



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 6 October 2026

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Council Chamber

Contact: Gemma O'Donnell (01438) 242216

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

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

AGENDA

PART 1

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2026.
3 - 10
- 3. UPDATE ON STEVENAGE WORKS AND THE SKILLS AGENDA**
To receive an update from Officers on Stevenage Works and the Skills Agenda since the completion of the Committee's review in January 2025.
11 - 24
- 4. UPDATE ON COST OF LIVING**
To receive an update from Officers on the Cost of Living, following the Committee's review which was completed in January 2024.
25 - 32
- 5. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**
To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.
- 6. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**
To consider the following motions –
 1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
 2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information

contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

Agenda Published 28/09/2026

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

Cabinet Member & Partners Response to Environment & Economy Select Committee review of the local Skills Agenda
Recommendations and final report

Date Recommendations of final report agreed by Environment & Economy Select Committee on 14 January 2025:

(Circulated to Cabinet Member and external partners 24 February 2025*)

*Circulation delayed due to rewriting of recommendations

Date responses should be made by:

Cabinet and partners responses should be received by
25 April 2025

Page 11

Recommendations:	Executive & Partner Response:	Update Autumn 2026
<u>Expansion of Stevenage Works</u> <u>Recommendation 1 – (i) Expansion of Stevenage Works</u> - It is recommended that the Council be encouraged to expand Stevenage Works beyond construction into the health and social care sectors. <u>(ii) Expansion of Stevenage Works into “Green Construction” Solar and air source heat pump technology</u> - It is recommended that the Council be encouraged to expand Stevenage Works into a third iteration beyond health and social care sectors into Green Technologies.	<i>Response supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski, Investment Support Grant Manager, Greta Gardiner and Cabinet Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:</i> <i>Stevenage Works has proven to be an invaluable initiative in providing apprenticeships and job experience in the construction sector. By leveraging the numerous building developments in Stevenage including the Council’s extensive regeneration projects — including town centre redevelopment, housing development, and the</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Resident Liaison Manager & Stevenage Works Lead, Greta Gardiner.</i> <i>During 2025/26, Stevenage Works has continued to grow in both size and impact, with more than 40 active partners contributing to the success of the initiative. Stevenage Works continues to provide valuable opportunities for local residents through apprenticeships; work placements and employment opportunities within the construction sector.</i> <i>These opportunities support local people in gaining the experience and skills needed to progress into</i>

Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski.

maintenance of council-owned properties — which include the Stevenage Works has successfully created opportunities for residents to gain vital industry experience.

Recognising the importance of broadening the scope of Stevenage Works, the Council is actively working to expand into the health and social care sectors. This will be a significant workstream over the 2025/26 period, ensuring that Stevenage Works continues to meet the needs of a rapidly evolving workforce and supports residents in accessing stable, rewarding careers.

With respect to Green Construction, the Council acknowledges the growing importance of sustainable building technologies, including solar and air source heat pump technology. However, rather than establishing a separate workstream, these elements are already being embedded within the existing construction focus of Stevenage Works. Given the increasing adoption of green construction techniques across the industry, we see this as an organic evolution rather than a distinct third iteration of the initiative. We appreciate the committee's insights on this matter and will continue to ensure that sustainability remains a core component of our construction training programmes.

sustainable employment within the construction industry. Stevenage Works continues to monitor and promote social value through its partnership with local organisations and building developments across Stevenage. The initiative works closely with the Council's extensive regeneration programme, helping to ensure that major development activity continues to deliver opportunities and benefits for local residents. Stevenage Works currently connects with a range of Council departments and areas of activity, including Town centre regeneration; Housing development; Maintenance of Council-owned properties and wider projects. Through these partnerships and connections, Stevenage Works has successfully created opportunities to gain valuable industry experience, develop skills and access pathways into employment.

Stevenage Works expansion into Health & Social Care 2025/26 - Following approval of the Terms of Reference in June 2025, Stevenage Works partners, including North Herts College, Jobcentre Plus, the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association (HCPA) and Hart Learning, worked together to promote employment and training opportunities within the care sector. An information event was held at the local Job Centre Plus in August 2025 to provide customers with an insight into working in care, address misconceptions and promote further training. This was followed by the first two-week Care Sector-Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) in September 2025, All 12 candidates who attended interviews were successful at the HCPA

		stage, with three subsequently securing employment in the care sector. A second Care Assistant SWAP was delivered in November 2025, attracting 11 participants, all of whom were considered suitable by HCPA. Further Health & Social Care SWAP programmes have since continued, with participants being offered employment opportunities with HCPA. Overall, the programme has strengthened collaboration between local partners and increased pathways into training and employment within the care sector. The Green Construction workstream - The Council does not have a dedicated Stevenage Works Green Construction workstream. Instead, it works with contractors and suppliers to incorporate green initiatives into procurement and the delivery of works and services. Stevenage Works will continue to collaborate with the SBC Climate Action Group and other partners to support, monitor, and ensure agreed environmental commitments are delivered. Examples include - Morgan Sindall delivering green initiative workshops; Contractors offering free trees for planting; Hill include environmental and sustainable measures in their development incorporating energy saving features into building designs. Minimising carbon footprint and impact on those living and working around the construction site. Equans are delivering energy efficiency retro fit works to some SBC Council homes which includes Insulation, Solar Panels and Air Source heat pumps and other elements under the Warm
--	--	---

		Homes programme. Sureserve one of our heating contractors have targets for carbon emissions reduced and All fleet vehicles are EV or Euro 6.
Recommendation 2 – Upskilling - It is recommended that all partners including the DWP, Citizens Advice, Step2Skills, the Council and SMEs and larger employers should be encouraged to do this. Efforts from all partners would be needed to help lower skilled individuals obtain the skills they need to access higher skilled and higher paid roles which would directly tackle the problems associated with insecure employment from low-skilled, low-paid work, especially affecting a cohort of people aged in their late 20s to early 40s who still had decades left in the workforce. Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski to lead on this and reach out to partners.	<i>Response for SBC supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski and Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:</i> <i>Addressing skills gaps across different age groups is a central focus of the Council's workforce development strategy. The Stevenage Works Skills Framework provides a structured approach to supporting three primary cohorts: young people entering the workforce, adults who are currently unemployed, and adults in employment seeking to upskill or transition into new career pathways.</i> <i>Through our allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity fund we have been working in partnership with Hertfordshire Futures over the last three years. This delivery model has allowed us to act as commissioners in our relationship with Hertfordshire Futures, allowing us to tailor the programme to local needs.</i> <i>This support is aimed at businesses and residents with programmes offering training opportunities that can be accessed by the 20s to 40s cohort referenced in the recommendation.</i> <i>Government has confirmed a continuation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the 2025/26 financial year and we have agreed a further</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>As set out in the previous update, unemployed adults and adults already in work are priority groups within the Stevenage Works Skills Framework. A substantial adult skills offer already exists, but awareness of the opportunities available, time to participate and the ability to fit learning around work and other responsibilities can be greater barriers than the availability of courses. Improving access to existing provision is therefore an important part of responding to the review's focus on helping residents move into more secure and better paid employment.</i> <i>The Council has been working with North Hertfordshire College during 2026 to develop an Adult Cohorts Pilot designed to respond to gaps in existing provision, particularly in targeted workforce transition and employability support. It will support adults experiencing organisational change, including redundancy, to strengthen their confidence, employability and readiness for new opportunities. The pilot will augment the college's existing adult skills provision. Its focus is as much on helping people understand and access the options already available to them as it is on developing new routes into employment and training.</i>

commitment to continue a suite of interventions in partnership with Hertfordshire Futures.

The college's existing provision includes flexible adult courses and shorter Skill Booster programmes covering areas such as digital workplace skills, care and education. The Adult Skills Fund provides an important source of national support for adult learning, including English, maths, essential digital skills and vocational training, with full funding available to eligible learners. Alongside this, the Government's Free Courses for Jobs offer supports eligible adults to gain approved qualifications and has expanded in 2026/27 to include more Level 2 engineering and manufacturing courses. The Council's role is to help partners identify gaps, improve awareness and connect residents with provision suited to their needs and circumstances.

Alongside support for adults changing or progressing in work, the wider skills framework also responds to the Government's increased focus on reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Through the Youth Guarantee and apprenticeship reforms, national policy is placing greater emphasis on helping young people enter employment, including through the expansion of Level 2 foundation apprenticeships. These combine paid work with structured training and employability skills, providing an accessible starting point from which young people can progress into more specialised or higher-level apprenticeships.

Recommendation 3 – Promotion of apprenticeships supporting nursery childcare for the local economy - Apprenticeships in

nursery childcare would both support parents in the local economy with the provision of more childcare and would support the apprentice to learn new skills and earn an income helping towards living costs whilst being trained. Members are aware that this is a national policy area which the Council can lobby on but has no direct control over.

Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski to liaise with external partners in the childcare sector.

Page 16

Response for SBC supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski and Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:

The Council acknowledges the importance of increasing the availability of apprenticeships in nursery childcare, both to support working parents and to provide meaningful career opportunities for apprentices. While national policy plays a significant role in shaping this sector, we are committed to exploring local opportunities in collaboration with North Herts College and other training providers.

As highlighted during the committee's review, North Herts College already offers flexible vocational career programmes and is responsive to local employer demands. The Council will engage with the college to determine how existing training provisions can be expanded to support the childcare sector and explore how apprenticeship programmes in this area can be effectively promoted within the local community.

Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski

North Hertfordshire College is well placed to support this recommendation through its existing early years provision and relationships with local nurseries and education settings. Its offer includes an Education and Early Years T Level, combining study with practical experience and providing a route into employment or further training.

Apprenticeship provision is available through Hart Learning & Development, which sits alongside the college within the Hart Learning Group. This includes Early Years Practitioner at Level 2 and Early Years Educator at Level 3, enabling people to earn whilst developing the qualifications and experience needed to work in childcare.

The University of Hertfordshire has also introduced an Early Years Teacher Degree Apprenticeship for September 2026, leading to a BEd (Hons) in Early Years Education with Early Years Teacher Status. This provides a further route for new entrants and existing staff to develop their careers whilst working in an early-years setting.

Recommendation 4 – Challenge to HCC & Local Children Centres regarding providing clear accessible information on what funding is available for families for childcare – The funding

position is currently confusing to parents so clarity would help in this area.

Action: HCC Children's Services & Local Children Centres

Response from HCC Children's Services & Local Children Centres:

It has not been possible to provide a response for this recommendation.

It has not been possible to provide an update response for this recommendation.

<u>Recommendation 5 – Promotion of work experience opportunities</u> - It is recommended that (i) the Council's Business Relationship Manager, Mena Caldbeck and the Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer works with colleagues and local employers to promote opportunities for young people to connect with those local employers for work experience; (ii) That SBC offers a range of work experience opportunities for young people across the organisation, and that these are offered consistently every year to local schools and colleges; and (iii) That SBC social media is used to share local job fares, open days, and work experience opportunities. Action: SBC Business Relationship Manager, Mena Caldbeck SBC Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer, Carol Richardson	<i>Response from the SBC Business Relationship Manager, Mena Caldbeck and Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer, Carol Richardson:</i> <i>The Council has a strong track record of supporting work experience initiatives and is committed to expanding these opportunities further. One of our flagship initiatives is Generation Stevenage, an annual employment and skills event run in partnership with Hertfordshire Futures. This is part of a series of 'Generation' events throughout Hertfordshire. This event connects young people with local employers, providing them with first-hand insight into career pathways across various industries.</i> <i>In 2025, the Council will enhance its direct work experience offerings, collaborating with four local schools—Barnwell, Nobel, Marriotts, and St John Henry Newman—to facilitate placements for both Year 10 and Year 12 students. We see this as an essential step in demonstrating our leadership in promoting work experience and encouraging businesses to follow suit.</i> <i>Social media remains an important tool in engaging young people with work experience and job opportunities. The Council will work closely with its communications team and educational partners to ensure that information about work experience placements, job fairs, and career development programmes reaches the widest possible audience through platforms preferred by young people.</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The previous update set out the Council's intention to strengthen its own work experience offer in partnership with local schools. This has been taken forward through placements for cohorts of Year 10 and Year 12 students in both 2025 and 2026. These placements have introduced young people to the range of careers within local government and given them experience of working within the organisation.</i> <i>Alongside these placements, the Council has welcomed its latest cohort of eight apprentices, who commenced their programmes in 2025. They are undertaking a variety of roles and qualification levels, including degree-level apprenticeships in surveying and finance which run over four years. These programmes reflect the Council's continuing investment in developing its future workforce and providing opportunities to gain qualifications alongside practical experience.</i> <i>Providing work experience and apprenticeships is an important part of the Council's contribution as a local employer. It provides practical experience to draw on when encouraging businesses and other public sector institutions to offer similar opportunities, and demonstrates the same commitment that the Council is asking of its partners.</i> <i>This sits alongside wider work through Stevenage Works, Generation Stevenage and Pioneering</i>
--	--	--

		<i>Young STEM Futures to connect education providers, young people and employers. Social media remains an important route for sharing placements, careers events and other opportunities.</i>
<u>Recommendation 6 – Promotion of success stories from Stevenage</u>- It is recommended that members and officers consider ways to promote success stories from the local community, celebrating successes by the college and schools where students show personal development or attain excellent skills outcomes, as they in turn become the role models for successive years of students, i.e. 'Mayors Award for Achievement'. This could be focused on those who have overcome challenges to achieve personal development, rather than focusing on the high academic achievers who traditionally already receive the recognition. Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski to liaise with the Leader	<i>Response from SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski and the Leader on behalf of the civic office of the Mayor:</i> <i>Celebrating the achievements of local individuals is an effective way to inspire future generations and showcase the opportunities available in Stevenage. The Council already recognises outstanding achievements through the Stevenage Together Awards, which include the Rising Star category.</i> <i>In response to this recommendation, we propose either enhancing the existing award or introducing a new accolade focused on individuals who have overcome challenges to achieve personal and professional growth. This initiative would align with the Council's commitment to supporting those from diverse backgrounds and promoting social mobility.</i> <i>To further elevate this recognition, we suggest that this award be overseen by the Youth Mayor, adding a new layer of engagement and credibility among young residents.</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The Council has taken forward this recommendation through the existing Stevenage Together Awards, involving the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor in judging, with a particular focus on the Rising Star award. Their involvement gives young people a direct role in recognising achievement and identifying local role models.</i> <i>The 2025 Rising Star winner, Winnie-Marie Stewart, was recognised for raising more than £5,000 for the Little Princess Trust through donating her hair at the age of seven. Her example demonstrates how the awards can recognise initiative and contribution to others beyond formal academic achievement, reflecting the committee's wish to promote a broader range of local role models.</i> <i>Young people from Stevenage have also been highlighted through both the Department for Work and Pensions' and Mission 44's social media channels, bringing their experiences to wider audiences. This has included DWP coverage of the visit by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Pat McFadden MP, to North Hertfordshire College, where he met young people involved in the Council's Pioneering Young STEM</i>

		<i>Futures programme. The coverage featured a student explaining how practical study and research laboratory work experience had helped inform her decision to pursue biomedical science at university. Mission 44 has also shared the experiences of young people participating through Stevenage Borough Council in its STEM activities at Silverstone.</i> <i>North Hertfordshire College and its learners have received further national exposure through the BBC documentary series Natalie Cassidy: Caring Together. The series followed Cassidy studying Health and Social Care at the college's Stevenage campus alongside other learners. It featured students' personal experiences and ambitions, including the experience of being a young carer, and showed how they applied their classroom learning during placements in care settings.</i>
<u>Recommendation 7 – Promotion of a clear local careers advice service</u> (i) Work with partners towards a credible local careers advice service. Establishing a clear source of objective careers information which is available to pupils, students, and those wanting to re-train, or change direction. That a local link within the National Careers service is readily available, and that this reflects national standards in career entry qualifications, but also what is available in Stevenage, and wider Hertfordshire; and (ii) Members proposed consideration of the creation of a centralised information hub on the council's website to provide accessible details about job opportunities, training, apprenticeships, and other resources. This	<i>Response from Response for SBC supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski SBC Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer, Carol Richardson and Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:</i> <i>The Council acknowledges the need for clear and accessible careers advice and supports the continued development of the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal. This platform, managed by Hertfordshire Futures, already serves as a key resource for schools, students, and jobseekers in the region. Rather than duplicating efforts, in response to this recommendation we would aim to</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The Council continues to work closely with Hertfordshire Futures to improve the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP), providing local tailoring to the wider county offer. This takes forward the commitment in the previous update to improve signposting and develop more Stevenage-specific content. The dedicated Find Your Future in Stevenage page, developed with the Council, brings together information on jobs, apprenticeships and training, with links to Stevenage Works and North Hertfordshire College.</i>

platform would also allow businesses, schools, and colleges to contribute information. Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski SBC Enterprise & Skills Partnership Officer, Carol Richardson – regarding links to the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP).	<i>enhance the visibility of this resource by improving signposting on the Council's website and through our outreach efforts.</i> <i>Additionally, we are exploring opportunities to expand the Stevenage-specific content on the portal, ensuring that residents can easily access information about local training programmes, apprenticeships, and job opportunities. This builds on work undertaken through the council's successful funding application to the Community Renewal Fund in 2022. As part of this we led on a countywide initiative to increase visibility of Public Sector careers on the HOP platform.</i>	<i>The Council's Making Stevenage Even Better regeneration website has also been updated with skills and opportunities content, including case studies on HOP and the Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC), and direct signposting to HOP. This helps connect information about the town's regeneration and growing industries with practical advice on how residents can access the opportunities being created.</i> <i>During 2026/27, improving the visibility of pathways is a specific strand of delivery under the Enterprise and Skills pillar of the Corporate Plan. The Council's newly established Youth Advisory Board is helping to inform this work, providing a sounding board for how opportunities are presented and the best ways to communicate with young people. Its involvement helps the Council test whether information is clear and relevant, and reach young people who may not engage with existing communications.</i>
<u>Recommendation 8 – Commendation to North Herts College and Barnwell School for their work in promoting skills</u> - It is recommended that North Herts College and Barnwell School be commended for their work to promote skills to their students (Noting that for context the review only interviewed these two academic institutions, but Members are aware of other good practice towards enhancing skills that is happening in the area). North Herts College by providing Industry standard facilities and equipment the college are equipping young people with the skills they need to move straight into higher level courses, apprenticeships	<i>Response supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski to NH College and Barnwell School</i> <i>The Council recognises the exceptional work of North Herts College and Barnwell School in equipping students with essential skills for their future careers. Both institutions play a pivotal role in the local skills landscape and have been instrumental in working in partnership with us to augment local skills provision.</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The Council continues to work closely with Barnwell School and North Hertfordshire College, and their involvement remains integral to its skills activity. Both partners help connect the ambitions of the Stevenage Works Skills Framework with the needs of local pupils, students and employers.</i> <i>The college's contribution spans technical education, apprenticeships and adult learning, whilst Barnwell provides an important link to</i>

or employment and are responding to what employers have been saying for some time that young entrants don't have the necessary skills to be work ready. Barnwell School are offering an excellent peer to peer mentoring to ready pupils for university applications and interviews as well as collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire through their "zero gravity" and "Brilliant Club" initiatives. Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski to reach out to partners at NH College and Barnwell School.	<i>As part of our commitment to acknowledging their contributions, we will formally commend both institutions and work with them to develop case studies highlighting their impactful programmes. These case studies will be shared across our social media platforms to inspire students and showcase best practices in skills development.</i>	<i>school-age young people and their preparation for further study and employment. The Council continues to draw on both institutions' experience when developing and delivering local interventions, maintaining the close partnership recognised by the committee.</i>
Recommendation 9 – Devolved, local skills strategy. <i>'One size fits all' solutions towards skills are ineffective. Localised strategies are better suited to address skill shortages.</i> <i>(i) That SBC along with its partners in the broadest sense (Herts Growth Board, Job Centre Plus, North Herts College, Local Secondary Schools, Local Employers) continue to work to develop and genuine, local skills strategy, which reflect local skills opportunities and challenges within the local economy; (ii) partners consider the provision of targeted support to engage those in insecure roles, providing a second-chance for those already in work but looking to transition to more fulfilling and secure career opportunities.</i> Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski	<i>Response supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski and Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:</i> <i>The Stevenage Works Skills Framework, approved by Cabinet in February 2024, serves as a guiding document for the Council's localised approach to skills development. Alongside this, key documents such as the Stevenage Town Investment Plan, Stevenage 2040 Investment Prospectus, and the emerging Hertfordshire Economy Strategy, ensures a cohesive and locally relevant approach to skills development that links into the council's broader strategic ambitions and provides a local iteration of the approach being adopted across the county.</i> <i>This is further cemented by the inclusion of Enterprise & Skills as a headline priority as part of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan (2024-27) which highlights the importance to the</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The Stevenage Works Skills Framework remains the guiding document for the Council's local approach, supported by the Enterprise and Skills pillar of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan. It provides the basis for targeting support towards young people entering the workforce, unemployed adults and those in work seeking to improve their skills or move into more secure employment.</i> <i>The previous update highlighted the emerging Hertfordshire Economic Strategy as an important part of the wider context for the Stevenage Works Skills Framework. That strategy has now been published, covering 2026–2036. Its Hertfordshire Works for Everyone priority emphasises progression through work, tackling barriers to employment and improving skills in essential sectors such as health, care and education. This</i>

	<i>administration, despite the statutory responsibility for Skills provision resting with the County Council. The need for a localised approach that best responds to the needs of Stevenage residents was a primary driving factor behind this inclusion and gives officers a clear mandate to galvanise local partners</i> <i>Rather than being static document, the framework contains an action plan which guides an ambitious, ongoing programme of activities aimed at addressing local skills shortages and improving employment opportunities for residents. In the continued development of the Skills Framework we will draw in the committee's recommendations, especially those referenced here and recommendation 2 around Upskilling.</i>	<i>supports the Council's focus on ensuring that local residents can benefit from the county's economic growth.</i> <i>The Council's approach also aligns with Get Britain Working, which brings employment, health and skills support together around local needs, and the Government's modern Industrial Strategy and sector plans. The emphasis on life sciences, advanced manufacturing, defence, and digital and technologies is particularly relevant to Stevenage's economy.</i> <i>The Skills Framework is designed to translate national and Hertfordshire skills and economic policy into local activity, shaped by the needs of Stevenage's residents and employers. The Council's Making Stevenage Even Better priorities for 2026/27 respond to these newer national and county strategies through targeted adult support, clearer information about routes into work and training, and stronger engagement with young people and employers.</i>
Recommendation 10: Collaboration with Employers to Promote Employment Opportunities The Council continues to engage and build on the widest possible cohort for opportunities, continuing to engage with employers in the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries and recruiters in Stevenage, to ensure high-skilled job opportunities are widely advertised and accessible to local residents. Many high-paid, high-skilled jobs are not visible to job seekers, as they are often gatekept	<i>Response supported by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski and Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Economy, Skills & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe:</i> <i>The Council continues to work closely with local employers, including those in the aerospace and pharmaceutical industries, to ensure that high-quality job opportunities are accessible to Stevenage residents.</i>	<i>Update response provided by SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski</i> <i>The Council continues to work with employers in Stevenage's growth sectors to improve residents' access to local career opportunities. Its skills partnerships include Airbus, MBDA, GSK, Autolus and Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, alongside education and training providers. These relationships help connect the skills employers need with the pathways available to local people.</i>

by recruiters. The review proposes working with companies and recruiters to address this because collaboration with local businesses was essential to bridge the gap and increase awareness of available opportunities. Action: SBC Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Daryl Jedowski.	<i>As previously referenced, the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal remains the primary jobs board supported by the Council, and we actively work with businesses to increase their visibility and engagement with the platform.</i> <i>The Council is optimistic about future employment prospects in Stevenage with many local businesses, particularly as they scale up operations, require skilled technicians and mid-level specialists providing more accessible opportunities to high paying meaningful work to our residents.</i> <i>A specific example of this, is Autolus, who have just moved into premises in the town centre, and who have established an apprenticeship programme through North Herts College.</i> <i>Such initiatives provide highly skilled technical roles that do not require traditional university degrees, broadening access to stable and well-paying careers. We will continue to foster employer collaboration to ensure that more residents benefit from these opportunities.</i>	<i>GSK's announcement that it intends to relocate its research and development operations from Stevenage to Cambridge by 2029 has added a significant new dimension to this work. Cabinet considered the implications and the Council's response on 10 September 2026, agreeing to establish a partnership Taskforce to coordinate activity with Government, Hertfordshire partners, businesses, education providers and other stakeholders.</i> <i>Supporting affected employees, retaining skills within the local economy and connecting people with alternative employment and retraining opportunities are central to this response. The work will also consider the implications for businesses within GSK's supply chain. Alongside this, the Council is continuing discussions with GSK about its local legacy, including skills and apprenticeship opportunities during the period leading up to its departure.</i> <i>HOP remains a shared resource for promoting opportunities and explaining routes into local industries. Its Employer Spotlight section includes GSK, Airbus, MBDA and Stevenage-based electronics manufacturer Nemco. Such information helps residents understand the range of employers and careers available, including opportunities accessible through apprenticeships and technical training.</i>
--	--	--

This page is intentionally left blank

Update on Cost-of-living pressures to residents and local businesses

following completed E&E Scrutiny review of 16 January 2024

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
Cost of Living Review	Mar-22	E&E Select Com'ttee - 15 December 2022 - Agreed Scoping Document	Agenda for Environment & Economy Select Committee on Thursday, 15 December 2022, 6.00pm	Agenda for Env & Economy Select Committee on Tuesday, 16 January 2024, 6.00pm	Rec 1 - Sign Posting – (i) It is recommended that an “holistic” approach, or resident centred approach, extends across SBC service, and into the Housing Team and (ii) delivery of council services accessible via digital means be continued with traditional person to person methods still made available.	Update from Head of Housing Operations, Simon Kiff - Housing Services continues to provide a resident-centred approach to support tenants and leaseholders experiencing financial hardship. Residents can access support through telephone, email, website information and direct engagement with officers. The Income Team works closely with the Welfare Benefits and Debt Advice Team, Citizens Advice and the DWP to provide joined-up support and ensure residents are signposted to appropriate services
					Rec 2 - Importance of Early Intervention - It is recommended that SBC and partners	Update from Head of Housing Operations, Simon Kiff - Early intervention remains a key priority. Where the property rents are high e.g. affordable rents, affordability checks are carried out by the Lettings team. Income Team undertakes financial health checks

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
					continue to support residents coming forward for help by encouraging early intervention mechanisms.	accounts go into arrears and when circumstances change, helping residents access benefits, maximise income and address financial difficulties before arrears escalate. Support includes affordability assessments, budgeting advice and tailored repayment arrangements
Page 26					Rec 3 - Continuation of administration of the Household Support Fund - It is recommended that if the Government make a further round of the Household Support Fund available for 2024-25 that officers carry on making this very valuable fund available to eligible local people.	Update from Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme Manager, Gemma Maret - Following the replacement of the Household Support Fund with the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), district councils are no longer allocated a direct funding pot to administer locally in the same way. Funding for activity such as food banks and warm/cool spaces is now available through separate grant application routes. Community Development will continue to promote relevant funding opportunities to local organisations and support community providers to access available funding where appropriate though our community information and funding pages Community Flyers & Funding Opportunities for the Stevenage Community Update from Head of Housing Operations, Simon Kiff - Housing Services continues to signpost eligible residents to Household Support Fund support and other available hardship schemes administered by the Council and partner organisations.

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
					Rec 4 - Continuation of Warm Spaces - It is recommended that the provision of warm spaces continues for 2023-24 and that the officer report from 2022-23 regarding the provision of warm spaces during this period be shared with Members.	Update from Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme Manager, Gemma Maret - The original Warm Spaces model developed into a broader Community Café approach, providing welcoming local spaces which can support residents throughout the year, including during periods of both cold and hot weather. Following the change from the Household Support Fund to the Crisis and Resilience Fund, there is no longer a direct district allocation to continue funding these spaces. The Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme Manager contacted existing community cafés to establish whether they wished to continue. Five community cafés confirmed that they wished to do so. A joint funding application was subsequently made through Hertfordshire Community Foundation on their behalf. Funding for all five cafés was approved and distributed, enabling them to continue operating through to July 2027. Community development will continue to maintain contact with the community cafés and identify future funding opportunities where appropriate. Update from Community Advice & Support Head of Service, Sarah Pateman - Community Advice & Support have operated and continue to operate warm and cool spaces within our service area, we operate a homeless hub in the town and a drop-in where customers

