, Rob Henry, Matthew Hurst CC, Dermot Kehoe, Lin Martin-Haugh, Jaysica Marvell, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Liam Morrell Phillips, Ellie Plater, Tom Plater, Ricki Rands, Lorraine Rossati, Wendy Rouse CC, Peter Wilkins, Nigel Williams, Jade Woods and Tom Wren

Start / End Start Time: 7.00pm
Time: End Time: 10.10am

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

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Leanne Brady, Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Andy McGuinness and Graham Spencer.

Councillors Tom Wren and Robin Parker CC declared interests in Item 14 – Civil Penalties Policy and Item 15 – Renters Rights Act 2025 as residential landlords in Stevenage.

2 **MINUTES - 21 MAY 2026**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Annual Council Meeting on 21 May 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to the inclusion of Councillor Peter Wilkins in the list of apologies for the meeting.

3 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor reported that, during his first nine weeks in office, he had attended 36 civic engagements across Stevenage and the wider community.

These included commemorative events marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day, Armed Forces Day commemorations, the opening of community facilities, and visits to local fairs and volunteer organisations.

The Mayor highlighted his appointment as President of the Stevenage District Scout Association and also referred to engagements alongside civic dignitaries, including

the High Sheriff, Lord-Lieutenant and fellow Mayors, as well as celebrations marking significant milestones for local residents.

The Mayor concluded by highlighting the success of Stevenage Day, attended by an estimated 30,000 people, and thanked all those involved in supporting the town's civic and community activities.

4 COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

There were no community presentations.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no petitions or deputations.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Mayor, Tyra Karira gave an update on events she had attended since the Annual Meeting.

Tyra reported on a positive and active start to her term in office, having participated in a range of civic and community events. These included representing Stevenage at the Town Twinning event, chairing the Youth Advisory Board and engaging with board members on ways to improve opportunities for young people, volunteering with residents at Silkin Court, and attending Stevenage Day. The Youth Mayor also highlighted attendance at the Goodwood Festival of Speed alongside members of the Youth Advisory Board and local college students, with the visit funded by Mission 44.

Tyra advised that along with the Deputy Youth Mayor, she had approved a grant of £150 to Friends of SADA to support the production of a Christmas song aimed at raising awareness and funds.

Tyra expressed her commitment to continuing to attend community events, and engage with young people to ensure that young people's voices were heard.

7 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Council noted that a response to the question submitted by Daryl Osborn regarding the Scrutiny Review of Bus Services had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

Daryl Osborne was present at the meeting and asked the following supplementary question:

‘Given that Stevenage's 80th Anniversary Heritage Bus Running Day is planned for 15 November, and funding is currently being sought, would Councillor Broom encourage his fellow councillors to consider allocating part of their LCB funding to support the event, helping heritage buses reach as many areas of the town as possible?’

In response, Councillor Broom confirmed his support for the proposal, stating that he was keen to see events held to celebrate Stevenage's 80th anniversary. He advised that he would be willing to allocate a portion of his Local Community Budget funding towards the Heritage Bus Running Day and encouraged other councillors to consider making similar contributions to support the event.

The Council then noted that a response to the question submitted by Jack Downie-Webb regarding empty homes had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

Jack Downie-Webb was present at the meeting and asked the following supplementary question:

'How many Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) have been successfully executed against long-term empty properties in the Borough over the previous five years and to what extent had these powers been used to bring vacant homes back into use?

In response, Councillor Broom advised that he had previously outlined the Council's enforcement powers and provided information on local activity relating to empty homes. He stated that a balance struck between addressing housing pressures, using available enforcement powers where appropriate, and maintaining a development approach that protected green space. He considered that the issues raised had largely been addressed in earlier responses, although he gave a commitment to provide additional detail regarding enforcement activity.

8 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Liam Morrell-Phillips, asked the following question:

Would the Leader of the Council commit to ensuring that the Local Government Reorganisation process was subject to full cross-party scrutiny. Councillor Morrell-Phillips stressed the importance of safeguarding Stevenage's identity, services and interests throughout the transition and ensuring that the needs of Stevenage residents remained a key consideration in any future reorganisation arrangements.

The Leader of the Council responded and agreed that securing the best outcomes for the residents of Stevenage and Hertfordshire was of paramount importance. The Leader advised that he worked closely with the Leaders of all Hertfordshire councils, together with Chief Executives and the Police and Crime Commissioner, through the Hertfordshire Leaders Group, which had reaffirmed its commitment to collaborative working in the interests of residents across the county.

The Leader also highlighted the extensive programme of information, engagement and training provided to Members and staff on Local Government Reorganisation over the preceding 18 months, with opportunities for all Members to contribute. The Leader confirmed that he would continue to engage with all Members on the developing arrangements, including future governance structures and preparations

for a shadow authority, and he welcomed input from across the Council as the reorganisation progressed.

The Council then received updates from the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders on the following matters:

- New Homes Update
- Youth Team Enjoy VIP STEM Inspiration Day at Silverstone with Mission 44
- Launch of We WILL Build it Better project, as part of the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme
- Stevenage 80
- Playzone
- Veterans Hub (VALOUR Programme) – Progress Update
- Care experience added as protected characteristic
- Food Waste Collections
- Local Government Reorganisation

9 **UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

Councillor Ellie Plater, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee gave an update on the work of the Committee. At its meeting on 15 June 2026, Members had considered a range of reports, including those relating to Pavement Licensing, Civil Penalties, Enforcement under the Renters' Rights Act, the Local Plan Partial Update, the Community Infrastructure Levy, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and Contract and Land Development matters. Members had noted the Council's robust approach to housing enforcement, including the ring-fencing of income from civil penalties for private sector housing enforcement activity. The Committee also received assurances that the current Local Plan would remain in force until its end date and sought clarification regarding proposed governance arrangements associated with LGR.

At its meeting on 21 July 2026, the Committee considered reports including the St Nicholas Pride in Place programme, the Quarter 4 Outturn Monitoring Report, the Corporate Performance reports, the Draft Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031, Sports and Leisure services, and a Contract Award for Repairs and voids materials. Members focused particularly on the composition of the St Nicholas Pride in Place Board, measures being taken to address ongoing challenges with housing voids through improved tenant engagement and tenancy audits, and proposals within the Draft Tenancy Strategy to strengthen tenant engagement and involvement.

Councillor Jim Brown gave an update on the work of the Community Select Committee. He advised that the Committee had agreed its 2026/27 work programme including policy development of the Tenancy Strategy and Housing Strategy, a major review of support for young people, an annual review of the Housing Allocations Policy, updates on housing damp and mould, preparation for Local Government Reorganisation, the Statutory Crime and Disorder Committee, and a standing Public Health item.

The Committee also considered the scoping document for its review of support for young people. Members agreed that the review should focus broadly on young

people aged 14 to 25 and include consideration of education, training, employment, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), looked-after children and care leavers. Members further agreed that the review should adopt a partnership approach involving schools, health services and other key organisations, with a particular emphasis on mental health, access to support services, neurodiversity, family support and the impact of these issues on educational outcomes and wellbeing.

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Leanne Brady, Councillor Ellie Plater gave an update on the work of the Community Select Committee.

The Committee approved a work programme including reviews of fly-tipping, cycling, skills and employment, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Members also agreed the scope of the fly-tipping review, which would examine enforcement activity, deterrents and penalties, the use of CCTV and signage, reporting arrangements, performance measures, hotspot locations, and access to waste disposal facilities.

The Committee also reviewed its Action Tracker and requested future updates on waste and recycling in flat blocks, the impact of the new college campus on skills provision and the local economy, and the effect of the cost-of-living crisis. Members agreed to defer further scrutiny of bus services, with the option of revisiting the issue in 2027 if required.

10 **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

Councillor Ellie Plater Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, moved that the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2025/26 be noted.

In moving the report, Councillor Plater advised that it reflected the significant volume of work undertaken by the three Scrutiny Committees during the 2025/26 municipal year. She advised that the Committees had conducted a wide range of reviews and investigations, providing detailed scrutiny of Council services and matters affecting local residents. She stressed that the scrutiny process added value through in-depth examination and constructive challenge, which supported informed decision-making. The Chair further commented that the report demonstrated the importance placed on scrutiny by Stevenage Borough Council and highlighted the strong cross-party commitment to the scrutiny function.

Councillor Brown in seconding the report confirmed that the scrutiny reviews undertaken during the year by all three committees had covered a wide range of significant and diverse topics, demonstrating the breadth and depth of the scrutiny function in examining issues of importance to the Council and local residents.

The Leader, Councillor Richard Henry acknowledged the crucial work of the Scrutiny Committees supported by the Scrutiny Officer in holding the Cabinet to account across the ambitious work agenda of the Council. He thanked the current Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees for their work.

It was **RESOLVED** that the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

and Select Committees during 2025/26, as set out in the report, be noted.

11

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in Stevenage

Councillor Tom Plater moved the following motion:

This Council notes that:

1. Apprenticeships provide a vital pathway into skilled employment for people of all ages, including young people entering the labour market, adults seeking to retrain or progress in their careers, and residents looking to develop new skills.
2. The Government has placed skills, training and employment at the heart of its mission to grow the economy and break down barriers to opportunity.
3. Recent apprenticeship reforms include measures to increase flexibility for employers and learners, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, expand opportunities for young people, introduce Foundation Apprenticeships, and reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy to better meet local labour market needs.
4. Stevenage has a proud history as a centre for innovation, advanced manufacturing, engineering, life sciences and technology, with major employers including Airbus, MBDA, Autolus and GSK, alongside a growing business community requiring a skilled local workforce.
5. This Council has already recognised the success of Stevenage Works in bringing together employers, education providers and public agencies to deliver employment, skills and social value outcomes for local residents.
6. Strong partnerships between local authorities, employers, colleges, training providers and Government are essential if local people are to benefit fully from apprenticeship reforms and wider economic growth.
7. Despite progress, barriers remain for residents seeking apprenticeships, including awareness of opportunities, travel costs, confidence, access to networks, caring responsibilities and competition for placements.

This Council believes that:

1. Every resident in Stevenage should have access to high-quality education, training, apprenticeships or employment opportunities at every stage of life.
2. Apprenticeships should be accessible to people from all backgrounds and at all ages, supporting social mobility, lifelong learning and inclusive economic growth.
3. Stevenage Borough Council has an important leadership role in convening partners and ensuring that regeneration and inward investment create opportunities for local

people throughout their working lives.

4. The Government's reforms provide a significant opportunity to increase apprenticeship participation, address local skills shortages and ensure businesses can access the workforce they need.
5. Existing partnerships, including Stevenage Works, provide a strong foundation on which to expand apprenticeship opportunities across the town.

This Council resolves to:

1. Work with key partners, including North Hertfordshire College, local schools, employers, training providers, the Hertfordshire skills system, Stevenage Works and business networks to maximise the opportunities arising from the Government's apprenticeship reforms.
2. Strengthen and promote partnership working across Stevenage to increase apprenticeship availability and encourage greater employer participation.
3. Work with existing contractors, developers and partners to increase apprenticeship opportunities through procurement, Section 106 agreements, social value commitments and workforce planning, whilst ensuring that agreed apprenticeship, employment and skills commitments are effectively monitored and delivered.
4. Support the promotion of apprenticeships through careers events, outreach activity and engagement with residents, particularly those who are not currently in education, employment or training, or who may benefit from retraining and upskilling opportunities.
5. Work with local employers to identify barriers to apprenticeship recruitment and retention and advocate for solutions where appropriate.
6. Request that the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Skills reports back to Members within twelve months on progress made, including:
 - apprenticeship opportunities supported or created;
 - partnership activity undertaken;
 - engagement with local employers and education providers; and
 - recommendations for further action.
7. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State for Skills, welcoming the Government's apprenticeship reforms, highlighting the work being undertaken in Stevenage through Stevenage Works and related partnerships, and inviting Ministers to engage with Stevenage as an example of effective local delivery of the Government's skills agenda.

In moving the motion, Councillor Plater highlighted the importance of apprenticeships, skills development and employment opportunities in ensuring that residents of all ages could access education, training and rewarding careers. He spoke of the benefits of apprenticeships in improving social mobility, addressing skills shortages and supporting economic growth, and welcomed recent Government reforms aimed at increasing flexibility and access to training.

Councillor Plater made reference to Stevenage's strengths in advanced manufacturing, space technology, defence and life sciences, and the need to ensure that local residents have the skills required to access employment opportunities arising from these sectors. He advised that the Council was already supporting this objective through initiatives such as Stevenage Works, partnerships with employers, schools, North Hertfordshire College, training providers and Jobcentre Plus, and by embedding skills and employment opportunities within the town's regeneration programme.

Councillor Plater referred to the Council's partnership with Mission 44 and its commitment to removing barriers to opportunity, particularly for young people seeking careers in STEM-related fields. He further acknowledged the value of the Council's own apprenticeship programme and its focus on developing and retaining talent within the organisation.

Councillor Plater advised that the Council was strengthening partnerships with employers and training providers, exploring barriers to apprenticeship creation and increasing access to skills and training opportunities. He also confirmed that the Council would write to Government to highlight Stevenage's successful approach to skills development and apprenticeships and to support the continued growth of opportunities for local residents.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Dermot Kehoe.

Councillor Morrell-Philips, Leader of the Opposition moved and Councillor Matthew Hurst seconded the following amendment:

To delete the final resolution, which read:

"Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State for Skills, welcoming the Government's apprenticeship reforms, highlighting the work being undertaken in Stevenage through Stevenage Works and related partnerships, and inviting Ministers to engage with Stevenage as an example of effective local delivery of the Government's skills agenda."

and replace it with:

"Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State for Skills, highlighting the apprenticeship, skills and employment work being undertaken in Stevenage through Stevenage Works and related partnerships, and seeking additional Government support and funding to expand apprenticeship opportunities for Stevenage residents."

Councillor Morrell Phillips advised that the remainder of the motion would be unchanged and that the intention was simply to focus the requested letter on securing further support and funding for Stevenage residents.

A number of Members spoke on the amendment and following consideration by the mover of the original motion, Councillor Tom Plater and in agreement with the mover

of the amendment Councillor Morrell Phillips, the Motion was amended to read:

This Council notes that:

1. Apprenticeships provide a vital pathway into skilled employment for people of all ages, including young people entering the labour market, adults seeking to retrain or progress in their careers, and residents looking to develop new skills.
2. The Government has placed skills, training and employment at the heart of its mission to grow the economy and break down barriers to opportunity.
3. Recent apprenticeship reforms include measures to increase flexibility for employers and learners, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, expand opportunities for young people, introduce Foundation Apprenticeships, and reform the Apprenticeship Levy into a Growth and Skills Levy to better meet local labour market needs.
4. Stevenage has a proud history as a centre for innovation, advanced manufacturing, engineering, life sciences and technology, with major employers including Airbus, MBDA, Autolus and GSK, alongside a growing business community requiring a skilled local workforce.
5. This Council has already recognised the success of Stevenage Works in bringing together employers, education providers and public agencies to deliver employment, skills and social value outcomes for local residents.
6. Strong partnerships between local authorities, employers, colleges, training providers and Government are essential if local people are to benefit fully from apprenticeship reforms and wider economic growth.
7. Despite progress, barriers remain for residents seeking apprenticeships, including awareness of opportunities, travel costs, confidence, access to networks, caring responsibilities and competition for placements.

This Council believes that:

1. Every resident in Stevenage should have access to high-quality education, training, apprenticeships or employment opportunities at every stage of life.
2. Apprenticeships should be accessible to people from all backgrounds and at all ages, supporting social mobility, lifelong learning and inclusive economic growth.
3. Stevenage Borough Council has an important leadership role in convening partners and ensuring that regeneration and inward investment create opportunities for local people throughout their working lives.
4. The Government's reforms provide a significant opportunity to increase apprenticeship participation, address local skills shortages and ensure businesses can access the workforce they need.
5. Existing partnerships, including Stevenage Works, provide a strong foundation

on which to expand apprenticeship opportunities across the town.

This Council resolves to:

1. Work with key partners, including North Hertfordshire College, local schools, employers, training providers, the Hertfordshire skills system, Stevenage Works and business networks to maximise the opportunities arising from the Government's apprenticeship reforms.
2. Strengthen and promote partnership working across Stevenage to increase apprenticeship availability and encourage greater employer participation.
3. Work with existing contractors, developers and partners to increase apprenticeship opportunities through procurement, Section 106 agreements, social value commitments and workforce planning, whilst ensuring that agreed apprenticeship, employment and skills commitments are effectively monitored and delivered.
4. Support the promotion of apprenticeships through careers events, outreach activity and engagement with residents, particularly those who are not currently in education, employment or training, or who may benefit from retraining and upskilling opportunities.
5. Work with local employers to identify barriers to apprenticeship recruitment and retention and advocate for solutions where appropriate.
6. Request that the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Skills reports back to Members within twelve months on progress made, including:
 - apprenticeship opportunities supported or created;
 - partnership activity undertaken;
 - engagement with local employers and education providers; and
 - recommendations for further action.
7. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State for Skills, welcoming the Government's apprenticeship reforms, highlighting the apprenticeship, skills and employment work being undertaken in Stevenage through Stevenage Works and related partnerships, and seeking additional Government support and funding to expand apprenticeship opportunities for Stevenage residents.

Following further debate, Councillor Tom Plater thanked Members for their contributions.

Upon being put to the vote, the amended Motion was carried.

Protecting Fairlands Valley Park and South Field from Development beyond Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Tom Wren moved the following motion:

This Council notes that:

1. Fairlands Valley Park is one of Stevenage's most valued public open spaces, providing essential recreational, environmental, health, and wellbeing benefits to residents of all ages.
2. The Park, including South Field and all associated green spaces, is widely used for leisure activities including walking, sport, community events, wildlife enjoyment, education, and informal recreation.
3. Public green spaces play a critical role in protecting biodiversity, improving air quality, supporting mental and physical health, mitigating flooding, and maintaining the character and identity of Stevenage
4. Future generations should be guaranteed permanent access to these open spaces for recreation and leisure purposes.
5. The maximum environmental protections are currently in place for Fairlands Valley Park and South Field under the existing town plan. There is concern that our current intentions are vulnerable to future challenges and potential changes to the town plan by successive administrations following local Government reorganisation, which may change the status of Fairlands Valley land.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Publicly state our firm opposition against any current or future proposal for housing development, residential construction, or urban encroachment within Fairlands Valley Park, including the South Field.
2. Explore and implement the strongest available legal protections, including but not limited to:
 - a. a restrictive covenant in partnership with Herts Wildlife Trust
 - b. protected open space designation,
 - c. Fields in Trust protection,
 - d. or other legally binding mechanisms,
3. Ensure the land is permanently safeguarded for leisure, recreation, environmental, and community use only.
4. Request that Council officers prepare a report outlining the legal options available to secure long term protection of the Park and South Field from development other than for the improvement of existing infrastructure, including the Farmhouse.
5. Commit to working with local residents, environmental groups, sports organisations, and community stakeholders to preserve and enhance the park for future generations.
6. Write to relevant regional and national planning authorities confirming the

Council's position that Fairlands Valley Park in its entirety and South Field must remain protected public leisure land and should not be allocated for housing development or industrial use in any future local planning framework.

In moving the motion, Councillor Wren advised that while existing Local Plan protections for Fairlands Valley Park were strong, they could be amended in the future. Councillor Wren emphasised the importance of taking action now to secure the strongest possible protections for Fairlands Valley while the Council had the ability to do so. It was argued that safeguarding the area now would help ensure its long-term protection for future generations.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Sarah Mead expressed concern about the potential implications of Local Government Reorganisation and the possibility of decisions affecting Stevenage being taken by representatives from outside the town. She emphasised the importance of protecting Fairlands Valley, describing it as a valued landmark and community asset enjoyed by generations of residents and serving as a place that brought people together across the town.

While acknowledging that Fairlands Valley currently benefitted from protection through the Local Plan, Councillor Mead stressed that planning policies could be changed in the future and therefore should not be relied upon alone and contended that stronger, long-term protections should be pursued to preserve Fairlands Valley for future generations and protect it from potential development proposals.

Following further debate in support of the motion it was acknowledged that Fairlands Valley already benefitted from significant environmental and planning protections and that the area was designated as a Principal Open Space within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and protected by policies relating to green infrastructure, the natural environment, principal open spaces and the Stevenage Green Link Network.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

12 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

The Council received eight questions from Members to Committee Chairs/Portfolio Holders.

The responses to the eight questions had been published in the supplementary agenda for the meeting.

(A) Question from Councillor Peter Wilkins re: Food Waste Collection

Supplementary question – Given that the Council's recycling rate was currently around 37-38% and remained below many neighbouring authorities, would the Council consider setting a target to increase recycling to at least 42% within the next two years?"

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that further work was required to improve communications and encourage greater participation in food waste recycling. He advised that while early indications were encouraging, it was considered

too soon to draw firm conclusions regarding longer-term trends but it was anticipated that participation rates would continue to increase gradually over time. Councillor Brown also made reference was also made to discussions held through the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, where similar challenges were being experienced by other authorities.

- (B) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness re: the planned schedule of environmental maintenance

Supplementary question – if there was additional capacity arising from reduced grass cutting, could this be used to undertake targeted weed clearance in high-footfall areas, such as neighbourhood centres, particularly where weeds had been sprayed but not subsequently removed?

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council was continuing to invest in the maintenance of the public realm, including additional work on hedgerow management and environmental upkeep across the town. He advised of a number of issues were currently affecting green spaces, including the impact of the prolonged dry weather, which had resulted in some trees shedding leaves prematurely and created additional maintenance requirements. He acknowledged the points raised by Councillor McGuinness and confirmed that they would be taken into consideration as part of the Council's ongoing management of the town's green spaces and public realm.

- (C) Question from Councillor Phil Bibby re: fuel inflation

There was no supplementary question

- (D) Question from Councillor Robin Parker re: automatic external defibrillators (AEDs)

Supplementary question – could a small budget be established within the General Revenue Account from next April to fund the replacement of automatic external defibrillators and any necessary replacement parts across the town.

The Portfolio Holder advised that he would be willing to explore the provision of funding and the mechanism and source of funding but gave a commitment to investigate the options available and determine whether support could be provided.

- (E) Question from Councillor Julie Ashley-Wren re: Fairlands Valley Lakes

Supplementary question – Would the Council give consideration to reinstating the climbing wall at the Lakes

The Portfolio Holder explained that the matter had previously been considered and that concerns regarding safety, together with the potential cost of replacement, had prevented further progress at that time. The issue would be considered as part of the Council's wider review of facilities and activities within Fairlands Valley.

(F) Question from Councillor Peter Clark re: extreme heat

Supplementary question – What measures were put in place to support people sleeping rough during the recent heatwave?

The Portfolio Holder explained that the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was activated during periods of extreme weather, including both severe cold and extreme heat. The Rough Sleeper Team increased its outreach and support activity and adopted a proactive approach to engagement, seeking to support individuals into accommodation where possible while respecting personal choices.

Additional measures included responding promptly to reports of rough sleeping, undertaking extra welfare visits and supporting approximately 8 to 10 people each day through the Homeless Community Hub. The Hub provided access to cold water, meals, ice lollies, sunscreen, hats and other items to help people stay safe during the heatwave.

Members were advised that similar support measures would be implemented during any future periods of extreme heat.

(G) Question from Councillor Jaysica Marvell re: Financial Support for residents

Supplementary question – is the Council measuring whether the apprenticeship programmes lead to improved outcomes for residents, such as moving into employment, increasing earnings, or, where appropriate, reducing reliance on benefits?

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that he did not have the requested information available and was unable to confirm whether the figures currently existed. He undertook to provide a written response to the Member following the meeting.

(H) Question from Councillor Tom Wren regarding: Pride in Place Funding

Supplementary question – Could further information be provided on the data behind the Community Needs Index, and how this compared across all Stevenage wards?

The Leader of the Council advised that the criteria used to allocate funding had been based on objective measures and had been assessed independently. The Council would act as the accountable body during the early stages of the programme, with responsibility for governance, financial oversight and decision-making with both the local MP and Council representatives to be involved in the Board and its decision-making processes.

In addition, the Leader explained that a preferred candidate for the role of Chair had been identified and once appointed, would work with Council representatives to consider applications for the Neighbourhood Board and

ensure balanced representation from local organisations and residents, with a significant proportion of members drawn from the St Nicholas community. The Leader also offered to provide further information regarding the Government's funding allocation process.

13 **BUSINESS & PLANNING ACT 2020 – NEW PAVEMENT LICENSING POLICY**

The Council considered a report in respect of the Council's Draft Pavement Licensing Policy.

It was moved by Councillor Rob Broom, and seconded by Councillor Lin Martin-Haugh, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the report be noted and the proposed Stevenage Borough Council Pavement Licensing Policy (attached at appendix A) be approved.
2. That the proposed Stevenage Borough Council Pavement Licensing Policy be adopted.

14 **CIVIL PENALTIES POLICY**

The Council considered a report in respect of the Council's revised Civil Penalty Policy.

It was moved by Councillor Rob Broom, and seconded by Councillor Loraine Rossati, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that Civil Penalty Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report be adopted.

15 **RENTERS RIGHTS ACT 2025 - ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

The Council considered a report in respect of the Council's Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy.

It was moved by Councillor Rob Broom, and seconded by Councillor Loraine Rossati, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

In response to concerns from a member regarding staffing capacity, the Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the additional workload associated with the proposals would place increased pressure on the enforcement team. The need for additional resources to support delivery would be monitored closely as demand developed. It was recognised that effective implementation would require sufficient enforcement capacity, and Councillor Broom confirmed a commitment to keeping resource requirements under review.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the Renters' Rights Act 2025 Enforcement Policy, attached as Appendix A to the report be adopted.

16 **STEVENAGE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE: ADOPTION**

The Council considered a report in respect of the adoption of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update.

It was moved by Councillor Rob Broom, and seconded by Councillor Claire Parris, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update, incorporating Main Modifications (Appendix C to E) and associated Proposals Map (Appendix F) be adopted.
2. That the feedback from the Planning & Development Committee on the content of the Report be noted.

17 **STEVENAGE BOROUGH REVISED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY: ADOPTION**

The Council considered the adoption of the Stevenage Borough Revised Community Infrastructure Levy.

It was moved by Councillor Rob Broom, and seconded by Councillor Claire Parris, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the Stevenage Borough Revised Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (Appendix B) be adopted.
2. That the feedback from the Planning & Development Committee on the content of this Report be noted.

18 **DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE UNDER THE SPECIAL URGENCY PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES (EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS) (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2012**

The Council considered a report in respect of the decision(s) taken by the Cabinet in accordance with the Special Urgency provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Monitoring Officer reported that, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, where the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to waive call-in on grounds of urgency, the decision must be reported to the next available meeting of Council together with the reasons for urgency. Members were advised that call-in had been waived in this instance due to the requirement for Hertfordshire authorities to submit a single collective response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) within a prescribed

timescale.

It was then moved by Councillor Richard Henry, and seconded by Councillor Ellie Plater, that the Recommendations in the report be approved.

Upon the motion being put to the vote, it was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

19 **AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 2 June 2026 were received.

20 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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.

21 **STEVENAGE NEW LEISURE CENTRE - WORKS CONTRACT**

The Council considered a Part II report in respect of the delivery of the new Stevenage Sports and Leisure Centre

Following debate where all Members welcomed the new Leisure Centre, upon being put to the vote it was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations in the report be approved.

CHAIR

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Meeting:	CABINET / AUDIT COMMITTEE / COUNCIL	Agenda Item:	
Portfolio Area:	Resources and Performance		
Date:	10 September 2026 / 16 September 2026 / 21 October 2026		

Annual Treasury Management Review 2025/26 and Prudential Indicators

NON-KEY DECISION

Author – Rhona Bellis
Contributor – Atif Iqbal
Lead Officer – Clare Fletcher
Contact Officer – Clare Fletcher/Atif Iqbal

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 Note the annual Treasury Management Report for 2025/26.
- 1.2 Approve the actual 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators in this report.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet

That, subject to any comments made by the Audit Committee to the Council, the 2025/26 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

2.2 Audit Committee

That, subject to any comments by the Cabinet to the Council, the 2025/26 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

2.3 Council

That, subject to any comments from the Audit Committee and the Cabinet, the 2025/26 Annual Treasury Management Review be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Regulatory Requirement

3.1.1 The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2025/26. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

3.1.2 During 2025/26 the minimum reporting requirements were that the Council should receive the following reports:

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Council 26 February 2025)
- a mid-year treasury update report (Council 17 December 2025)
- an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report).

3.1.3 In December 2017, CIPFA revised the Code to require, all local authorities to report on:

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed; and
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

These elements are covered in the annual Capital Strategy reported to Council in February each year.

3.1.4 The regulatory environment places responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by Members.

3.1.5 This report summarises:

- Capital activity during the year;
- Impact of this activity on the Council's underlying indebtedness (the Capital Financing Requirement);
- The actual prudential and treasury indicators;
- Overall treasury position identifying how the Council has borrowed in relation to this indebtedness, and the impact on investment balances;
- Summary of interest rate movements in the year;
- Detailed debt activity; and
- Detailed investment activity.

3.1.6 Officers confirm that they have complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by the Audit Committee and the Cabinet before they were reported to the Council.

3.1.7 Member training on treasury management issues was undertaken during the year on 22 January 2026 in order to support members' scrutiny role.

3.2 Executive Summary

3.2.1 During 2025/26, the Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements as outlined in paragraph 3.1.1 above. These requirements include:

- a. The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's minimal risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- b. The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

3.2.2 The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparators, are as follows:

Table 1

Prudential and treasury indicators £000	31/03/2025 Actual	2025/26 Original Budget	31/03/2026 Actual
Capital expenditure			
GF	13,347	51,821	22,334
HRA	31,074	51,399	30,707
Total	44,421	103,220	53,041
Capital Financing Requirement			
GF	62,119	70,561	69,266
HRA	272,356	286,179	273,845
Total	334,475	356,740	343,111
Gross borrowing¹	254,057	306,686	266,057
Investments			

¹ Excludes Finance Leases

Prudential and treasury indicators £000	31/03/2025 Actual	2025/26 Original Budget	31/03/2026 Actual
Under 1 year	46,132	30,000	51,865
Net borrowing	227,057	276,686	214,192

- 3.2.3 There was rephasing of planned capital expenditure from 2025/26 into future years resulting in an overall reduction in the use of borrowing to finance capital expenditure. Not all capital expenditure is funded from borrowing so the reduction in the capital financing requirement (the Councils need to borrow) does not match the reduction in capital expenditure. Details of the slippage are in the quarterly monitoring update reports to Cabinet – see background papers.
- 3.2.4 Other prudential and treasury indicators are to be found in the main body of this report. The Chief Finance Officer also confirms that borrowing (internal and external) was only undertaken for a capital purpose, and the statutory borrowing limit (the authorised limit) was not breached.
- 3.2.5 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the year the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2025/26.
- 3.2.6 All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

4 THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FINANCING

- 4.1.1 Capital expenditure² can be financed either from capital resources the Council has on its balance sheet (e.g. capital receipts and capital grants) or by making a revenue contribution to capital. If sufficient capital resources are not available to fund the expenditure the Council would need to borrow to meet the funding gap. This borrowing may be taken externally in new loans or internally from cash balances held by the Council. The need to borrow is measured and reported through the Prudential Indicators.
- 4.1.2 The actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows the actual capital expenditure and how this was financed.

² Council expenditure can be classified as capital when it is used to purchase assets with a life of more than one year, exceeds £10,000 in value and meets the guidelines laid out in CIPFA accounting practices.

Table 2

Capital Expenditure and Financing £000	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Original Budget	2025/26 Actual
General Fund			
Capital Expenditure:	13,347	51,821	22,334
Financed excluding borrowing	(9,156)	(45,393)	(14,634)
Unfinanced capital expenditure (borrowing)	4,191	6,428	7,700
HRA			
Capital Expenditure:	31,074	51,399	30,707
Financed excluding borrowing	(31,074)	(37,576)	(27,926)
Unfinanced capital expenditure (borrowing)	-	13,823	2,781

4.2 THE COUNCIL'S OVERALL BORROWING NEED

- 4.2.1 The Council's underlying need to borrow to finance capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). It represents the amount of debt it needs to/has taken out to fund the capital programme (and includes both internal and external borrowing). The CFR is then reduced as debt repayments are made, and Minimum Revenue Provisions are made. A separate CFR is calculated for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and any transfers of assets (such as land or buildings) between the two accounts will impact on each fund's CFR. The CFR will go up on the fund "receiving" the assets and go down (by the same amount) on the fund "giving" the asset. There were no transfers of assets in 2025/26.
- 4.2.2 Part of the Council's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Council's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies, (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLB], or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources within the Council.
- 4.2.3 Reducing the CFR – the Council's (non HRA) underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The Council is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision – MRP, to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the non-Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing need, (there is no

statutory requirement to reduce the HRA CFR). This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.

4.2.4 The total CFR can also be reduced by:

- a. the application of additional capital financing resources, (such as unapplied capital receipts); or
- b. charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).

4.2.5 The Council's 2025/26 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (MRP), as required by MHCLG Guidance, was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2025/26 on 26 February 2025.

The MRP charged to the General Fund in 2025/26 was £815K of which:

- £144K is funded from investment property
- £41K is funded by the new multi storey car park (Railway North)
- £157K is funded by the Garage Improvements Programme
- £131K is a net cost to the General Fund
- £119K charged for improvements to leisure facilities
- £223K housing development (wholly owned company)

4.2.6 The Council's CFR for the year is shown below and represents a key prudential indicator. It includes finance leases included on the balance sheet, which increase the Council's borrowing need. No borrowing is actually required against these schemes as a borrowing facility is included in the contract.

Table 3

CFR £000	31/03/2025 Actual	2025/26 Q3 Budget	31/03/2026 Actual
General Fund			
Opening balance	58,643	62,119	62,119
Add: unfinanced capital expenditure (as above)	4,191	8,390	7,700
Increase in finance lease obligations	1,121	-	-
Less:			
Unfinanced capital expenditure from prior years now financed	(11)	(44)	(44)
Repayment of external borrowing	(1,000)	500	500
MRP / VRP	(454)	(591)	(815)

CFR £000	31/03/2025 Actual	2025/26 Q3 Budget	31/03/2026 Actual
Finance lease repayments	(361)	(194)	(194)
Closing balance	62,119	70,180	69,266
Movement CFR 2024/25 to 2025/26			7,147
Closing balance excluding finance lease	44,762	52,273	52,273
CFR (£000): HRA			
Opening balance	272,384	272,356	272,356
Add: Unfinanced capital expenditure (as above)	-	6,459	2,781
Less:			
Repayment of external borrowing		(500)	(500)
Unfinanced capital expenditure from prior years now financed		(750)	(750)
Finance lease repayments	(28)	(42)	(42)
Closing balance	272,356	277,523	273,845
Movement CFR 2024/25 to 2025/26			1,489
Closing balance excluding finance lease³	271,051	276,260	272,582

4.2.7 The movement in the GF CFR between 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026 is £7 Million, mainly made up of:

- £7.5 Million relating to borrowing used to finance additional lending to Swingate LLP as part of the joint venture with Mace.
- Reduction in overall borrowing as a result of the application of MRP £814K.

4.2.8 Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for gross borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

4.3 Limits to Borrowing Activity

Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Council should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2024/25) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2025/26) and next two financial years. This essentially means that

³ HRA leases 10 residential properties from Marshgate Ltd a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council.

the Council is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allowed the Council some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2025/26. The table below highlights the Council's gross borrowing position against the CFR. The Council has complied with this prudential indicator.

Table 4

Limits to Borrowing £000	31/03/2025 Actual	2025/26 Budget	31/03/2026 Actual
Gross borrowing position	254,057	287,516	266,057
Finance Leases	18,540	19,170	18,256
CFR	(334,475)	(356,740)	(343,111)
(Under) / over funding of CFR – Internal Borrowing	(61,878)	(50,054)	(58,798)

- 4.4 The **authorised limit** - the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. Once this has been set, the Council does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2025/26 the Council has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.
- 4.5 The **operational boundary** – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary are acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.
- 4.6 **Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream** - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital, (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income), against the net revenue stream.

Table 5

Authorised limits	Operational Boundary £'000	Authorised Limit £'000	Actual External Debt 31/03/2026 £'000	Financing costs % of net revenue stream	
				GF	HRA
Borrowing	356,740	374,740	284,313		
Less Investments			(51,865)		
Total 2025/26	356,740	374,740	232,448	(2)%	12%

- 4.6.1 The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream is equal to General Fund interest costs divided by the General Fund net revenue income from Council tax, Revenue Support Grant and retained business rates. For the HRA the net revenue stream is the income shown in the Council's accounts – rents, service charges and other income.
- 4.6.2 The ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream reflects the relatively high level of debt as a result of the HRA self-financing deal with the government in 2012 (HRA 2024/25 13%).
- 4.6.3 The General Fund comparative rates for 2024/25 are (9)%. The movement to (2%) reflects the increased cost of funding through MRP unfunded capital expenditure. Capital receipts expected to be received in 2026/27 and 2027/28 are expected to significantly reduce this funding requirement.
- 4.6.4 Fluctuations in average external debt during the year include additional PWLB borrowing of £12 Million and repayment of PWLB debt of £0.5 Million. The balance at the end of the year is materially lower than both the operational and authorised limits. The difference between average and maximum debt balances are minimal.

4.7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

TREASURY POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

- 4.7.1 The Council's treasury management debt and investment position is organised by the treasury management service in order to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through Member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity detailed in the Council's Treasury Management Practices.
- 4.7.2 At the end of 2025/26 the Council's treasury position (excluding finance leases), was as follows:

Table 6

Treasury Position (Excludes Finance Leases)	31/03/2025 Principal £000	Rate / Return 2025/26 %	Average Life 2025/26 (Yrs.)	31/03/2026 Principal £000	Rate / Return 2025/26 %	Average Life 2025/26 (Yrs.)
PWLB Borrowing	247,987	3.60	11	259,487	3.28	10
Other Borrowing (LEP)	6,570	-	5	6,570	-	4
Total External Debt	254,557	-	-	266,057	-	-
Capital Financing Requirement	(315,813)	-	-	(317,240)	-	-
Over/(Under) borrowing	(61,256)	-	-	(51,183)	-	-
Total Treasury Investments	44,196	4.95	<1	51,865	4.35	<1
Net Debt	(17,060)			682		

The maturity structure of the external debt portfolio was as follows:

Table 7

Debt Maturity Structure £000	31.3.25 Actual	2025/26 Authorised Limit	31.3.26 Actual
Within 1 Year	500		8,000
Over 1 not over 2 years	8,000		10,456
Over 2 not over 5 years	30,656		43,200
Over 5 not over 10 years	84,400		91,463
Over 10 not over 20 years	106,431		101,368
Over 20 not over 30 years	18,000		5,000
Total PWLB Debt	247,987		259,487
LEP Loan:			
Over 1 not over 4 years	6,570		6,570
Total LEP Loan	6,570		6,570
Total Debt	254,557	374,740	266,057

4.7.3 The General Fund loan from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is in relation to regeneration activities.

The Councils Investment portfolio (Treasury and non-treasury investments) is as follows:

Table 8

Treasury investments (all managed in house)	31.3.25 Actual £000	31.3.25 Actual %	31.3.26 Actual £000	31.3.26 Actual %
Banks and Building Societies	17,000	38%	5,000	10%
Local authorities	10,000	23%	37,570	72%
Money Market Funds	17,196	39%	9,295	18%
Total treasury investments	44,196	100%	51,865	100%
Non-Treasury investments				
Subsidiaries (para 4.8.4)	14,077	97%	23,316	98%
Subsidiary Equity (Marshgate)	418	3%	418	2%
Municipal Bond	10	-	-	-
Total Non-Treasury Investments	14,505	100%	23,734	100%
Treasury investments	44,196	75%	51,865	67%
Non-Treasury investments	14,505	25%	23,734	33%
Total of all Investments	58,701	100%	75,599	100%

The increased balance of investments with Local authorities (LA's) in the year reflects higher PWLB rates encouraging Local Authorities to look elsewhere for short term funding. The rates offered by Local Authorities during the year have exceeded the rates offered by Bank and Building societies.

The maturity structure of the investment portfolio is as follows:

Table 9

Investment Maturity Structure £000	31.3.25 Actual	31.3.26 Actual
Within 1 Year	56,316	64,862
Longer than 1 year	2,385	10,737
Total Investments	58,701	75,599

4.7.4 The non-treasury loans to the subsidiaries are made up of:

- Marshgate LTD (WOC), for the purchase and development of housing within the Borough in 2021/22 and 2022/23 £12,972K – repayable 2026/27
- Swingate Developments LLP - £10,262K – repayable 2027/28
- Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd - £82K – repayable over next 4 years

4.7.5 The equity investment in Marshgate Ltd reflects the equity element of member agreed funding that was formalised in 2024/25.

4.7.6 The increase in the treasury investment balances of £8 Million between 31 March 2025 and 31 March 2026 reflects lower than expected capital expenditure in 2025/26 and the replenishment of HRA internal borrowing by £12 Million additional borrowing from PWLB.

4.8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26

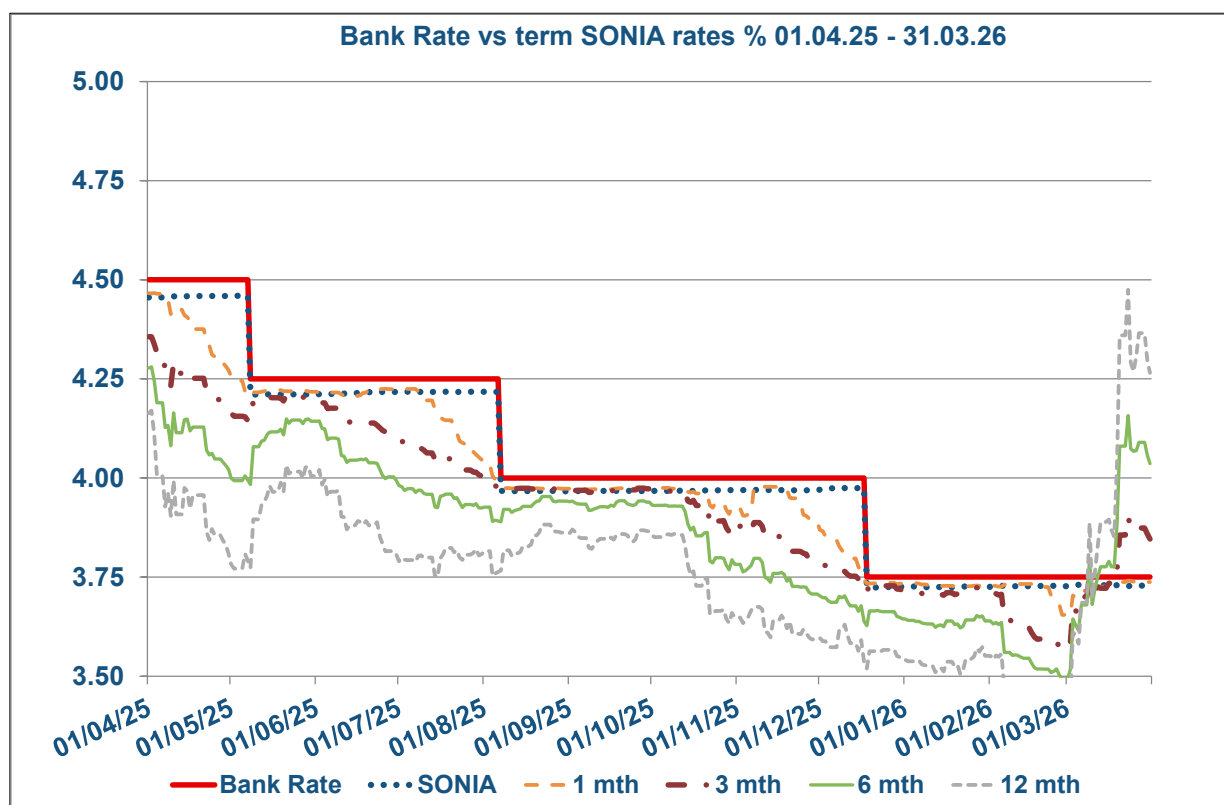
4.8.1 The Treasury Management Strategy was approved by Council on 26 February 2025.

There are no policy changes to the TMS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

4.9 Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk

4.9.1 Investment returns remained robust throughout the course of 2025/26 with the Bank Rate reducing steadily through the course of the financial year from 4.5% to 3.75% as at 31 March 2026. Concerns over the impact of the Middle East conflict on inflation led to further rate reductions anticipated in 2025, not materialising by the end of the year.

4.9.2 Investment Benchmarking Data – Sterling Overnight Index Averages (Term) 2025/26



4.10 Borrowing strategy and control of interest rate risk

- 4.10.1 During 2025/26, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), was fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2026 and 2027 in the light of economic growth concerns and the eventual dampening of inflation. The Council has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels (>5%) and has focused on a policy of internal borrowing, supplemented by short-dated borrowing (<5 years) as appropriate.
- 4.10.2 The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served the Council well over the last few years. However, this has been kept under review to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when the Council may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or the refinancing of maturing debt.
- 4.10.3 The Council has taken some limited borrowing in 2025/26 (£12 Million) to ensure the Council's cashflow position is resilient and to ensure that if interest rates increase, large amounts of borrowing required are not all taken at higher rates.
- 4.10.4 At the start of April 2026, the market expected Bank Rate to increase over the coming months to 4% or 4.25%, from 3.75%. A significant fall in inflation will be required to underpin any material movement lower in the near future. The latest forecast updated on 25th March 2026 is below:

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 25.03.26												
	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28	Dec-28	Mar-29
BANK RATE	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
3 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
6 month ave earnings	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.20	4.20	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80
5 yr PWLB	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
10 yr PWLB	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60
25 yr PWLB	6.00	6.00	5.90	5.80	5.60	5.40	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.10	5.10
50 yr PWLB	5.80	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.40	5.20	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.90

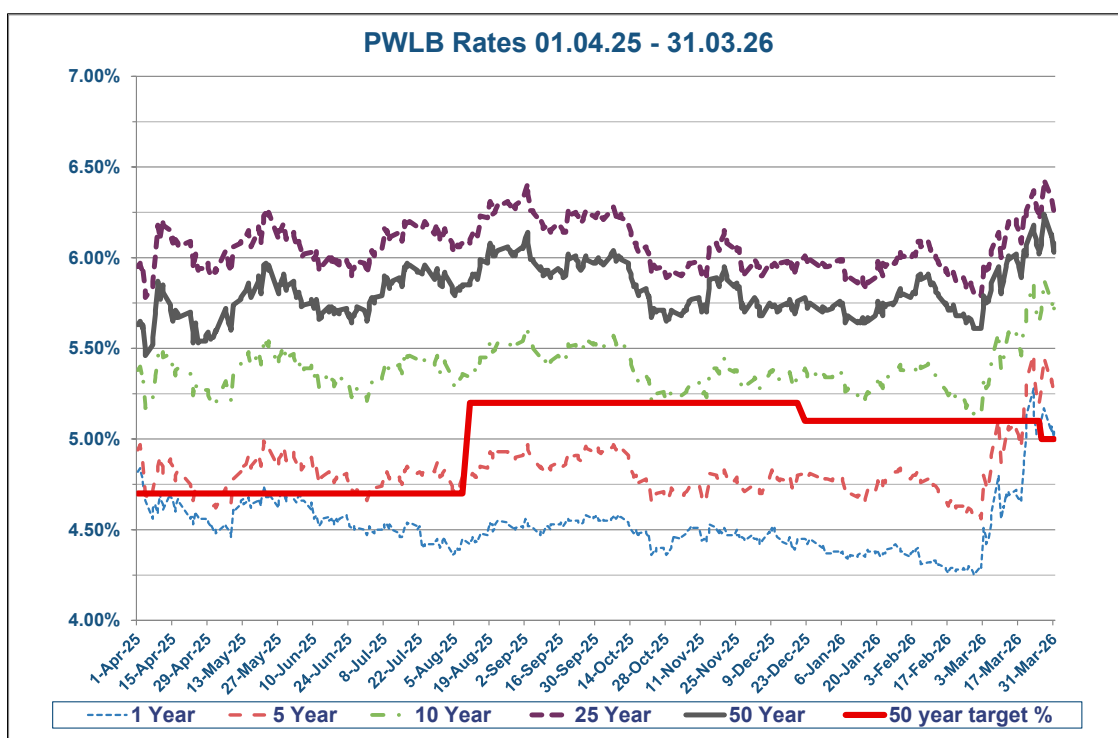
- 4.10.5 The PWLB certainty rate is gilts plus 80bps. Gilt yields have been volatile through 2025/26. The low point for long-term rates of 25 and 50 years' duration was reached early in April 2025 whilst the low points for short and medium dated rates were reached in early 2026, prior to the outbreak of the Middle East conflict.
- 4.10.6 At the close of 31 March 2026, the 1-year PWLB Certainty rate was 5.04% whilst the 5, 10, 25 and 50 year rates were 5.28%, 5.72%, 6.29% and 6.08% respectively. For the Council, external borrowing in 2025/26 related to the HRA account where the certainty rate included an additional 0.4% discount.
- 4.10.7 It is expected that rates will remain elevated into 2026/27 as Base rate is expected to remain at 3.75% for the year. Medium to long-dated borrowing rates are expected to remain "expensive".

4.10.8 As a general rule, short-dated gilt yields will reflect expected movements in Bank Rate, whilst medium to long-dated yields are driven primarily by the inflation outlook.

4.10.9 The Chart below shows the volatility of the PWLB borrowing rates from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

PWLB RATES 2025/26

Chart 1



4.11 BORROWING OUTTURN

4.11.1 One new loan was taken out in the year. This was to refinance HRA internal borrowing, details being:

£12 Million loan taken from 26 January 2026 to 24 January 2031 at an annual interest rate of 4.31%

4.11.2 Interest paid on PWLB borrowing during the year was £ 8.5 Million – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and £40K - General Fund (GF). This was against an original budget of £8.5 Million.

4.12 INVESTMENT OUTTURN

4.12.1 Investment Policy – the Council's investment policy is governed by MHCLG investment guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Council on 26 February 2025. This policy sets out the

approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data, (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

4.12.2 The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Authority had no liquidity difficulties.

4.12.3 In accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy, the Council invests its surplus cash balances that are committed for future approved spending. The policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies, supplemented by additional market data and counterparty limits dependant on level of cash balances held.

4.13 Treasury Investment performance year to date as of 31 March 2026

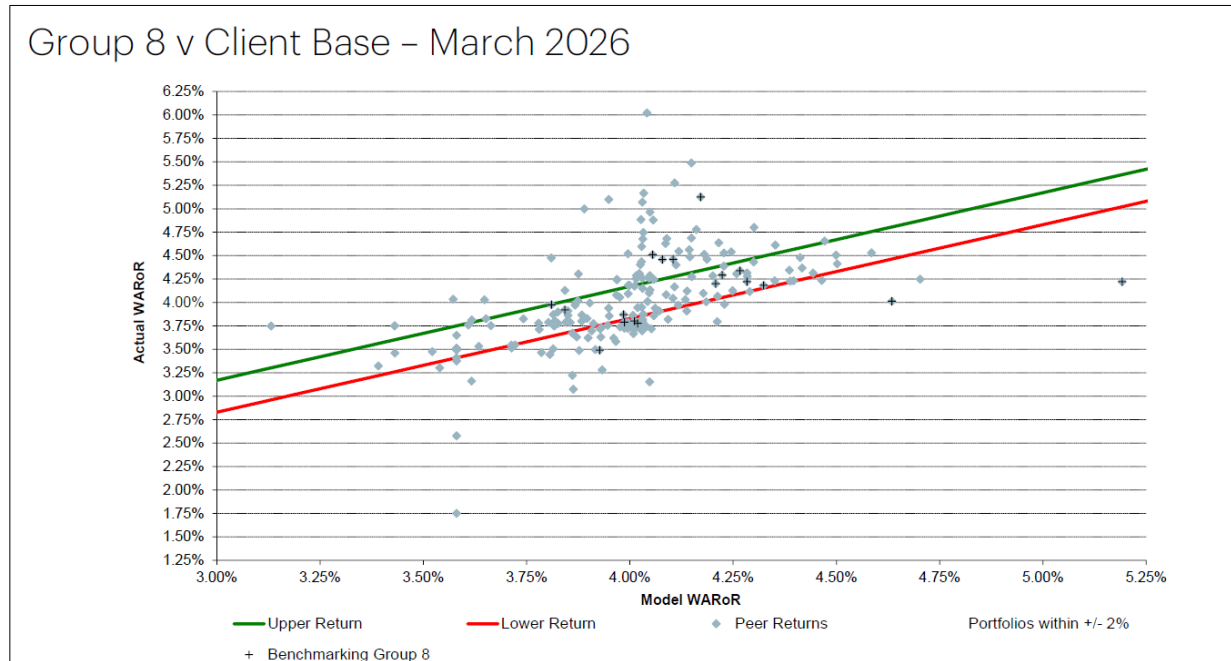
4.13.1 The Council's current treasury investment portfolio consists of "conventional" cash investments: deposits with banks and building societies, Money Market Funds and loans to other Local Authorities. No investments have been made with any of the other approved instruments within the Specified and Non-specified Investment Criteria.

4.13.2 Average level of funding available for investment purposes during the year was £60 Million, earning an average interest rate of 4.35%. Interest earned to 31 March 2026 was £2.6 Million on treasury investments (GF £1.1 Million, HRA £1.5 Million), against the working budget of £2.56 Million (GF £1.04 Million, HRA £1.52 Million).

4.13.3 The Council's treasury advisors (MUFG), provide regular benchmarking analysis of the performance of the Council's investments against a group of 20 other local authorities. The March 2026 report shows performance of the portfolio held at 31 March 2026 exceeding the upper return range against model returns. This performance is consistent across the year. The WARoR⁴ for Stevenage was 4.46% against the model WARoR 3.93% to 4.28%.

⁴ WARoR = Weighted average rate of return on investments

Chart 2

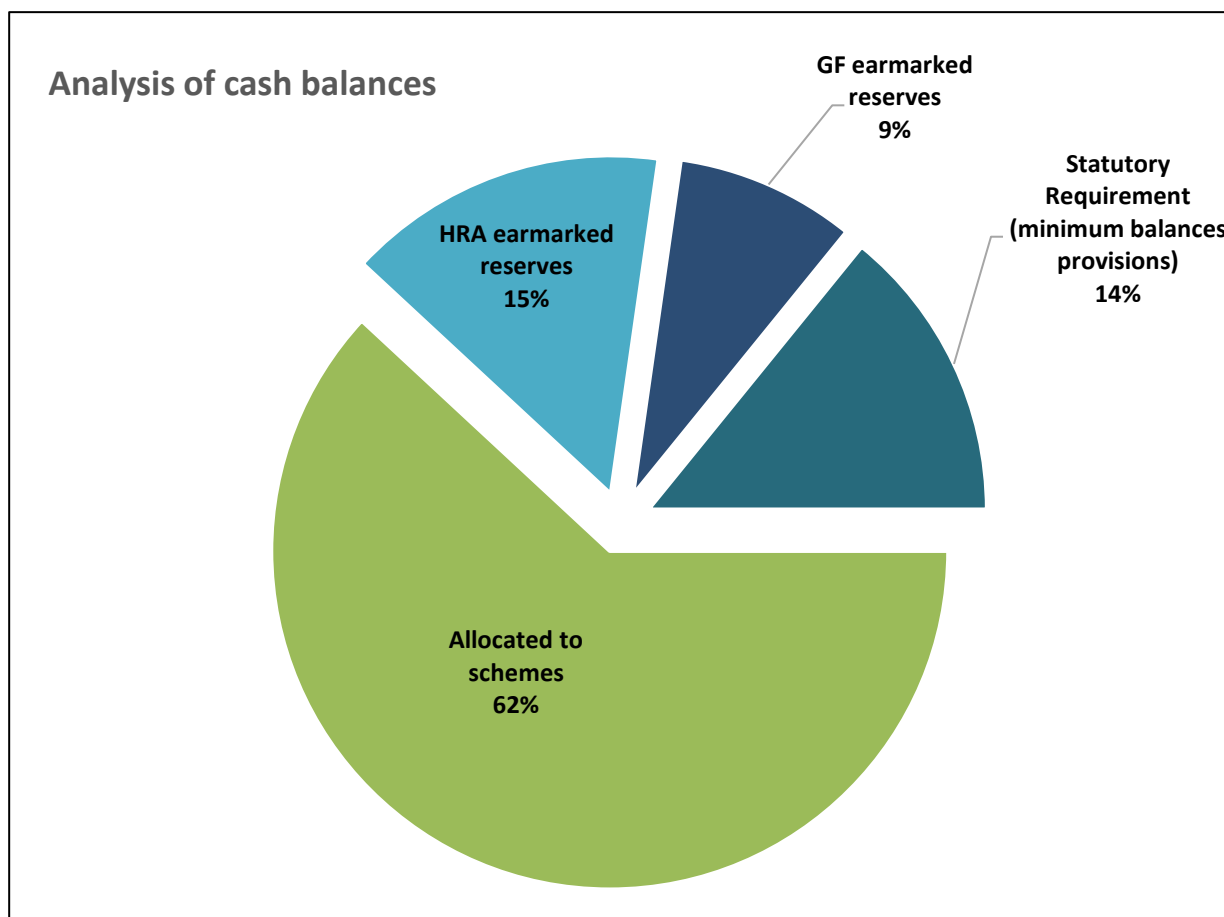


4.13.4 The Council's balances are made up of cash reserves e.g. HRA and General Fund balances, restricted use receipts e.g. right to buy one for one receipts and balances held for provisions such as business rate appeals.

4.13.5 In considering the Council's level of cash balances, Members should note that the General Fund MTFs and Capital Strategy have a planned use of resources over a minimum of 5 years and the HRA Business Plan (HRA BP) a planned use of resources over a 30-year period, which means, while not committed in the current year, they are required in future years.

4.13.6 The following chart shows the planned use of cash balances as at 31 March 2026.

Chart 3



4.13.7 The restrictive use of a proportion of the cash balances set out above, plus the planned use of resources in line with the Council's capital and revenue strategies mean that the investment balance of £52 Million as at 31 March 26 is not available to fund new expenditure.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is of a financial nature and reviews the treasury management function for 2025/26. Any consequential financial impacts identified in the Capital strategy and Revenue budget monitoring reports have been incorporated into this report.

5.1.2 During the financial year Officers operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Council's Treasury management practices.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 Approval of the Prudential Code Indicators and the Treasury Management Strategy are intended to ensure that the Council complies with relevant legislation and best practice.
- 5.2.2 There have been no changes to PWLB borrowing arrangements since the last Treasury report. Officers will ensure that any changes to the Prudential and Treasury Management codes from 2026/27 are reflected in treasury operations and reporting requirements.

5.3 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 The current policy of minimising external borrowing through the use of internal borrowing, where appropriate, taking advantage of the benefits differentials between investment income and borrowing rates is kept under ongoing review as these conditions change. This policy only remains financially viable while cash balances are high. Capital investment, not funded by capital receipts and grant funding reduce these balances if not supported by additional borrowing. The risk is that the Council may need to take borrowing at higher rates than budgeted which would increase revenue costs.
- 5.3.2 The Council's Treasury Management Strategy is based on limits for counterparties to reduce risk of investing with only a small number of institutions.
- 5.3.3 The thresholds and time limits set for investments in the Strategy are based on the relative ratings of investment vehicles and counter parties. These are designed to take into account the relative risk of investments and also to preclude certain grades of investments and counterparties to prevent loss of income to the Council.
- 5.3.4 There is a risk to the HRA BP's ability to fund the approved 30-year spending plans if interest rates continue at the current high level, although currently it is anticipated that rates will reduce. This will be included in the HRA MTFS forecast in 2026/27.

5.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.4.1 This report is technical in nature and there are no implications associated with equalities and diversity within this report. In addition to remaining within agreed counterparty rules, the Council retains the discretion not to invest in countries that meet the minimum rating but where there are concerns over human rights issues. Counterparty rules will also be overlaid by any other ethical considerations from time to time as appropriate.

5.4.2 The Treasury Management Policy does not have the potential to discriminate against people on grounds of age; disability; gender; ethnicity; sexual orientation; religion/belief; or by way of financial exclusion. As such a detailed Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

5.5 Climate Change Implications

There are no specific climate change implications resulting from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- BD1 Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2025/26 (Council 26 February 2025)
- BD2 2025/26 Mid-Year Treasury Management Review and Prudential Indicators (Council 17 December 2025)
- BD3 First Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 (Cabinet 17 September 2025)
- BD4 Second Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 (Cabinet 12 November 2025)
- BD5 Final Capital Strategy 2025/26-2029/30 (Council 11 February 2026)
- BD6 Third Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 (Cabinet 11 March 2026)
- BD7 Fourth Quarter Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report 2025/26 (Cabinet 15 July 2026)

APPENDICES

- Appendix A - Investment Portfolio

Type of Investment / Deposit	Counterparty	Issue Date	Maturity Date	£000	Rate %
Money Market Fund	Aberdeen GBP Liquidity Class L1			7700	3.8
Money Market Fund	CCLA PSDF Desposit Class4			500	3.7
Money Market Fund	Morgan Stanley GBP Liquidity Institutional ZNAG			500	3.7
Money Market Fund	JPM GBP Liquidity LVNAV			500	3.8
Fixed Term Deposit	Landesbank Hessen Thuringen Girozentrale-Frankfurt	14/08/2025	13/08/2026	2000	4.1
Fixed Term Deposit	Cambridgeshire County Council	30/10/2025	29/05/2026	5000	4.4
Fixed Term Deposit	Broxbourne Borough Council-Waltham Cross	16/12/2025	16/09/2026	4570	4.7
Fixed Term Deposit	Suffolk County Council	18/12/2025	18/06/2026	5000	4.5
Fixed Term Deposit	Basildon Borough council	05/01/2026	06/07/2026	5000	4.5
Fixed Term Deposit	Folkestone & Hythe District Council	03/02/2026	03/08/2026	3000	4.5
Fixed Term Deposit	Harlow Council	23/01/2026	22/05/2026	5000	4.7
Fixed Term Deposit	Harlow Council	12/03/2026	12/06/2026	5000	5.4
Fixed Term Deposit	Lancashire County Council	24/03/2026	23/03/2027	5000	4.5
Fixed Term Deposit	Landesbank	27/03/2026	25/03/2027	3000	4.6
Fixed Term Deposit	HSBC	31/03/2026	01/04/2026	95	3.6
	Total			51865	

Meeting Full Council
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 21 October 2026



NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION – PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Author James Chettleburgh | 2266 and Victoria Wilders
Lead Officer Alex Robinson | 2257
Contact Officer James Chettleburgh | 2266

1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report proposes amendments to the Council's Constitution to ensure that it reflects and is compliant with the new National Scheme of Delegation ("the Scheme") which the Government is introducing via the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 ("the Regulations").

1.2 All local planning authorities are expected to have the new arrangements in place for 31st October 2026. Decisions taken on or after that date must be taken in line with the Regulations and if not, could be considered by the Courts to have been unlawfully taken.

This report sets out the changes the Scheme introduces and outlines the process for Member referral of Schedule 2 applications and the process the Council will

adhere to when recording decisions for proposals passing through the Gateway Test.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council:

1. Approve the amendments to the Constitution as set out in this report so that they reflect the Regulations and associated guidance (Appendix 1);
2. Agree that the amendments to the Constitution relating to the Scheme will take effect from 31st October 2026 to coincide with the implementation of the Regulations
3. Delegates authority to the Borough Solicitor/Monitoring Officer to update the Constitution in respect of legislative changes in accordance with the Regulations.
4. Agree that the amendments specified in paragraph 1 above replaces the outdated Scheme of Delegation 2007 in (Appendix 2).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 inserted provisions into the Town and County Planning Act 1990 enabling the Regulations to establish the Scheme specifying which planning decisions must be delegated to officers and which may be referred to committee. They also limit planning committees to 13 members. The Council must update its constitutional arrangements by 31 October 2026 to comply with the Regulations.
- 3.2 Historically, each council determined through its Constitution and sub delegations, which applications were decided by officers and which were referred to committee. Under the new Regulations, this discretion is largely removed and replaced by a nationally prescribed framework. The revised Scheme separates routine and technical decisions from matters requiring Member oversight. It clarifies responsibility for planning and related regulatory functions while maintaining safeguards through published criteria, professional judgement, legal oversight and established governance procedures.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

- 4.1 These reforms are intended to create greater consistency across England and ensure that planning committees focus on the most significant planning decisions, while routine applications are determined by professional planning officers. This will support timely and consistent decisions. Council approval is

required to amend the Constitution so that it reflects the Regulations and so that it remains lawful, current and operationally effective. The following provides an overview of the main changes being made:

Development management and committee referrals

- 4.2 The Scheme places applications into two broad categories: Schedule 1 applications and Schedule 2 applications.
- 4.3 Schedule 1 applications must be determined by officers and will not be eligible for Planning Committee determination. Schedule 1 generally covers routine, smaller-scale and technical application types. Examples include householder development, minor residential development generally involving up to nine dwellings on sites below 0.5 hectares, minor commercial development, most reserved matters approvals not linked to very large outline schemes, discharge of conditions, prior approvals, non-material amendments, certificates of lawfulness, biodiversity gain plans and similar matters.
- 4.4 Schedule 2 applications are generally larger, more complex or more sensitive. These may include proposals outside the Schedule 1 categories, listed building consent applications, advertisement consent applications, works to protected trees, and certain reserved matters or variation applications associated with larger schemes. Schedule 2 applications are also subject to a presumption in favour of being determined by officers but may be referred to the Planning and Development Committee where the Nominated Officer and Nominated Councillor agree that the statutory referral test is satisfied.
- 4.5 Any planning matters which fall outside of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 applications are delegated to the Director of Planning and Regulation in the Constitution, who may further delegate these powers to a suitably qualified and/or experienced officers as set out in sub delegation contained in the Planning Scheme of Management which sits outside of the Constitution and published on the council's website for transparency purposed.
- 4.6 The Planning Scheme of Management will also set out how a member can make a referral under the gateway test (referred to below) in respect of Schedule 2 applications.

The new gateway test

- 4.5 The national criteria state that a Schedule 2 application may only be referred to the Planning and Development Committee where it raises one, or both, of the following:
 - a significant economic, social or environmental issue for the local area, or
 - a significant planning issue having regard to the development plan and other material considerations.

- 4.6 Referral of an application to Planning and Development Committee must be agreed by a Nominated Officer and the Nominated Councillor. It is proposed that the Nominated Officer is the Director of Planning and Regulation (or the Head of Planning and Enforcement in their absence) and the Nominated Councillor is the Chair of Planning Committee (or the Vice Chair in their absence). It will be the case that any Member can seek a referral of any Schedule 2 application for consideration by the Nominated Officer and Nominated Member. A process note setting out how this regime will operate will be provided to Members.
- 4.7 With respect to triaging applications when it comes to referring applications to the Planning and Development Committee, the Government's Statutory Guidance: Planning Committees and the National of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities (paragraph 14) states "*Where local planning authorities anticipate that there may be a significant number of Schedule 2 or own-interest applications which may need to be considered for referral to committee they may wish to put in place a triage system to ensure that the nominated officer and nominated member of the committee are not overwhelmed and to avoid any unnecessary delays in planning decision making*".
- 4.8 Taking into consideration the above, it is proposed that a triage system for Schedule 2 applications and self-interest applications is introduced. This is to ensure that the nominated officer and nominated member are not overwhelmed by the volume of applications and to avoid unnecessary delays in planning decision making. In addition, it will ensure that the Planning and Development Committee can focus on large scale, strategically important applications, rather than having to deal with small scale applications which are generally technical in nature.

Own-interest and conflict cases

- 4.9 Applications involving the Council's own interests, or applications made by or on behalf of the Council, councillors or senior officers, will be subject to a different process to maintain transparency.
- 4.10 Broadly speaking the Council's own major applications (Schedule 2) will continue to be determined by the Planning and Development Committee where the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area or raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.
- 4.11 In addition to the above, where the application is for a land sale and the landowner is the Council and not the applicant, the application shall be referred to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision where 5 or more representations have been received which raise material planning matters that

advocate a different outcome (i.e. approval / refusal) than that set out in the Officer's recommendation. This reflects the existing scheme of delegation which is currently in place and ensures members still have oversight of such applications.

- 4.12 Turning to the triage process for self-interest applications, it is recommended that the majority of all Schedule 1 applications be determined under delegated powers as set out below:

Schedule 1 Functions	
Application categories	Self-Interest applications (Regulation 6) – Suggested Triage.
householder development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	Delegated
minor commercial development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	Delegated
minor residential development (consisting of up to 9 new dwellings (flats or houses) on a site smaller than 0.5 hectares and other minor development in relation to flats)	Delegated
where it is not related to a phase of development in an outline planning permission, reserved matters approvals (applications under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	Delegated

Note: Reserved matters approval in respect of an outline planning permission other than a large outline phase permission (i.e. one which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more) (applications under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	
discharge of conditions (applications under Article 27(1) of Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	Delegated
prior approval for permitted development rights (applications under Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015)	Delegated
permission in principle (as referred to in section 58A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning	Delegated

obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	
where local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, modification or discharge of a planning obligation (applications under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
non-material changes to planning permission or permission in principle (applications under section 96A(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development (under section 191(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
certificates of lawfulness of proposed use or development (under section 192(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
biodiversity gain plan (duty to approve under paragraph 14 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Delegated
Certificates of appropriate alternative development	Delegated

(applications under section 17 of the Land Compensation Act 1961)	
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4.13 Turning to the triage process for self-interest applications covered under Schedule 2, this has been set out in further detail in the table below. In addition, this table also sets out the types of applications and circumstances in which they may be referred to the planning and development committee for its decision:

Schedule 2 Functions	
Application categories	Self-Interest applications (Regulation 6) – Suggested Triage.
A local authority considers that the application for planning permission (Schedule 1) is connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent (See paragraph 19 of the guidance)	Householder applications:- Delegated All other Schedule 1 applications:- Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
the application is made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Relating to a Schedule 1 application)	Householder applications:- Delegated All other Schedule 1 applications:- Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

	2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
applications for planning permission which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential applications	Major applications All major applications submitted by or on behalf of the Council shall be determined by the Planning and Development Committee by default. Other applications: Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
applications for planning permission which would otherwise fall into Schedule 1 but are connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent	Householder applications:- Delegated All other Schedule 1 applications:- Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.

applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 2 planning permission (under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Major applications All major (without compliance of conditions) applications submitted by or on behalf of the Council shall be determined by the Planning and Development Committee by default. Other applications: Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
applications for development which has already been carried out (under section 73A(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
where it is related to a large outline planning permission, applications for reserved matters approvals (under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)	Referral of Reserved Matters Applications to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

Definition of large outline reserved matters (defined by the Regulations): One which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 sq.m or more.	2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Referral to planning committee where the obligation relates to certain obligations e.g., affordable housing, infrastructure delivery, financial obligations etc & the deed of variation raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations; or The Deed of Variation raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area. Otherwise, delegated to officers.
where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, application for modification or discharge of a planning obligation (under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	Referral to planning committee where the application relates to certain obligations e.g., affordable housing, infrastructure delivery, financial obligations etc & the deed of variation raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations; or The Deed of Variation raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.

	Otherwise, delegated to officers.
applications for listed building consent (under section 10 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)	Delegated
applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)	Delegated
applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)	Delegated
applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)	Delegated

- 4.14 When it comes to standard Schedule 2 applications (Non self-interest), the triage process for such applications is outlined below. In addition, the table also sets out what applications will have to go through the Gateway Process as to whether or not the application is referred to the Planning Committee for its decision:

Schedule 2 Functions

Application categories	None Self-interest – Triage (See para 14 of the guidance relating to triage of Schedule 2 apps)
A local authority considers that the application for planning permission (Schedule 1) is connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent (See paragraph 19 of the guidance)	TRIAGE
the application is made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Relating to a Schedule 1 application)	TRIAGE
applications for planning permission which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential applications.	GATEWAY TEST
applications for planning permission which would otherwise fall into Schedule 1 but are connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent	TRIAGE

applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 2 planning permission (under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	GATEWAY TEST
applications for development which has already been carried out (under section 73A(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	GATEWAY TEST
where it is related to a large outline planning permission, applications for reserved matters approvals (under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015) Definition of large outline reserved matters (defined by the Regulations): One which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 sq.m or more.	GATEWAY TEST

where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	GATEWAY TEST
where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, application for modification or discharge of a planning obligation (under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)	GATEWAY TEST
applications for listed building consent (under section 10 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)	TRIAGE
applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)	TRIAGE
applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of	TRIAGE

Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)	
applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)	TRIAGE

- 4.15 Details of the proposed amendments to the Constitution can be found at Appendix 1 along with details of the proposed triage process for Schedule 2 and self-interest applications.

5 GOVERNANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In order to comply with legislation, the Council will need to update its Constitution. It is proposed that this should include identifying the Director of Planning and Regulation as the Nominated Officer, identifying the Chair of Planning Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence) as the Nominated Councillor, and establishing a clear record of referral decisions and the reasons for them. If an application that must be delegated is instead determined by Planning Committee, the decision could be vulnerable to legal challenge and may be quashed.

8 PLANNING CODE OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

- 8.1 Consequential revisions will cover application triage, statutory referral routes, public speaking, Member training, technical briefings, lobbying, conflicts of interest, applications involving Members or officers, standards of conduct, and unreasonable or vexatious behaviour. These changes are intended to keep committee procedures transparent, proportionate and legally robust.

9 IMPLICATIONS

Financial and resources

- 9.1 No significant direct budget growth is presently anticipated. Implementation will require officer time for constitutional amendments, process mapping, training, briefings, guidance and published information. These costs should be managed within approved budgets unless a separate decision is required. Clearer delegation may improve use of officer and committee resources over time.

Legal and governance

- 9.2 The Council must keep its Constitution up to date (section 9P Local Government Act 2000). It must maintain lawful arrangements for discharging its functions and must have regard to statutory guidance. Decisions taken contrary to the Regulations may be vulnerable to judicial review and quashing. Delegated authority and associated amendments to the Constitution for minor consequential amendments and legislative change to the Monitoring Officer will allow the Council to remain aligned with legislation, guidance and transitional requirements.

Risk

- 9.3 Failure to approve and implement the Scheme would create legal, procedural and reputational risk, including uncertainty over the validity of committee decisions. Implementation risks will be mitigated through legal review, clear procedures, training, published guidance and controlled commencement.

Planning, policy and environmental

- 9.4 The changes concern governance rather than the content of the Development Plan. They do not alter adopted planning policies or statutory assessment duties. They should, however, support faster policy-led decisions, timely plan-making and proportionate referral of proposals with significant planning or environmental implications.

Climate, equality and community safety

- 9.5 The Scheme has no direct climate, sustainability or community safety effects. Existing duties concerning climate change, biodiversity, environmental assessment and community safety remain. No specific adverse equality effects have been identified, and all implementation measures must continue to have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and accessible public participation.

Consultation

- 9.6 The Scheme has been prepared following the Government's consultation and publication of the final Regulations and statutory guidance. Implementation will take account of those materials and any further relevant guidance.

10 OPTIONS, NEXT STEPS AND CONCLUSION

Options considered

Option 1—approve the amendments to the Constitution: recommended because it provides a lawful and clear basis for implementation.

Option 2—retain the existing arrangements: not recommended because it would leave the governance framework misaligned with mandatory requirements and expose decisions to challenge.

Next steps

- 10.1 Subject to approval, officers will finalise constitutional and procedural amendments, reduce committee membership to the statutory maximum, publish updated delegations and guidance, complete staff and Member briefings, and implement the revised arrangements from 31 October 2026.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The revised Scheme provides a clear, proportionate and legally robust framework for planning functions. It supports efficient professional decision-making, focuses Member oversight on significant matters and enables the Council to comply with the national planning committee reforms.

APPENDICES

- 1. Constitutional amendments
- 2. Scheme of Delegation dated 4th September 2007

APPENDIX 1

Constitution amendments to reflect changes as a result of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 and also to reflect the Planning Officers Society Good Practice Guidance Note.

PART 2

Articles

ARTICLE 8 – THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE, REGULATORY AND OTHER COMMITTEES

8.2 Regulatory Committees

The Council appoints the following regulatory Committees to undertake a number of its statutory and other duties not delegated to officers:

- Planning & Development Committee [in accordance with the Town and Country Planning \(Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions\) \(England\) Regulations 2026.](#)
- Licensing Committee
- General Purposes Committee

The terms of reference of these Committees are set out at Part 3 of this Constitution.

8.3 Public Participation

~~At meetings of the Planning and Development Committee the Chair will first invite an objector (in pre-arranged exceptional circumstances more than one objector), and then the applicant (or agent or supporter), to address the Committee on the planning issues of an application for a maximum of three minutes each; there being no right for objectors or applicants to question members or officers nor any right of reply by objector or applicants. An applicant (agent or supporter) will only be allowed to speak if there has first been an objector speaking.~~

The Licensing and General Purposes [Committees will allow](#) applicants/objectors to address the Committee as appropriate.

ARTICLE 13 – MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

13.2 Changes to the Constitution

Statutory changes to the Constitution may be made by the by the Borough Solicitor/Monitoring Officer without reference to Council. Other Changes to the Constitution will only be approved by Council. The Chief Executive may authorise minor and consequential amendments. The Leader of the Council is to be notified of all such amendments.

PART 3

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FUNCTIONS

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.5 Planning and Development Committee – Quorum 4

Membership

The Planning and Development Committee, by virtue of Regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (“the Regulations”), cannot exceed 13 elected members (to be politically balanced).

Purpose

To exercise, in line with the Council’s Planning and Development Committee Procedures, the functions, powers and duties of the Council in relation to the determination of planning applications and any other planning matter referred to it by the Director of Planning and Regulations.

Powers

The Planning and Development Committee has the following powers:-

To hear pre application or pre-determination presentations of developments by developer and for individual members of the Committee to ask questions and highlight issues that may require further consideration by the developer.

To determine the planning applications referred to it pursuant to the Regulations and the Constitution, as set out in paragraph 4.7 below.

To consider, and where necessary determine, any other planning matter referred to it by the Director of Planning and Regulations.

Planning and Development Committee Chair

The Chair shall be the Council's Nominated Member for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.

Where the Chair is unavailable or unable to participate in relation to an application, the Chair may designate another member of the Planning and Development Committee as substitute Nominated Member for that application.

a. ~~To advise the Leader/Executive on the following:~~

(i) ~~Identification of consumer needs for services related to planning and development services and facilities functions of the Committee, and recommendations on the development of services and facilities to meet them, including:~~

~~Land use plans and policy, including local plans~~

~~Employment and economic development~~

~~Development management services~~

~~and advising the Leader / Executive / Council accordingly;~~

(ii) ~~Management and maintenance of planning and development related facilities and services in item (i), including employment and training facilities and services;~~

(iii) ~~Monitoring and review of performance in relation to the provision and development of planning and development services and facilities, including employment and training facilities and services, whether provided by the Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation), other Council Service Delivery Units, or outside contractors and advising the Leader/Executive/Council accordingly;~~

(iv) ~~The promotion of the economic development of Stevenage, and of specific industrial/commercial land and premises within Stevenage, as to use and development and, where appropriate, about monitoring negotiations for development and redevelopment;~~

(v) ~~Development and encouragement of local businesses, employment and training initiatives, with co-ordination and implementation by the Leader / Executive as appropriate.~~

(vi) ~~The allocation and monitoring of grant aid and loans to local employment and training initiatives.~~

b. ~~Responsibility for Development Management, including Listed Building Control – determination of planning applications, and enforcement matters under planning regulations.~~

c. ~~Responsibility for Building Control – determination of applications under the Building Regulations, and enforcement matters under planning and building legislation.~~

d. ~~Responsibility for the determination of Countryside Management and Tree Preservation matters, including the making of Tree Preservation Orders and related matters, and including consultation with appropriate outside bodies.~~

e. ~~Matters imposed or permitted by legislation in relation to the functions of the Committee.~~

f. ~~Insofar as they are not already referred to in these terms of reference, those relevant powers set out in Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations as amended (see Table 2 of Part 3 of this Constitution); as clarified by regulations, subject to them being dealt with, as appropriate, by officers under delegated powers.~~

~~This is to include the making of charges for any approval, licence or registration etc., in relation to the powers referred to.~~

- g. ~~Insofar as they are not already referred to in these terms of reference, those local choice functions set out at Table 3 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.~~

~~Any other appropriate matter referred.~~

4. SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

4.4 Council functions

- a. The Chief Executive may exercise all of those Council functions that are not specifically reserved to Council for decision-making, or actions delegated by ~~the Council as the local planning authority to the Director of Planning and Regulation or their delegate as set out in paragraph XX the Planning and Development Committee to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) or his/her delegate.~~
- b. The Chief Executive may exercise any Council power in cases of extreme urgency whether or not reserved for Council decision making
- c. The Borough Solicitor shall have authority to institute, defend or settle any legal proceedings as necessary to protect the interests of the Council.

4.5 Exercise of officer delegations

The Chief Executive will establish a scheme of sub-delegations (save where the Director of Planning and Regulation sub-delegates their functions in para xx in accordance with a Planning Scheme of Management) that specifies the functions, names the post which may carry out that sub-delegated function, and the limits if any on the sub-delegation. The Chief Executive will periodically review sub-delegations and whenever necessary, and may change sub-delegations as (s)he sees fit. The limits on sub-delegation may include the obligation to consult, record and/or refer back to the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and/or Strategic Directors (or another officer) in certain circumstances, and are made subject to relevant policies.

The Borough Solicitor will maintain the current version of the Council's scheme of officer delegations.

4.6 Planning Scheme of Delegation

Reference to the Regulations in this part of the Constitution is a reference to the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. Schedule 1 of the Regulations contains those application types which must be determined by officers, pursuant to Regulation 4.

4.7 Delegation of Planning Functions

All planning matters and functions that the Council as Local Planning Authority are responsible for are delegated to the Director of Planning and Regulation except where the decision on a matter or function is reserved to the following bodies:

Full Council

The following must be determined by Full Council:

- To submit a Development Plan Document for examination
- To adopt a Development Plan Document
- To submit a draft Charging Schedule for examination
- To approve or withdraw a Charging Schedule

Cabinet

The following must be determined by the Executive:

- To consult on a Local Development Framework Document

- To adopt a Supplementary Planning Document, the Local Development Scheme or the Statement of Community Involvement
- To approve the Authority Monitoring Report
- To authorise a Neighbourhood Plan to be put to referendum
- To agree that a Neighbourhood Plan be Made
- To designate a Conservation Area

Planning and Development Committee

The following planning applications must be determined by the Planning and Development Committee: -

Those applications listed in Schedule 2 of the Regulations that the Nominated Member and the Nominated Officer agree that referral to and determination by Planning and Development Committee is necessary.

Any other planning matter that an officer of the authority with delegated powers considers that referral to and determination by the Planning and Development Committee is necessary.

4.8 Triage System

As recommended in the MHCLG statutory Guidance that accompanied the Regulations, where local planning authorities anticipate that there may be a significant number of cases which meet the criteria in regulation 5(3) (Gateway Test) or which may fall under regulation 6 (Own-Interest Application) and which could therefore be considered for referral to committee, they may wish to put in place a triage system to ensure that the nominated officer and nominated member of the committee are not overwhelmed and to avoid any unnecessary delays in planning decision making.

The Council's Triage System has two stages:

- Stage 1: a category or part of a category of an application of a kind specified by Schedule 2 which should be treated as such.
- Stage 2: a specific application of a kind specified by Schedule 2 where an officer with delegated powers considers it should be treated as such because the criteria in Regulation 5(3) are clearly not engaged.

Triage process for self-interest applications

The majority of all Schedule 1 applications be determined under delegated powers as set out below:

<u>Schedule 1 Functions</u>	
<u>Application categories</u>	<u>Self-Interest applications (Regulation 6) – Suggested Triage.</u>
<u>householder development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>minor commercial development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>minor residential development (consisting of up to 9 new dwellings (flats or houses) on a site smaller than 0.5 hectares and other minor development in relation to flats)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u>
<u>where it is not related to a phase of development in an outline planning permission, reserved matters approvals (applications under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> - <u>Note:</u> <u>Reserved matters approval in respect of an outline planning permission other than a large outline</u>	<u>Delegated</u>

<u>phase permission (i.e. one which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more) (applications under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> -	
<u>discharge of conditions (applications under Article 27(1) of Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>prior approval for permitted development rights (applications under Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>permission in principle (as referred to in section 58A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -

<u>where local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 1 application, modification or discharge of a planning obligation (applications under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>non-material changes to planning permission or permission in principle (applications under section 96A(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development (under section 191(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	- <u>Delegated</u> -
<u>certificates of lawfulness of proposed use or development (under section 192(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -
<u>biodiversity gain plan (duty to approve under paragraph 14 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> - -
<u>Certificates of appropriate alternative development (applications under section 17 of the Land Compensation Act 1961)</u>	<u>Delegated</u> - -

Triage process for self-interest applications covered under Schedule 2. The below table also sets out the types of applications and circumstances in which they may be referred to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision:

<u>Schedule 2 Functions</u>	
<u>Application categories</u>	<u>Self-Interest applications (Regulation 6) – Suggested Triage.</u>
A local authority considers that the application for planning permission (Schedule 1) is connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent (See paragraph 19 of the guidance)	<u>Householder applications:-</u> Delegated <u>All other Schedule 1 applications:-</u> Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.
the application is made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Relating to a Schedule 1 application) -	<u>Householder applications:-</u> Delegated <u>All other Schedule 1 applications:-</u> Referral to committee where: 1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations. 2) the application raises an economic, social or

	<u>environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>
<u>applications for planning permission which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential applications</u> -	Major applications <u>All major applications submitted by or on behalf of the Council shall be determined by the Planning and Development Committee by default.</u> Other applications: <u>Referral to committee where:</u> <u>1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.</u> <u>2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>
<u>applications for planning permission which would otherwise fall into Schedule 1 but are connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent</u> -	Householder applications:- <u>Delegated</u> All other Schedule 1 applications:- <u>Referral to committee where:</u> <u>1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.</u> <u>2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>

<u>applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 2 planning permission (under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	Major applications <u>All major (without compliance of conditions) applications submitted by or on behalf of the Council shall be determined by the Planning and Development Committee by default.</u> Other applications: <u>Referral to committee where:</u> <u>1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.</u> <u>2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>
<u>applications for development which has already been carried out (under section 73A(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Referral to committee where:</u> <u>1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.</u> <u>2) the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>
<u>where it is related to a large outline planning permission, applications for reserved matters approvals (under Article 6 of the Town and Country</u>	<u>Referral of Reserved Matters Applications to committee where:</u> <u>1) the application raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development</u>

<u>Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> Definition of large outline reserved matters (defined by the Regulations): One which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 sq.m or more. -	<u>plan and any other material considerations.</u> 2) <u>the application raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u>
<u>where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> - -	<u>Referral to planning committee where the obligation relates to certain obligations e.g., affordable housing, infrastructure delivery, financial obligations etc & the deed of variation raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations; or</u> <u>The Deed of Variation raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u> <u>Otherwise, delegated to officers.</u> -
<u>where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, application for modification or discharge of a planning obligation (under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u>	<u>Referral to planning committee where the application relates to certain obligations e.g., affordable housing, infrastructure delivery, financial obligations etc & the deed of variation raises a significant planning matter having regard to the development plan</u>

-	<u>and any other material considerations;</u> <u>or</u> <u>The Deed of Variation raises an economic, social or environmental issue of significance to the local area.</u> <u>Otherwise, delegated to officers.</u> -
<u>applications for listed building consent (under section 10 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> - -
<u>applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u>
<u>applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u>
<u>applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)</u> -	<u>Delegated</u> -

In relation to standard Schedule 2 applications (Non self-interest), the triage process for such applications is outlined below. In addition, the table also sets out what applications will have to go through the Gateway Process as to whether or not the application is

referred to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision:

<u>Schedule 2 Functions</u>	
<u>Application categories</u>	<u>None Self-interest – Triage (See para 14 of the guidance relating to triage of Schedule 2 apps)</u>
<u>A local authority considers that the application for planning permission (Schedule 1) is connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent</u> <u>(See paragraph 19 of the guidance)</u>	<u>TRIAGE</u> -
<u>the application is made under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Relating to a Schedule 1 application)</u> -	<u>TRIAGE</u> -
<u>applications for planning permission which are not householder, minor commercial or minor residential applications.</u> -	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u> - - - - -
<u>applications for planning permission which would otherwise fall into Schedule 1 but are connected to a Schedule 2 application for listed building consent or for the</u>	<u>TRIAGE</u> -

<u>variation or discharge of a condition on a listed building consent</u> -	
<u>applications to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached in respect of which the previous planning permission was a Schedule 2 planning permission (under section 73(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u>
<u>applications for development which has already been carried out (under section 73A(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u>
<u>where it is related to a large outline planning permission, applications for reserved matters approvals (under Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)</u> <u>Definition of large outline reserved matters (defined by the Regulations):</u> One which grants permission for development involving the provision of at least 500 dwellings or a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u>

<u>development is 50,000 sq.m or more.</u> -	
<u>where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, requests to agree to modify or discharge a planning obligation (under section 106A(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> - -	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u> - - -
<u>where a local planning authority considers a planning obligation is connected to a Schedule 2 application, application for modification or discharge of a planning obligation (under section 106A(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990)</u> -	<u>GATEWAY TEST</u> -
<u>applications for listed building consent (under section 10 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)</u> -	<u>TRIAGE</u> -
<u>applications for the variation or discharge of conditions of listed building consent (under section 19 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990)</u> -	<u>TRIAGE</u> -

<u>applications for advertisement consent (under regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007)</u> -	<u>TRIAGE</u> - - -
<u>applications for consent under tree preservation orders (under regulation 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012)</u> -	<u>TRIAGE</u> - -

4.9 Delegation And Sub-Delegation

The Director of Planning and Regulation should produce a document (called the Planning Scheme of Management) for the purposes of Regulation 3 that clearly sets out:

- A. the member of the authority who acts as the Nominated Member;
- B. one or more members of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Member;
- C. the officer of the authority who acts as the Nominated Officer; and
- D. one or more officers of the authority who act as a substitute for the Nominated Officer.

With respect to A and B different members can be nominated for different purposes. With respect to C and D different officers can be nominated for different purposes. These should also be set out in the document.

The document should also set out:

- the officer(s) of the authority who have delegated powers to determine a Schedule 1 planning application (Regulation 4);
- the officer(s) of the authority who have delegated powers to determine a Schedule 2 planning application (Regulation 5);

- the officer(s) of the authority who have delegated powers to determine an Own-Interest Application (Regulation 6); and
- the officer(s) of the authority who have delegated powers under the Constitution to determine any other planning matter.

11. The document should be published on the Council's website.

4.10 Lobbying

12. The Nominated Member or the Nominated Officer or any other officer of the authority, when exercising their powers under Regulations 4, 5 or 6 and this Scheme of Delegation, shall not be lobbied or otherwise contacted by any person or organisation, including by members or officers of the relevant authority, to use their power in a particular way.

13. Any such lobbying that is received should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will deal with it as appropriate.

14. A Vexatious Customer Procedure to deal with planning related complaints that are unreasonable persistent, malicious and/or vexatious or flagrantly in breach of rules or procedures can be found in Part 5 – Codes and Protocols.

TABLE 3

Responsibility for Local Choice Functions

	Function	Decision making body
1.	Any function under a local Act other than a function specified or referred to in regulation 2 or Schedule 1	Leader / Executive
2.	The determination of an appeal against any decision made by or on behalf of the Authority	General Purposes Committee Appeals & Grievances Panel Strategic Directors

		<i>In accordance with terms of reference/delegated authority</i>
3.	The appointment of review boards under regulations under subsection (4) of section 34 (determination of claims and reviews) of the Social Security Act 1998	Council
4.	~~Any function relating to contaminated land~~	~~Planning & Development Committee~~
5.	The discharge of any function relating to the control of pollution or the management of air quality	Leader / Executive
6.	The service of an abatement notice in respect of a statutory nuisance	Leader / Executive
7.	The passing of a resolution that Schedule 2 to the Nuisance and Statutory Nuisance Act 1993 should apply in the authority's area	Leader / Executive
8.	The inspection of the authority's area to detect any statutory nuisance	Leader / Executive
9.	The investigation of any complaint as to the existence of a statutory nuisance	Leader / Executive
10.	~~The obtaining of information under section 330 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as to interests in land~~	~~Planning & Development Committee~~

11.	The obtaining of particulars of persons interested in land under section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976	Leader / Executive
12.	The appointment of any individual officer – (a) to any office other than an office in which he/she is employed by the authority (b) to any body other than: (i) the authority; (ii) a joint committee of two or more authorities; or (c) to any committee or sub-committee of such a body, and the revocation of any such appointment.	Council (if Council business) Executive (if an Executive function)
13.	The making of agreements with other local authorities for the placing of staff at the disposal of those other authorities	Leader / Executive
14.	Functions under S.106, 110 & 113 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 relating to Local Area Agreements	Leader / Executive

PART 4
RULES OF PROCEDURE

11. Petitions and Deputations

(ix) If a petition regarding a planning application which is contrary to the Officer's recommendation then the application will be considered by the Planning Committee, subject to other requirements of the Council's Constitution. Where the application is referred to the Planning and Development Committee, the lead petitioner or other nominated person, will be given five minutes about the application.

42. Other provisions

The following Standing Orders from Part 1 (Council Meetings) and Part 2 (General) shall apply to these bodies, allowing that 'Mayor' shall be substituted by 'Chair' or person presiding, as appropriate.

The Planning and Development Committee has its own committee procedure rules which is set out at paragraph 49 below.

49. Planning and Development Committee Procedures

Reference to the Chief Planning Officer is also a reference to an officer who is representing them at the committee meeting. This will normally be the Director of Planning and Regulation.

Format of committee agenda

The Committee's agenda may contain the following parts for planning reports:

- A. Development presentations: to enable the Committee to receive presentations on proposed developments, including when they are at the pre-application stage. These items do not attract public speaking rights.
- B. Applications for decision: these items attract public speaking rights.
- C. Other planning matters: non-application matters that require Committee consideration. These items do not attract public speaking rights.

Format of committee procedures

The procedure for considering the items on each part of the agenda are set out below. Reference to the Chief Planning Officer is also a reference to their representative at the committee. This will be the Director of Planning and Regulation or their substitute (Head of Planning and Enforcement).

Development presentations (Pre-applications Only)

The procedure for considering each item shall be as follows:

- The Chief Planning Officer will introduce the main issues;
- The developer will present their scheme for no longer than 20 minutes unless the Chair, exercising their discretion, has allowed a different period;
- Through the Chair, Committee members ask questions of the developer; and
- The Chief Planning Officer will summarise the issues raised by the Committee which will form the minute for the item.

Applications for decision

The procedure for considering applications where there are public speakers shall be as follows:

- The Planning Officer will introduce the development the subject of the application, including an overview of the main issues;
- Public speaking will take place
- The Planning Officer will, where necessary, address any issues raised during public speaking; and
- Through the Chair, Committee members may ask questions of clarification;
- The Committee will consider the item and reach a decision.

The procedure for considering applications where there are no public speakers shall be as follows:

- If requested by the Chair, the Planning Officer will present the main issues; and
- The Committee will consider the item and reach a decision.

Other planning matters

The procedure for considering any item shall be as follows:

- If requested by the Chair, the Planning Officer will present the main issues; and
- The Committee will consider the item and, if required, reach a decision

Format of committee recommendations

The recommendations in reports to Committee will not set out the full wording of planning conditions, informatives and planning obligations, (or reasons for refusal, where that is the recommendation) but comprise a summary of them. There are two reasons for this:

- It communicates the details of the recommended decision more clearly to the Committee than many pages of detailed planning conditions etc; and
- There can sometimes be a delay before a decision is issued (such as waiting for the signing of a legal agreement or views from the Strategic Planning Authority and/or the National Planning Case Unit) and something may arise which necessitates an amendment, a deletion or an addition.

Delegation to officers

It is the function of the Director of Planning and Regulation to communicate the detailed wording of Committee decisions to applicants.

Where the Committee determines an item on an agenda the Chief Planning Officer has delegated authority to:

- make changes to the wording of the committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions, informatives and planning obligations or, if refused, the reasons for the decision);
 - accept changes or amendments to the development; and
 - consider the effect of any subsequent changes in legislation or policy;
- prior to the decision being actioned, provided that the Chief Planning Officer is satisfied that any such changes could not reasonably be regarded as deviating from the overall principle of the decision reached by the Committee, nor that

such change(s) could reasonably have led to a different decision having been reached by the Committee.

In the event of changes being made to an officer recommendation by the Committee (such as amending or changing the recommendation), the task of formalising the wording of those changes, within the substantive nature of the Committee decision, is delegated to the Director of Planning and Regulation.

Public speaking rules

People can only address the committee on items that are on the Applications for Decision part of the agenda. As stated above, other items on an agenda do not attract public speaking rights, except at the discretion of the Chair.

Subject always to the limitations below, for each planning application there are up to three separate speaking slots, in the following order, allocated to:

Objector(s) who have submitted a Planning Objection (as defined below) to the planning application. Only one objector can address the meeting for a maximum of three minutes each. Additional objectors who are wishing to speak at the Meeting will be at the discretion of the Chair.

The applicant or their agent/representative and supporter(s) – hereinafter referred to as the Applicant's slot. This slot will be allocated the same length of time as the Objectors' slot i.e. three minutes. The length of time maybe increased to a maximum of six minutes if the Chair allows an additional objector to speak at the Committee Meeting. The Applicant's slot is for the applicant to decide how to use. If there are supporters wishing to address the committee, they must liaise with the Applicant.

Any Ward Councillor who has submitted a Planning Objection (as defined below) to the planning application. Up to two Ward Councillors can address the meeting for a maximum of Six Minutes Each. If such a Ward Councillor wishes to speak but is unable to attend the Committee, they may nominate a substitute Councillor to address the Committee on their behalf.

A Planning Objection is defined as a Public Access response, email, letter or petition that meets all the following requirements:

- it relates to and is in response to an application that has been publicised/advertised/notified by the Council;
- it is not anonymous and includes the person's name and postal address;
- it is from, or on behalf of, a person who lives at or operates from an address which is within the Council's administrative area;
- it is received by the Planning Service within the statutory consultation period (usually 21 days of the publication of the case in the weekly list of planning applications) or within any prescribed timeframes as part of any formal re-consultation process (between 14 and 21 days); and
- it raises objections that are material planning considerations and are related to the application and they have not been overcome by scheme amendment, imposing planning condition(s) or securing planning obligation(s).

Registering slots and attendance

If members of the public (objectors or supporters), applicants and agents or Ward Councillors wish to speak on an application on an agenda they must contact the Head of Planning and Enforcement (or Team Leader in their absence) by email (planning@stevenage.gov.uk) or by telephone (01438 242242). Registration of slots can only be taken after the publication of the agenda and by 2 working days prior the meeting. In doing so they must provide their contact details and also outline (in writing) the points they wish to raise at the meeting.

On the night of the committee, members of the public (objectors or supporters), applicants and agents or Ward Councillors who have registered a speaking slot must register their attendance with the Committee Clerk in attendance at the meeting at least 15 minutes before the meeting starts.

Prioritisation

Where more than one Objector have registered to speak (subject to the agreement of the Chair) and the arrangements have not been resolved in advance, the Committee Clerk and / or an Officer in the Planning Service will inform the parties involved so that they can decide either who will address the committee or how they will divide up the allocated speaking slots. Objectors are expected to come to an agreement between themselves on this.

Where Objectors cannot come to an agreement, the chair will be notified of this through Democratic Services, and the Chair will decide who will be accorded the right to speak in each of the three-minute slots. Preference will normally be given to those who are potentially most affected by the development, which will usually be those living or operating closest to the application site. The Chair may take advice from officers in making this decision.

Where more than two Ward Councillors have registered to speak and the arrangements have not been resolved in advance, preference will be given to those members within whose ward the development is located or mainly located.

In both cases, to ensure the most efficient progress of Committee business on the evening, the decision of the Chair will be final and not be the subject of debate by the Committee.

Any Councillor who addresses the committee must declare, before making their speech, details of any material contact they have had with the applicant, agent, advisor, neighbour, objector or other interested party and whether the speech is made on behalf of such person(s) or any other particular interest.

Where the Applicant is the only speaker on an item recommended for approval, they would only be expected to take up their speaking slot if there was a material aspect of the recommendation that they disagreed with.

All those involved in public speaking are restricted to an oral presentation only. This means presentations and / or representations made by members of the public either in a written or digital format, will not be presented to the Planning and Development Committee as part of the officer's presentation. Therefore, the officers' presentation material is not available for use by public speakers.

See below under lobbying for advice about the distribution of additional material or information to Members of the Committee.

Following the completion of a speaker's address to the Committee, that speaker shall take no further part in the proceedings of the meeting unless invited to do so by the Chair.

Speaking Rights at adjourned meetings

Where an item is on an agenda and it has been deferred from a previous meeting, speaking will only be allowed in the following circumstances:

- Where substantive new material is being considered by the committee. Substantive new material is defined as material where officers have decided that consultation with the public on it is necessary.
- Where the matter is to be reconsidered for any other reason.

Otherwise, because the same members are continuing their consideration of the item and are not considering substantive new material, a second round of public speaking is not required.

For the avoidance of doubt, an item that has been deferred because members were minded to go against the officer recommendation and the Chief Planning Officer was unable to advise on grounds in the meeting or the decision constitutes a Departure and is therefore bringing a further report to the next available Committee setting out their advice, does not require a second round of public speaking because this does not constitute substantive new material.

Varying Speaking Rights

At the discretion of the Chair, such as in the interests of natural justice or in exceptional circumstances, the public speaking procedures may be varied. The reasons for any such variation shall be recorded in the minutes. The number of objectors or supporters would not, of itself, be a factor in allowing additional speakers or longer speaking times. If changes are made to the speaking times, the Applicant must be offered the same time to speak as the time offered collectively to Objectors.

Other procedural issues

It is vital that Members of the Committee understand what their role is and the parameters within which they must operate.

Their role is to determine the planning applications that are reported to them; they are planning decision makers. In carrying out that role they are governed by

planning law, particularly s36(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which states that they must determine an application in accordance with the development plan unless there are good planning reasons to do otherwise. In effect, the purpose of a planning decision maker is to deliver the local plan.

This means that political matters must not be brought into the debate, only material planning considerations. Members are not there to represent their constituents. They represent the Council as a whole and they must make decisions in the public interest. This can extend beyond the vicinity of the development under consideration and in some cases encompass a very wide area, even the whole country if national considerations are raised.

Late material and other updates

It is common for material (such as late representations or consultee responses) to be received by the Planning Service after the close of the agenda. Where this material needs to be brought to the attention of the Committee so that it can be considered (i.e. where new matters are raised), it will be presented in the Addendum Report. It will comprise a summary of what has been raised and be reported in the same way as representations are presented in the main Committee report.

The Addendum Report will contain the following:

- Pick up errors in a committee report that it is necessary to correct.
- Report any material received or identified since the close of the agenda which needs to be brought to the attention of the committee to enable them to consider/determine an agenda item.
- Set out any material changes to the details within the recommendation.

The practicality of producing such a report means that there must be a cut-off point for the receipt of late material by the Planning Service. This is noon (12pm) on the day before the meeting. Generally, material received after this time will not be reported to the Committee. The Chief Planning Officer has an absolute discretion in this regard.

Lobbying

Material must not be distributed to Committee Councillors by members of the public (including public speakers) or other Councillors during the meeting, including the period before it starts or during any adjournments.

The distribution of such material should be done in advance of the meeting by either supplying it to the Planning Service, if it is written material and can be included in the Addendum Report, or otherwise by sending it direct to Councillors in advance of the meeting. Councillors' contact details are available from the Council's website. Anything sent to Councillors must also be sent to the Planning Service.

The deadline for the submission of late material (above) also applies to any lobbying material and where this has not been met, members of the committee will be required to not take such late material into account.

Withdrawn Agenda Items

If the Chief Planning Officer decides before the start of a meeting that an item that is on an agenda of the Committee should not be considered by the Committee, for whatever reason, they shall withdraw that item from the agenda. The committee will be informed of that in the Addendum Report, if possible, and at the start of the meeting. An explanation will be given for the reason the report is withdrawn from the agenda and, if possible, the expected date at which it will be reported again. That decision or the item will not be the subject of debate by the Committee.

Attendance During Committee

Where a decision is made on an agenda item, to be able to vote a Member of the Committee must be present throughout the whole of the Committee's consideration of that item, including the officer introduction and any public speaking. This also applies when a matter is considered across two or more meetings because of a deferment, unless a decision is made to start the consideration of the matter afresh.

Any dispute as to whether the Councillor in question should be permitted to vote shall be decided by the Chair, in consultation with legal and other officers as necessary. That decision will be final and not be the subject of debate by the Committee.

This does not apply to Development Presentations because no decisions are being made as they are part of an informal pre-application process, rather than the formal planning application determination process.

Duration of Meetings

Planning Committee meetings are subject to a guillotine that they should finish within 3½ hours of the time that the meeting was due to start (as listed on the agenda papers). An item started before the guillotine can continue to be considered for a further 30 minutes to enable it to be determined. The meeting must therefore not last for more than 4 hours.

Where a report has been placed on a Planning and Development Committee agenda but the meeting either fails to start to consider that item prior to the guillotine, or starts consideration before the guillotine but fails to complete determination of it within the additional 30 minutes, further consideration of the matter will be suspended and it will be delegated to officers to determine in accordance with the recommendation set out in the report.

The meeting can only suspend these provisions if it does so by way of a resolution made prior to the guillotine and agreed on a majority vote. Generally, the committee would only suspend the guillotine for undetermined items with speakers and must not routinely suspend the guillotine.

Voting procedures

The Chair will bring the Committee to a vote when they consider that there has been sufficient debate of an item.

The Committee will vote on the recommendation set out in the report, unless a motion has been made and seconded to defer consideration of an item (for example for a site visit or for further information/advice).

If a Committee Member wishes to amend the recommendation (such as an additional condition or a variation to a condition) they will need to move this, have it seconded and decided, prior to any vote on the recommendation. A recommendation cannot be changed (eg from approval to refusal) in this way.

For the vote on the recommendation (or an amendment to the recommendation) to be successful there needs to be a majority vote in favour of it. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair has an additional, unconstrained casting vote. This can be exercised irrespective of whether the Chair already voted.

Decisions contrary to the recommendation

A motion to go against the recommendation must always be considered after a vote on the recommendation (or an amendment to the recommendation) has taken place, so that officers are clear that the Committee may be minded to go against their recommendation and can prepare their advice accordingly.

When the recommendation is not supported, a new motion to either grant or refuse the application must be moved and seconded. However, before a new motion is proposed, the Committee must first receive advice from the Chief Planning Officer as to what form a new motion should take. That advice will be based upon the development plan, the material planning considerations that have been discussed by the Committee and whether there are grounds that could be defended in the event of an appeal or legal challenge.

The solicitor advising the Committee may be called upon as necessary to give advice on legal matters but cannot advise the Committee on planning matters.

Once the Committee has received the advice of the Chief Planning Officer they can proceed to a vote. A detailed minute of the Committee's reasons for going against the officer's recommendation shall be made, which as a matter of law, must be clear and convincing. The decision should take the form, 'That authority is delegated to the Chief Planning Officer to refuse planning permission for the following summary reasons:

If the Chief Planning Officer considers that they are unable to give that advice immediately in the meeting, further consideration of the matter will be suspended, and the agenda item will be deferred so that the Chief Planning Officer can bring a further report to the next available Committee setting out their advice.

In such cases, it will be important that the Chair communicates clearly to the meeting that a decision on the application has not been made and that it will be considered further at a future meeting of the Committee.

Decisions contrary to the development plan

The law (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) requires that where the Development Plan is relevant, decisions must be taken in accordance with it unless there are good planning reasons to do otherwise. If the Committee intends to approve an application which does not accord with the provisions of the Development Plan, the material considerations must be clearly identified and the justification for overriding the Development Plan clearly demonstrated. The application must be advertised in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and, depending upon the type of development proposed, may also have to be referred to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government (National Planning Casework Unit). Such a decision is referred to as a Departure.

If the recommendation in the officer report constitutes a Departure, the justification will be included in that report, and the necessary advertisement would have been undertaken.

If the Committee is minded to make a decision which would be contrary to the officer recommendation and that decision (in the opinion of the Chief Planning Officer) would constitute a Departure, the Chief Planning Officer shall so inform the committee. Further consideration of the matter will be suspended, and the agenda item will be deferred so that the Chief Planning Officer can bring a further report to the next available Committee detailing the planning issues raised by such a decision. Any necessary advertisement of the application will also be undertaken.

In such cases, it will be important that the Chair communicates clearly to the meeting that a decision on the application has not been made and that it will be considered further at a future meeting of the Committee.

If, having considered the second report, the Committee decides to determine the application contrary to the provisions of the Development Plan, a detailed minute of the Committee's reasons for going against the Development Plan shall be made, which as a matter of law, must be clear and convincing.

Deferred Decisions

If the Committee decides to defer consideration of an item to a later meeting the following procedures shall apply depending on the reason for the deferment. At the time of deferral the Chair shall identify which procedure is likely to be followed at the deferred meeting.

If the Committee defers making a decision for further information (such as a site visit or for clarification of or further advice on a matter) or a minor change to the proposal (defined as a change that officers decide that consultation with the public on it is not necessary) then at the deferred meeting members of the Committee will effectively continue their consideration of the item. This means that:

- in line with the principle set out above under Attendance During Committee, only those Members present at the meeting when the matter was first considered, and at the deferred meeting may vote on the matter; and
- in line with the Public Speaking Rights set out above, a further round of public speaking will not be permitted at the deferred meeting.

If the limitations set out above result in the Committee not being quorate (not enough members are present to hold a valid vote), then the procedures set out in the next paragraph shall apply.

If the Committee defers making a decision in order to seek substantive new material or a material change to the proposal (both defined as an addition or change that officers decide that consultation with the public on it is necessary) the Committee shall consider the item afresh at the deferred meeting. Officers will present the item in full, including the new material. Public speaking will be permitted in line with the Public Speaking Rights set out above. All Members present at the deferred meeting when the item is reconsidered may vote on it.

Committee Minutes

The minutes of the committee meeting will record:

- The councillors and officers present at the meeting.
- Any disclosures of interest made by councillors or officers.
- For each item, the identity of any public speakers and the decision.

- Where a decision goes against the recommendation, the reason(s) for doing so.
- Where a decision is deferred, the reason(s) for doing so.
- Details of any adjournment of the meeting, and the reason(s) for doing so;
- The use of the Chair's discretion to depart from Constitutional rules and procedures, and the reason(s) for doing so.
- The recorded vote in terms of those who voted for, against or abstained in respect to an officers recommendation.
- The time the meeting finished.

Site Visit Procedures

Site visits are for Members of the Planning and Development Committee to observe the site and gain a better understanding of the impact of the development. They are intended to:

- be a fact-finding exercise;
- let Members consider the proposed development in the context of the site;
- allow Members to ask officers questions of clarification about the development; and
- enable officers to point out relevant features and factors for consideration at the committee.

The merits or otherwise of the development must not be discussed at a site visit.

The decision whether to have a site visit is made by the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, in consultation with the Chief Planning Officer. A request for a site visit should only be made by Members of the Committee:

- where the benefit is clear and substantial, and it is only likely to be so if the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from the plans and any supporting material, including photographs and aerial photography, and the reasons why a site visit is considered necessary should be included in the request; and
- as early as possible in the life of the planning application to prevent delays to the determination of the application.

The request must be agreed by the Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, in consultation with the Chief Planning Officer.

A request for a site visit should not be made by Members of the Committee at the meeting.

A site visit will normally take place during normal business hours (see section 8.10 for more details) which will conclude consideration of the matter. An alternative date can only be arranged with the agreement of the Chair.

Attendance At The Site Visit

A site visit is not a part of the formal determination of the planning application and therefore the public attendance and speaking rights of the formal Planning and Development Committee do not apply. Site visits should only be attended by Members of the Planning and Development Committee and officers. The arrangements for site visits will not normally be publicised. The applicant, their agent(s) and third parties are not expected to be present. If such parties are present and they are interfering with the site visit process, the Chair shall decide how best to deal with the breach of procedures, including abandoning the site visit.

Where permission is needed to go onto private land, contact will be made by officers with the owner to facilitate access. The owner or their representative will only facilitate access and shall play no further role in the site visit.

Where the Chair of the Committee considers that there is information which cannot be provided by officers, which it is necessary to receive on site and which is only likely to be able to be provided by the applicant, their agent(s) or a third party, they will instruct officers to invite one representative of the required party to be present but only to present the information and answer any questions from Members, through the Chair, that relate to the information that officers are unable to provide. Once they have performed their role, they must leave.

Site Visits will only be conducted during normal business hours and so will exclude weekends, bank holidays or any other public holiday which may occur from time-to-time.

Conduct Of The Site Visit

The purpose, format, issues for consideration and standards of conduct should be made clear by the Chair at the outset and adhered to throughout the visit.

All Members attending the site visit should remain together as a group to ensure that they all receive the same information.

Officers will explain the submitted plans and proposals in relation to the site and any relevant neighbouring land. Members of the Committee may ask questions of those present to establish matters of fact and inform their consideration of the application.

Members should not hear representations by any party at the site visit. Where a Member is approached by the applicant or a third party, the party should be advised that they should make representations in writing to the authority and direct them to or inform the officer present.

Reporting On The Site Visit

An Officer from the Planning Service will must prepare minutes of the site visit and these minutes included in the Addendum Report to the Planning and Development Committee that subsequently considers the application. It should record:

- The date and time of the visit.
- The names of all present.
- A summary note of any questions asked by Members and the responses provided by officers (or others) during the visit so that all Members have the same information.

Technical Briefings

Technical briefings may be arranged for large or complex applications where the Chief Planning Officer considers that the Members of the Committee will be assisted by a briefing. The briefing may deal with the application as a whole or with specific issues only.

The purpose of technical briefings is to provide information to Members. Technical briefings are not an opportunity to consider the merits of the application. Members should not treat the technical briefing as an opportunity to debate the application ahead of the relevant Planning and Development Committee meeting, although Members can ask questions for information and clarification.

The briefing will be led by officers. External consultants engaged by the Council to advise officers may also attend.

Officers will generally invite the applicant and/or their advisors to attend the technical briefing, however, these technical briefings are not open to the applicant, members of the public or to objectors, unless they are invited by officers.

Minutes will be kept of technical briefings.

Part 5 – Codes and Protocols

This contains a model procedure to deal with planning related complaints that are unreasonably persistent, malicious and/or vexatious or flagrantly in breach of rules or procedures.

Add:-

Part 5(c) Vexatious Customer Procedure

Introduction

This procedure is designed to deal with lobbying, representations, complaints and similar submissions to the Planning Service where the complainant is unreasonably

persistent, malicious and/or vexatious or flagrantly in breach of rules or procedures. These will be referred to collectively as vexatious complaints in these procedures.

Whilst not specifically covered by these procedures, the Council does not expect staff to tolerate behaviour that is abusive, offensive or threatening and will take action to protect staff from such situations.

Reasons For The Procedure

Planning decisions are based on balancing competing interests and making an informed judgement against a national, regional and local policy framework on what can be controversial proposals. One of the key aims of the planning system is to balance private interests in the development of land against the wider public interest. In performing this role, planning necessarily affects land and property interests, particularly the financial value of landholdings and the quality of their settings. Opposing views are often strongly held by those involved.

Whilst Councillors and officers must take account of these views, they cannot favour any person, company, group or locality, nor put themselves in a position where they may appear to be doing so. It is important, therefore, that Councils make planning decisions affecting these interests openly, impartially, with sound judgement and for justifiable reasons.

Whilst it is legitimate that people affected by planning proposals express their views on them so that they may be considered, they must respect the Council's members and officers and not subject them to unacceptable behaviour. The purpose of this procedure is to identify such behaviour; explain why it is unacceptable; and set out procedures to deal with it when it occurs persistently.

Potential Problems

Dealing with complaints, representations and enquires from the public is generally a straightforward process. In a small number of cases, people pursue them in a way which can either impede dealing with the matter or can have significant resource implications for the Council. This can happen either while the matter is being investigated, or once the Council has finished dealing with it. It is important to distinguish between people who make several complaints because they genuinely think things have gone wrong and people who make unreasonably persistent complaints, representations or enquiries.

The aim of these procedures is to contribute to the Council's overall aim of dealing with all customers in ways which are consistent and equitable. It sets out how the Council will decide which customers will be treated as vexatious, and what the Council will do in those circumstances. This guidance runs alongside existing corporate policies and guidance relating to equalities, health and safety, and dignity and respect at work. It should only be pursued where necessary.

What follows are the three most common examples of behaviours that would be covered by these procedures.

National Scheme Of Delegation

The Government have introduced a National Scheme of Delegation through the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. This means that there are only certain circumstances when a planning application can be referred to committee for determination. The old practices of a specific quantity of objections triggering that or referral by a ward member, no longer apply.

The decision on whether a matter is determined by members in committee, cabinet or full council is specified by the Regulations or the Constitution. Where there is discretion, it is generally a decision between the Chair of Planning Committee] and the Director of Planning and Regulation . There are statutory provisions governing how they should do this, and lobbying is not a matter that can be considered. Because of this risk that they will be put under pressure to use their powers in a particular way, the Constitution prohibits the lobbying of these members and officers in these circumstances.

Any such lobbying should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will deal with it under these procedures.

Representations On Planning Applications

The public have the right to comment on a planning application. It is the substance of what has been said that is material, not how often it has been repeated or who said it. A planning decision is not a local plebiscite and voluminous, repetitive objection or support campaigns add nothing to the decision-making process, other than unnecessarily increasing the workload of the Planning Service as they must be processed.

Councils have always had to deal with such repeat representations, but a new trend is emerging where AI is used to generate this material. The result can be excessive both in the number of objections generated and in the length of individual objections. These can often be highly inaccurate. Along with the right to make a representation, there is a duty to ensure that it is accurate. Again, excessively long and inaccurate representations add nothing to the decision-making process, other than unnecessarily increasing the workload of the Planning Service as they must be checked.

Any such excessively voluminous representations or where there is evidence of the unreasonable use of AI, should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will deal with it under these procedures.

Vexatious complaints

The final category is wider than representations on planning applications and can occur with other planning activities such as enforcement complaints and policy matters. Again people have the right to make complaints or other representations, but they also have a responsibility to be reasonable and not submit excessive quantities of correspondence and be unreasonably persistent.

The Council defines unreasonable behaviour in these cases as those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Council, hinder the Council's consideration of their or other people's complaints/enquiries. Customers who are displaying unreasonable behaviours, may have justified complaints or grievances but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways. They may not be seeking to resolve a dispute between themselves and the Council but are seeking to cause unnecessary aggravation or annoyance to the Council. Alternatively, they may be intent on pursuing complaints or enquiries which appear to have no substance, or which have already been investigated and determined. Their contacts with the Council may be amicable but still place very heavy demands on staff time, or they may be distressing for all involved.

Any such behaviours that reach the vexatious threshold should be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will deal with it under these procedures.

Principles

The key principle behind these procedures is the need to balance the rights of the public to correspond with the Council with their responsibility to do so in a way that is proportionate and reasonable. The procedures are not intended to be used to restrict customers in contacting the [Planning Service], however the Council has a duty to ensure that it provides value for money for all its residents and customers. It is those customers who are placing heavy demands on staff time that is unjustified and unreasonable who will potentially be subject to these procedures.

Procedure And Sanctions

Where the Director of Planning and Regulation considers that a customer is in breach of these procedures they will refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer.

If the Monitoring Officer agrees that the thresholds in these procedures have been reached, they will contact the customer. There are three stages to the process.

Stage 1

The infringement of these procedures will be explained to the customer. They will be advised not to repeat their actions and the potential consequences of ignoring the advice will be set out.

Stage 2

If there is a further infringement, that fact will be pointed out to the customer. They will be advised that this is their final warning and if they repeat their actions, they will be treated as a vexatious complainant as previously set out.

Stage 3

Following a third infringement, they will be treated as a vexatious complainant and informed of the actions the Council is putting in place. This would usually mean that they must submit any representations or other communication with the **Planning Service** through either:

- An appropriate professional person; or
- the customer's ward member.

The professional person should be operating in the field of planning or a closely related professional area and would include a RTPI planning consultant, RICS surveyor, an RIBA architect or similar. These professions have professional codes which prescribe the behaviour of their members thereby enabling the Council to manage, through their respective institutes, any problems that might arise. The professional person must therefore be endorsed by the Director of Planning and Regulation and their decision on this would be final.

If the customer is unable or unwilling to use a professional person, then the only way to submit material on planning matters to the **Planning Service** is through their ward member. The ward member would have to comply with the Council's rules in doing this, including the expectations around proportionality and reasonableness.

