

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 14 September 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Leanne Brady (Chair), Peter Wilkins (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Claire Parris, Jade Woods, Doug Bainbridge CC, Jan Bainbridge CC, John Blackwood, Jaysica Marvell, Graham Spencer and Peter Clark

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.15pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nigel Williams.

Councillor Peter Clark was present as a substitute.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2026 were agreed by the Committee.

3 INTERVIEW WITH CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Committee interviewed the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Environment, Transport and Planning and Stronger Communities and Equalities as part of its review of fly-tipping.

Members discussed the importance of a balanced approach combining prevention, education, communication and enforcement. It was considered important that residents and businesses received clear and regular information about what constituted fly-tipping, including simple visual communications showing examples of unacceptable waste disposal. Members noted that some residents might not understand that leaving items beside bins, at recycling sites or in other public areas constituted fly-tipping and that greater awareness of the seriousness of the offence was required.

There was strong support for maintaining an appropriate enforcement response, particularly in cases of persistent or repeated fly-tipping. Members considered that residents should generally be given an opportunity to rectify matters following an initial incident or warning, but that further action, including Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), should be considered where fly-tipping continued. Members did not support setting a numerical target for the issuing of FPNs, as this could create an inappropriate incentive for enforcement. Instead, it was suggested that enforcement

activity should be monitored as a statistic to assess how effectively cases supported prevention, clearance and behaviour change.

Members raised concerns regarding fly-tipping at recycling and bring-bank locations, particularly where black bags or other items were left beside containers. Officers advised that recycling teams attended such sites at least three times a week, while the cleansing team attended daily, including a seven-day operation to clear fly-tipping. Members nevertheless considered whether improved signage, monitoring and communications at hotspot locations could help prevent incidents. The possibility of increasing waste disposal capacity was also discussed. While members recognised that overflowing or unavailable facilities could contribute to inappropriate disposal, the preferred approach was to encourage responsible disposal alongside improvements to signage and monitoring rather than simply increasing capacity.

The Committee heard that repeated fly-tipping in particular locations remained a significant concern. Members noted that residents frequently raised complaints about persistent offenders and considered that stronger enforcement could provide an effective deterrent. It was suggested that communications could be targeted not only at suspected perpetrators but also more widely across affected streets, informing residents that the Council was investigating fly-tipping and reinforcing that the behaviour would not be accepted. Members also suggested that residents could be encouraged to report incidents or provide information anonymously where they had witnessed fly-tipping.

The use of door-to-door engagement in hotspot areas was proposed alongside letters and leaflets, enabling officers to engage directly with residents and encourage the reporting of suspected incidents. Members considered that visible Council presence in affected communities could itself act as a deterrent and help officers develop stronger links with residents. It was also suggested that conversations with suspected perpetrators could have a preventative effect even where there was insufficient evidence to issue an FPN.

Members discussed the potential publication of photographs or details of individuals who had received enforcement action. Concerns were raised regarding privacy, GDPR and the potential for such measures to be disproportionate. Officers advised that the legal position would need to be checked and that there could be opportunities to publicise enforcement through photographs of fly-tipping incidents or communications confirming that enforcement action had been taken, without necessarily identifying individuals.

The Committee considered the role of CCTV and other monitoring technology in tackling fly-tipping hotspots. Officers advised that CCTV was already available at some locations and that redeployable cameras could be positioned in hotspot areas. However, moving cameras could require consent from Hertfordshire County Council and could involve significant costs. Officers confirmed that the use and positioning of existing CCTV, including dome cameras, would be reviewed to determine how it could better support both prevention and enforcement. Members considered that, where appropriate, publicising the presence of CCTV could provide an additional deterrent.

A potential concern was raised regarding the use of reports from individual residents, particularly where there could be underlying neighbour disputes. Members stressed that allegations should be appropriately investigated and corroborated before enforcement action was taken, rather than relying solely on unsubstantiated complaints. Officers confirmed that investigations would take account of this risk.

Members discussed the potential creation of a dedicated fly-tipping enforcement officer within the Council. It was suggested that an officer working alongside the existing waste and cleansing staff could provide dedicated enforcement capacity, improve day-to-day intelligence gathering and develop stronger relationships within affected communities. Members suggested that the role could potentially incorporate other environmental enforcement responsibilities, such as fly-posting and abandoned vehicles, or potentially be shared with another local authority. The proposal was considered worthy of further exploration.

The Committee also considered comparative fly-tipping statistics, which appeared to show Stevenage recording significantly higher levels than some other Hertfordshire authorities. Officers advised that work had been undertaken through the Hertfordshire Fly-Tipping Group to investigate these differences. It was explained that Stevenage recorded a wider range of incidents than some other authorities, including fly-tipping at flat blocks, and had a greater number of bring-bank sites. Consequently, comparisons between authorities were not necessarily like-for-like. Officers indicated that work would continue to improve consistency in reporting across Hertfordshire.

The Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities and Equalities supported the preventative approach, while recognising the need for stronger action against persistent offenders. It was emphasised that education should give residents and businesses a clear opportunity to understand and rectify mistakes, but repeated offences should result in a more robust response. The Portfolio Holder identified persistent fly-tipping hotspots as a particular challenge and stressed the importance of protecting pride in place and encouraging residents to take responsibility for their local environment.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport and Planning supported strengthening the Council's enforcement capability and identified fly-tipping around verges and bins as an area requiring particular attention. The proposal for dedicated enforcement capacity within the operational team was highlighted as a potential means of improving the Council's ability to respond to incidents and gather intelligence.

Overall, the Committee recognised that there was no single solution to fly-tipping and that an effective approach would require a combination of clear communications, preventative education, community engagement, improved monitoring, accurate data, appropriate enforcement and proportionate use of FPNs. Members supported further consideration of hotspot interventions, CCTV, dedicated enforcement capacity and improved consistency of data across Hertfordshire.

The Committee received an update on fly-tipping enforcement data for 2025/26, following a request made at the previous meeting. The data provided covered enforcement activity across the Hertfordshire district and borough councils. Members were advised that, where possible, the Council sought to intervene with offenders before formal enforcement action was required. During the period, 129 investigated cases were resolved through the removal of fly-tipped waste prior to enforcement action. Two cases were resolved through tenancy enforcement, relating to issues associated with bin stores or communal areas within Council-owned properties. A total of 13 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were issued, of which 11 were paid and two were referred to court for legal action. Comparative FPN data for other Hertfordshire authorities was also provided for Members' consideration.

Members queried the significant variation in enforcement activity between authorities and asked whether there were lessons that could be learned from councils recording higher levels of enforcement. It was acknowledged that further work was required through the Fly-Tipping Action Plan to identify best practice both within Hertfordshire and nationally. The potential use of CCTV was highlighted as both a deterrent and a means of gathering evidence to support enforcement action. Members also discussed the importance of identifying and addressing local hotspots, with particular concerns raised regarding persistent fly-tipping around bins, garage compounds, parks and other communal areas. It was noted that the majority of residents disposed of their waste responsibly, but that a relatively small number of individuals could have a significant detrimental effect on neighbourhoods.

The Committee discussed the possibility of undertaking more proactive community engagement in identified hotspot areas. Officers advised that improved data from the Council's new digital system was helping to provide greater clarity regarding the location of incidents. As part of the Action Plan, consideration would be given to undertaking targeted visits, including door-knocking and the distribution of letters to households in affected areas. This approach was intended both to discourage further fly-tipping and to encourage residents to report incidents and provide evidence where possible. Members also suggested that greater communication was required to ensure residents understood what constituted fly-tipping, how waste could be disposed of correctly and the potential consequences of committing an offence.

Members queried the destination of waste removed by individuals who had voluntarily cleared fly-tipping following intervention. Officers advised that they did not have the specific information available at the meeting but would seek clarification from the Enforcement Team regarding how such waste was subsequently disposed of and whether it was dealt with responsibly.

The Committee received an update on the provision of electrical waste recycling facilities. Officers explained that the previous collection service had been discontinued due to cost issues. The service had also experienced a 33% reduction in usage between 2019 and 2022. Officers were now reviewing whether a replacement service should be introduced and were considering a Council-led trial at a few high-priority locations, potentially including Oaks Cross, St Nicholas and The Oval. It was noted that the trial would be intended for small electrical items such as

kettles and toasters, and that clear communications would be required to prevent larger appliances being deposited at the sites.

Members raised concerns regarding the safe disposal of lithium batteries. Officers advised that lithium batteries would not be accepted through the proposed electrical waste facilities and confirmed that the Council was also investigating a kerbside battery collection service, with the intention of trialling this from January 2027. Members welcomed the proposed approach, particularly in light of recent fires at waste facilities and the risks associated with lithium batteries.

A Member queried whether the Council had received complaints following the withdrawal of the electrical waste facilities and whether reinstating the service represented value for money. Officers confirmed that, to their knowledge, no complaints had been received, but noted that significant quantities of electrical waste were being collected at the Cavendish transfer station and that some of this appeared to originate from fly-tipping. It was therefore considered appropriate to test whether providing a local service could reduce fly-tipping levels.

The Committee discussed repeat offenders and the challenges associated with identifying individuals responsible for repeated incidents. Officers advised that limited data was available because evidence was required before enforcement action could be taken. However, more targeted work could be undertaken in areas where repeated problems were identified, particularly around flat blocks and communal bin stores. Officers also highlighted the need to address commercial waste being deposited at bring bank sites and confirmed that further work with local traders would be undertaken.