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
						can get advice, signposting, support a hot meal and do activities such as games and karaoke once a month. The Welfare Debt and Advice Team offer support for any tenant that needs advice or finds themselves struggling with debt or the cost of living. Following the Community Select Committee meeting in March 2026 we also ran a campaign around scams with Citizens Advice who we procure a service which supports the residents of Stevenage who maybe in debt or need advice. The service includes “court desk” support for anyone that has a court hearing for rent arrears. We are working with a company in Stevenage that donates an ASDA voucher monthly so that families in refuge have access to fresh fruit and vegetables, we also received funding to be able to purchase supermarket vouchers and support to help with utility bills.
					Rec 5 - SBC frontline staff training on Cost-of-Living - It is recommended that SBC training is maintained on the cost of living across all public facing teams, especially Housing and Council Tax.	Update from Head of Housing Operations, Simon Kiff - Cost-of-living support remains embedded within Housing Services. Income Officers continue to receive training and development in welfare benefits, financial inclusion, vulnerability awareness and supportive customer engagement to help identify hardship and provide appropriate support and referrals.

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
					Rec 6 - Council Tax Arrears and Rent Arrears - It is recommended that the level of Council Tax Arrears and Rent Arrears should be recorded and disseminated, not only because of the revenue implications for SBC, but because these are indicators of the impact on family finances	Update from Head of Housing Operations, Simon Kiff - Rent arrears continue to be monitored as a key indicator of financial hardship. The Income Team works proactively with tenants through income maximisation, benefit support, budgeting advice, debt advice referrals and personalised arrears management. The team also signposts residents to Affinity Water schemes, including water meter installations and social tariffs, helping to reduce household costs and improve affordability. Annual Update - Joint Revs and Benefits Committee - 7 January 2026
-		-	-	-	Rec 7 - Impact on Businesses in Stevenage - It is recommended that the Business Relationship Manager and the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy and Transport be invited to commission a report	Update from the Business Relationship Manager, Mena Caldbeck – The context for businesses is that they continue to be challenged through the Ukraine War and now the more recently the Iran War. The recent increases in Business Rates, National Insurance Contributions and the Minimum Wage are also increasing further pressures on businesses. The Business Relationship Manager, has reported feedback from large business and from SME's as follows: Increasing operating costs through:

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
					on the ongoing conditions of the business market in the town, looking at the pressures of on businesses particularly on SME's.	• Energy, utilities, rent, rates and premises costs • Insurance and professional service costs • Raw materials, stock and supplier prices – some prices doubled after the Ukraine War • Transport, fuel and logistics costs – increasing once again through Iran War • Higher financing and borrowing costs, alongside difficulties in obtaining funding Pressure on consumer demand impacting retail, hospitality and the High Street: • Households have less disposable income, so customers are become more price-sensitive and shopping around • There is reduced discretionary spending and people spending less on going out for meals, clothing etc • Customers want to see discounts and promotions Cash-flow and profitability: • Businesses face ongoing rising costs and often limited ability to increase prices • Profit margins continue to become squeezed • Businesses have reported customers are taking longer to pay invoices • Smaller businesses have identified short-term cash-flow problems, and this is ongoing Supply-chain disruption: • Many businesses stated suppliers were increasing prices or changing terms

Review Title & C'ttee	Date added to the work programme	Scoping/ started complete /updated	Review start date (& follow-up dates)	Review Status (date if completed)	Key Recommendations	Autumn 2026 Update
Page 31						- Some businesses have identified that they are facing increasing minimum order quantities from suppliers - Businesses have had to look for alternative suppliers - There has been greater pressure to diversify supply chains and reduce dependency on single suppliers Wage and recruitment pressures: - Employers more recently are being impacted by NI increases and minimum wage increases and are having to put recruitment on hold - Businesses faced pressure to retain skilled staff and adding to wage increase demands - Recruitment has been impacted where businesses were not able to match larger employers' salaries Pressures on Business Owners: Smaller businesses have stated ongoing pressures which have resulted in: - Longer working hours and not always being able to take income from the business - Greater risk of business closures and owners deciding not to expand Investment Plans on hold: Many businesses have stated they delayed purchasing equipment, improvement, or expansion plans because of uncertainty in the economy.

This page is intentionally left blank