Further sanctions may be considered depending on the circumstances of a particular case. These could include:

- **Named Point of Contact:** Requiring the complainant to only contact one named staff member.
- **Refusing New Complaints:** Refusing to process further complaints about the same matter.
- **Banning Access:** Banning the individual from council premises, except by appointment.
- **Termination of Contact:** In extreme cases, stopping all communication with the complainant.

The restrictions would normally continue for a year. The sanctions will then be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the **Director of Planning and Regulation**, to judge whether they can be lifted. This decision will be based on whether the customer has displayed reformed behaviour. The sanctions should remain in place until such time as it is considered that they have.

If sanctions are removed but the customer renews their previously identified behaviour, the sanctions can be reimposed without any further warning.

Appeal

The decision to treat a customer as vexatious and impose sanctions can be appealed through the Monitoring Officer. This must be received by the Council within 28 days of the date of its decision. If the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the Chief Executive Officer can be asked to review the decision. That request must also be made within 28 days and the decision will be final.

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Committee: Planning and Development Author: Martin Fitch - 01438 242268

Date: Tuesday 4 September 2007

Lead Officer: Peter Bandy - 01438 242288

Contact Officer: Martin Fitch - 01438 242268

**INFORMATION REPORT – SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO THE HEAD OF PLANNING
AND REGENERATION**

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update members of the scheme of delegation to the Head of Planning and Regeneration that is currently in operation.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Several members, have requested clarification of the scheme of delegation that relates to the work of the Committee.
- 2.2 The current scheme, which is attached as Appendix A, was approved by the Committee in February 2004 with several amendments made in December of that year following a six month review of its operation. The scheme was introduced to reduce the number of planning and related applications that were determined by the Committee under the previous arrangements that dated from 1993 for three reasons. Firstly, under the previous scheme, the Committee was spending ever increasing lengths of time dealing with large agendas that included significant numbers of relatively minor proposals, thereby reducing the ability to focus on the more complex and contentious issues that are raised by major applications. Secondly, given the four weekly Committee cycle, a significant proportion of the more minor applications were being determined outside the timescale set out in the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's). Thirdly, in 2003 the Council was failing to meet the BVPI that was then in force requiring local planning authorities to determine at least 90% of planning applications under delegated powers. At that time, approximately 70% of applications were dealt with under delegated powers, a figure that has risen to 91% for 2006/2007 under the current arrangements.
- 2.3 When the current scheme of delegation was approved, it was recognised that a small number of applications that would, in normal circumstances, be determined by the Head of Planning and Regeneration could raise issues which ought to be considered by the Committee. Accordingly, a procedure was introduced by which any member of the Council is able to request that, in exceptional circumstances, a particular application is "called-in" for determination by the Committee. This procedure is set out in Appendix B and it is of note that, to date, very few applications have been reported to the Committee as the result of members pursuing this procedure.
- 2.4 It is also the case that the Head of Planning and regeneration has the discretion to report minor applications for determination by the Committee where this is considered appropriate.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the information in this report be noted.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DELEGATION TO THE HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING (as amended by Planning and Development Committee on 21 December 2004)

PLANNING AND RELATED APPLICATIONS

(A) To determine applications for permission or consent, submitted under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(as amended), the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) and associated Regulations and Orders, other than:-

- (i) 'Major applications' as defined in the Town and Country Planning General Development (Procedure) Order 1995 (excluding those seeking approval of reserved matters)
- (ii) Applications 'called in' by a Member of the Council for determination by the Planning and Development Committee, in accordance with the adopted procedure
- (iii) Applications to which a neighbouring local planning authority has objected in writing
- (iv) Applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 by, or on behalf of, Stevenage Borough Council
- (v) Applications submitted by, or on behalf of, Members of Stevenage Borough Council or officers of the Council at, or above, the level of Principal Officer.
- (vi) Applications submitted in respect of land in the ownership of Stevenage Borough Council where objections to the proposals have been received in writing.
- (vii) Applications which the Head of Development and Planning considers it prudent to have considered by the Planning and Development Committee

(B) To determine applications under the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990

Provided that, in the case of any application under categories A or B:-

- (i) it does not materially conflict with any adopted or, where appropriate, emerging, planning policy adopted by Stevenage Borough Council;
- (ii) the grant of permission or consent is not dependent upon the completion of a legal agreement under the Planning Acts.

(C) To determine applications for prior approval in relation to permitted development proposals in accordance with the Town and Country Planning General (Permitted Development Order) 1995 and any subsequent amendments thereto.

(D) To determine applications for Certificates of Lawful Existing and Proposed Use or Development under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(as amended).

ENFORCEMENT

- (i) To issue Requisition for Information Notices, Planning Contravention Notices and Breach of Condition Notices, and, subject to the Borough Solicitor being satisfied with the appropriateness of the evidence, to initiate prosecution procedures for non-compliance with those Notices.
- (ii) To initiate prosecution procedures in respect of the unauthorised display of advertisements, subject to the Borough Solicitor being satisfied with the appropriateness of the evidence
- (iii) In cases where urgent action is considered necessary, and following consultation with the Chair and/or the Vice-Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, to issue the following :-
 - Enforcement Notices and Stop Notices, under the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) 1990;
 - Building Preservation Notices and Listed Building Enforcement Notices, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
 - Hazardous Substances Contravention Notices, under the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990;

and to apply to the Courts for injunctions in respect of contraventions of planning, listed building and hazardous substances control.

- (iv) To authorise an appropriate officer to enter land for enforcement purposes in cases where admission has been refused or in cases of urgency.
- (v) To exercise all powers of the Council under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and allied legislation in respect of fly posting.
- (vi) To authorise the service of notices under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of the proper maintenance of land

OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

- (i) To decline to determine repetitive applications for planning permission in accordance with Section 70a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990(as amended) and for advertisement consent under Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992.
- (ii) To prepare and present evidence in respect of an appeal against any decision under the Town and Country Planning Acts or in respect of any application referred to the Secretary of State for determination
- (iii) To approve the content of Agreements made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act.
- (iv) To determine whether an environmental statement is required in respect of proposed developments and, where a statement is required, to provide a scoping opinion relating to the information to be provided in the statement

- (v) To respond on behalf of the Council to consultations on planning applications from neighbouring Local Planning Authorities and Hertfordshire County Council
- (vi) To respond on behalf of the Council to consultations from Government departments

BUILDING CONTROL

- (i) To exercise all powers of the Council relating to building control in accordance with the provisions of the Building Regulations 2000, as amended, and the Building Act 1984, as amended and allied legislation.
- (ii) To authorise legal proceedings in respect of Contraventions of the Building Act 1984, as amended, the Building Regulations 2000, as amended, and allied legislation, subject to the Borough Solicitor being satisfied with the appropriateness of the evidence.

PROTECTION AND WORKS TO TREES

- (i) To authorise the making of Tree Preservation Orders.
- (ii) To determine applications for consent to fell, or carry out works to, trees covered by a Tree Preservations Order
- (iii) To respond to notifications of proposed works to trees in conservation areas.
- (iv) To authorise prosecution proceedings for offences in respect of Tree Preservation Orders and unauthorised works to trees in conservation areas, subject to the Borough Solicitor being satisfied with the appropriateness of the evidence.

MEMBERS' CALL-IN PROCEDURE

- Members informed of valid applications that are received by the Council by means of the weekly list.
- Members have 28 days from the date of its receipt by the Council to request that an application that would otherwise be dealt with under delegated powers is instead determined by the Planning and Development Committee. In the first instance, this should be done by contacting either the Head of Planning and Regeneration or the Development Control Manager to explain the reason/s why the application should be called in and why Committee consideration is regarded as necessary.
- If agreement cannot be reached with the Head of Planning and Regeneration or the Development Control Manager on the justification for the application to be determined by the Committee, Members may submit their request directly to the Chair of the Committee, whose decision will be final.
- No call-in will be possible after the end of the 28 day period.
- When an application is called in, the Member concerned will be notified as soon as practicable of the date when it will be reported to the Committee so that they may attend and, with the Chair's agreement, speak on the item.

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Forhad Chowdhury (Chair), Jim Brown, Jeff Bullock, Coleen De Freitas, Sarah Mead, Liam Morrell Phillips, Graham Spencer and Peter Wilkins

Independent Member: Syed Uddin

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dermot Kehoe and Leanne Brady.

Councillor Jim Brown was in attendance as a substitute.

It was noted that the Audit Committee's Independent Member, Syed Uddin, would be extended until 31 March 2028.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 2 June 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3 SHARED INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the first progress report for the financial year on the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), covering work undertaken between April and August 2026.

The report provided an update on completed and ongoing audit work and outstanding recommendations. It also provided an update on the assessment of the internal audit function and a minor amendment to the Audit Charter to clarify the Committee's oversight role.

It was noted that four audits had been finalised, all of which had provided a positive level of assurance, with further audits scheduled to commence during the year. The Committee discussed the outstanding internal audit recommendations, with particular attention given to the cybersecurity recommendations.

Members queried the lack of an update against a recommendation due in July 2026, noting the significance of cybersecurity risks. It was noted that further cybersecurity audit work was planned for Quarter 4, reflecting the rapidly changing nature of the risk. It was also suggested that the Committee would benefit from a further cybersecurity briefing from the Director of ICT, similar to the presentation provided to the Committee in November 2025.

Members also sought clarification on how overdue audit recommendations were monitored and how revised implementation dates were agreed. It was explained that Internal Audit tracked all medium and high-priority recommendations, while responsibility for implementation remained with the relevant managers, and were escalated to senior management where necessary.

Discussions took place regarding the audit findings relating to council garages and damp and mould. Members sought clarification on the assurance ratings and what action would be required to improve them. It was explained that addressing the recommendations and closing identified gaps in the control environment would be expected to improve the level of assurance following any subsequent audit work. Members welcomed the recommendations relating to damp and mould, particularly in light of the requirements under Awaab's Law, and emphasised the importance of ensuring that cases were progressed promptly.

Members also discussed missed appointments for housing-related works. Concerns were raised regarding the effectiveness of communication with tenants and the potential impact of missed appointments on the delivery and cost of services. It was noted that work was already underway to review missed appointments and improve communication with tenants, and that further discussion would take place outside the Committee.

Following the discussion, a further question was raised regarding whether the Council had any direct or indirect exposure to Palantir through its contracts and whether this presented any cybersecurity or data protection risks. It was agreed that this matter would be included within the next cybersecurity presentation to the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

4 **ADOPTION OF ANTI-FRAUD & CORRUPTION POLICY STATEMENT & STRATEGY / ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY / FRAUD SANCTIONS POLICY**

The Committee considered the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy, Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Fraud Sanctions Policy. It was explained that the three revised policies strengthened the Council's counter-fraud framework and had been updated to reflect current legislation, guidance, frameworks and local government best practice.

The revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy had been substantially expanded to provide clearer governance arrangements, responsibilities, fraud risk management

and reporting procedures, with wider coverage of bribery, corruption, money laundering, tax evasion and other economic crime.

The Committee was advised that the policies placed greater emphasis on fraud prevention and developing an organisational culture that reduced the risk of fraud occurring. It was noted the cash acceptance limit had been reduced from £3,000 to £1,000, reflecting the relatively low level of cash collected by the Council and practice elsewhere.

It was further noted that the three policies had been presented using a new corporate template to improve consistency and accessibility. Following consultation with stakeholders, flow charts had also been incorporated into each policy to clearly set out how and where suspected fraud, money laundering and related matters should be reported.

It was explained that where an actual financial loss had occurred, such as an incorrect Council Tax reduction, the precise amount could be established and recovery action taken. In tenancy fraud cases, the financial impact could include temporary accommodation costs, costs associated with putting a property back into use and the loss of an opportunity to re-let the property.

Members also queried cases where tenants had left family members living in Council properties. Officers clarified that where a tenant had moved elsewhere and left family members in the property without formally regularising the tenancy, this could constitute a breach of the tenancy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

5 **EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - AZETS**

The Committee received a presentation on the External Audit Plan for the year ended 31 March 2026. The auditors outlined the materiality thresholds, significant audit risks and Value for Money arrangements.

The Committee was also advised of the proposed audit fee for 2025/26 of £487,503, which included additional work required to rebuild assurance following the previous disclaimer opinions.

The Committee were also presented with the Build Back Assurance Plan, which set out the approach to rebuilding assurance over the previous four years alongside the 2025/26 audit and would be reported to the Committee quarterly, enabling progress and any slippage against the timetable to be monitored.

Members raised questions regarding the proposed timescale for rebuilding audit assurance, particularly whether the target of completing four years' outstanding work within nine months was achievable, and what assurances could be provided that the timetable would not slip further.

It was explained that the timetable had been agreed between the external auditors and the Council's Finance team, with both parties having committed the necessary

resources. The external auditors advised that the Council had been assessed as being towards the lower end of the risk spectrum, allowing a more targeted approach.

It was agreed that further updates would be provided to the Committee on any additional funding made available by MHCLG to support build-back costs when available.

Further questions were raised regarding the potential consequences if the timetable was not achieved. It was explained that there would be no immediate financial penalty, but delays could extend the period for which the Council received a disclaimer opinion and would postpone the return to a clean audit.

Questions were also raised regarding the transparency of the Build Back Plan and how the Committee would be able to understand which areas of work remained outstanding. It was confirmed that progress would be presented using a heat-map format, identifying work not yet undertaken, work in progress and completed work, with further detail and findings provided as the audit progressed.

Members sought clarification on the timetable in relation to other district councils and the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was explained that each council would have an individual timetable based on its risk profile and the approach of its external auditor. The auditors confirmed that the current timetable remained ambitious but was considered achievable, with the intention of returning the Council to a clean audit opinion by the proposed date.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

6 **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF 2025/26 INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

The Committee received the Annual Treasury Management Review for 2025/26, which set out the Council's Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for the year.

It was reported that the Council had operated within all approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators, complied with the relevant Treasury Management and Prudential Codes, and remained within its authorised borrowing limits.

It was explained that the rephasing of the capital programme from 2025/26 into the following financial year had reduced the Council's immediate borrowing requirement. This had enabled the Council to invest funds for a short period before they were required for the committed capital programme.

The Committee was advised that the Council had continued to use internal borrowing where this represented better value than external borrowing. The only new loan taken during the year had been £12 million for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to refinance an existing loan, in accordance with the HRA 40-year Business Plan.

In response to a question regarding whether the Council's financial performance could result in reduced Council Tax requirements, Officers clarified that the Council Tax for 2026/27 had already been set and that decisions regarding 2027/28 would form part of the future budget setting process.

The Committee also sought clarification on the Council's overall level of debt, which was approximately £266 million at the end of March 2026. Officers explained that the majority of this related to the approximately £200 million HRA borrowing undertaken in 2012 as part of the transfer of the Council's housing stock.

The HRA borrowing was managed through the HRA 40-year Business Plan, which provided for the borrowing to be repaid over the life of the plan. It was further explained that additional HRA borrowing was linked to the Council's housing regeneration and redevelopment programmes and was required to be supported by the HRA Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

7 SHARED ANTI-FRAUD SERVICE (SAFS) YEAR END REPORT AND PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received the Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) Year-End Report, which provided an overview of the work undertaken during 2025/26 to protect the Council against fraud, and to deliver the Council's Anti-Fraud Action Plan.

It was reported that the SAFS partnership comprised eight councils, and that the service worked with senior officers to deliver the agreed programme of Counter-Fraud activity.

Members were advised that work had continued to strengthen the Council's Anti-Fraud culture, including 11 training sessions covering areas such as identity fraud and fraud risk assessments. SAFS had also supported the review and development of the Council's anti-fraud policies and had issued five fraud alerts and 31 real-time threat alerts covering issues including internal fraud, planning fraud and business rates fraud.

It was reported that 31 Council Tax cases had been resolved through compliance activity, preventing approximately £53,000 in Council Tax and Housing Benefit fraud. Of the 24 cases investigated and closed, 18 had identified fraud, with total recoverable losses of approximately £514,000.

In response to a question regarding the cost of recovering the identified losses, SAFS explained that there was no additional fee for individual recoveries, as the service operated on an agreed annual flat fee. The partnership was jointly funded by its eight participating councils, with each Council's contribution determined according to its level of need. It was noted that Stevenage's contribution was higher than some other district councils due to the Council's housing stock generating additional Counter-Fraud activity.

The Committee also received an update on delivery of the Anti-Fraud Action Plan for

April to June 2026. It was reported that all key performance indicators were currently on target and that the plan covered fraud alerts, emerging trends, executive reports and delivery of the training programme.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

8 **RIPA POLICY AND REPORT**

The Head of Information Governance introduced the report and advised that the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) policy had been reviewed following an inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office.

The revised policy addressed recommendations from the inspection and included updated guidance on social media investigations, directed surveillance and the use of covert human intelligence sources.

Practical scenarios had been included to help officers understand when surveillance powers could be used and to provide greater clarity and confidence in applying the procedures.

It was noted that the Council had last used its surveillance powers in 2021, but that appropriate procedures and authorisation arrangements needed to remain in place.

Members thanked officers for the practical scenarios included within the revised RIPA policy, noting that these provided a clearer understanding of when the Council's surveillance powers could appropriately be used. Particular reference was made to the potential application of the powers in circumstances involving the protection of children from harm.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

9 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I report.

10 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

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.

11 **PART II MINUTES - AUDIT MARCH & JUNE 2026**

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 24 March and 2 June 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair.

12 **Q1 CORPORATE RISK REPORT**

The Committee considered the Quarter 1 update on the Strategic Risk Register.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented the report.

Members asked several questions that were answered by Officers.

13 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

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