Members were reminded of the Council's new online reporting system for fly-tipping. Officers explained that residents could report incidents either as registered users or as guests, with reports being sent directly to the relevant team. Once the waste had been removed, the case would be closed and the person reporting the incident would receive an email notification.

Members discussed whether the Council's prompt removal of fly-tipping could inadvertently encourage further incidents by creating an expectation that waste would be removed quickly. It was acknowledged that the Council needed to balance an effective cleansing response with the importance of discouraging repeat behaviour.

The Committee considered potential visits to identified fly-tipping hotspots and discussed the difficulty of observing incidents if sites had already been cleared. It was suggested that officers could take photographs of sites before clearance over an agreed period, providing Members with a representative pictorial record of the issues. Members also suggested undertaking unannounced spot checks of a number of locations to provide a more accurate picture of conditions at the sites.

The Committee considered the possibility of engaging with a neighbouring authority as a critical friend to identify alternative approaches to fly-tipping enforcement. Officers agreed that information could be sought from other authorities, while noting

concerns regarding the wider use of private enforcement companies and the risk of enforcement activity being the priority rather than addressing the underlying causes of fly-tipping.

Members also queried whether Civil Enforcement Officers could potentially be given powers to undertake fly-tipping enforcement. Officers agreed to investigate the relevant legislation and whether such an approach was possible. Members expressed a preference for enforcement to remain closely connected to the Council's existing waste services and local knowledge, rather than being undertaken by an external private organisation.

The Committee subsequently considered comparative fly-tipping data presented in the report. Members raised concerns that the data did not necessarily provide a fair comparison for Stevenage, particularly given the Council's 8,000 housing properties, associated communal areas and other Council-owned land and buildings. It was suggested that Stevenage's distinctive Radburn layout of its housing stock could also affect how incidents were classified, particularly where pathways, footpaths and areas around properties were concerned.

Concern was also expressed regarding the classification of incidents on highways and footpaths, with the data appearing to show significantly fewer highway incidents in Stevenage than in other authorities. Members suggested that this might reflect differences in definitions or reporting practices rather than the actual level of fly-tipping experienced by pedestrians and cyclists. Officers acknowledged that Stevenage's reporting arrangements differed from those of other Hertfordshire authorities and that this could affect the figures presented.

The Committee noted that the comparative data had originated from DEFRA and suggested that clarification should be sought regarding the definitions used for the different categories. It was agreed that the Council should consider raising concerns with DEFRA where appropriate, while continuing to review its own reporting methodology to ensure that the data accurately represented the scale and location of fly-tipping in Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED** that the reporting instructions should be circulated to all Members to ensure they were readily available when reporting incidents.

5 **REVIEW THE FLY-TIPPING TASK FORCE'S ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received a presentation on the draft Fly-Tipping Action Plan, which had been developed in consultation with key Council officers and partners, including the Police. The Action Plan comprised eight key objectives, supported by a series of tasks and actions, and would be monitored through a Fly-Tipping Task Force, with additional governance through the SoSafe Partnership. Lead officers and target dates were being added to the document, with several actions already underway. Suggested Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had also been included, and the Committee was invited to provide comments and suggestions for further development.

Members highlighted the importance of updating the Council's Environmental Crime

Enforcement Policy to provide greater clarity on the Council's approach to fly-tipping, graffiti and fly-posting, and to address inconsistencies in investigation and enforcement processes. The need for clear roles and responsibilities across the teams involved in environmental crime, together with appropriate staff training on legislation, investigation and enforcement powers, was also emphasised. Members welcomed the proposed use of CCTV and a performance dashboard, suggesting that the dashboard could provide publicly accessible information and be reviewed regularly to maintain focus on delivery of the Action Plan.

The Committee discussed the importance of communication, community engagement and ensuring that residents understood what constituted fly-tipping, including the inappropriate placement of waste beside bins. Members welcomed the proposal for St Nicholas to be used as a pilot area and suggested that all Council staff could be encouraged and trained to report environmental crime, thereby increasing the intelligence available to officers. Reassurance was provided that the existing arrangements for the removal of offensive graffiti within 24 hours would continue.

Members also raised concerns regarding the quality and speed of graffiti removal at locations around the town and requested that officers consider whether further action could be taken to improve the overall standard and timeliness of removal. Members further suggested that the Action Plan should consider the definitions and reporting of fly-tipping statistics to DEFRA, with the importance of staff understanding the relevant definitions noted.

The Committee was advised of the forthcoming Keep Britain Tidy national fly-tipping campaign, running from 12 to 25 October, alongside which Hertfordshire partners would promote the local campaign using existing campaign materials and enforcement success stories through social media. Members were encouraged to share the campaign information to increase its reach.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Action Plan should have clear ownership and that quarterly progress updates could be undertaken to ensure that actions remained live and that incremental progress was monitored.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

7 **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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part

II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

8 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR