

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 18 February 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Lynda Guy and Sarah Mead

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.19pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Anne Wells and Nigel Williams.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 January 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 February 2025:

2. MINUTES - CABINET 15 JANUARY 2025

Noted

3. MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

Noted

4. FINAL SOSAFE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Head of Community Advice and Support introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

5. FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that the report had been updated to include the business rate gains. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding the graduate scheme, the Chief Finance Officer advised the Committee that the report included two growth items, graffiti removal and the graduate scheme, which would be part funded from the business rates gains.

6. FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2029/30

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that the report had been updated to include the garage improvement programme. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

7. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding borrowing limits imposed by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) beyond the council's own prudential indicators, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that borrowing for commercial investment was not permitted, and borrowing could only be undertaken when needed. When applying for PWLB loans, the council must confirm compliance with those rules. The Committee heard that the Council benefited from two discounts: a 20-basis-point "certainty discount" and a further 40-basis-point reduction for housing-related borrowing. Most borrowing was through the PWLB, except for approximately £7 million in interest-free Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) loans.

8. ADOPTION OF THREE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) introduced the report. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

A Member sought clarification on the delegated powers granted to the Interim Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation regarding minor amendments to the SPD documents. Officers confirmed that such amendments would be limited to grammatical, typographical, and minor clarification changes, ensuring alignment with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policies. Any substantive policy changes would require re-consultation.

A Member queried the alignment of the SPD with Hertfordshire County Council's Place for Movement Design Guide to avoid conflicts in development requirements. Officers explained that the Borough Council's guidance referred to the County Council's highways guidance, which was issued in March 2024, to prevent duplication and ensure consistency. The County team had reviewed the documents

and provided feedback to mitigate any potential conflicts.

Comments were made regarding the transparency of Section 106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) contributions. Officers advised that CIL payments were reported in the Capital Strategy and referenced in the Capital Monitoring Statement. It was noted that any CIL expenditure exceeding £75,000 must be reported to Members, typically through Cabinet. Additionally, an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement was published, detailing accrued funds and spending, including significant allocations such as the £5 million ringfenced for the leisure centre project. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring such financial information was easily accessible for public transparency and accountability.

A Member requested clarification on parking provisions within new developments and whether a fixed percentage was required. Officers explained that parking provision was determined using a formula based on census data, with requirements increasing according to the number of bedrooms per dwelling. The calculation took into account the housing mix and accessibility zones, with developments in sustainable locations, such as town centres, potentially having reduced or zero parking requirements.

Regarding developer contributions, it was confirmed that these were not set as a percentage but rather financial contributions tied to specific initiatives, such as the Stevenage Works Initiative. This scheme supported employment and apprenticeships, requiring major developers to contribute. If developers failed to meet their obligations, a financial penalty was imposed, which was allocated to a training fund to support apprenticeships.

9. VULNERABILITY POLICY

The Head of Community Advice and Support introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding the suspension of the Stevenage connection in relation to the policy. Officers confirmed that this matter would require further investigation and that a response would be provided in due course.

10. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

It was noted that there had been no Urgent Part I Business at the Cabinet meeting.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Committee considered the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 February 2025:

12. PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORT CONTRACTORS FOR THE REPAIRS AND VOIDS SERVICE

The Assistant Director (Building Safety and Housing Property Services) introduced the report.

A Member asked a question that was responded to by Officers.

13. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

The Committee noted there had been no Urgent Part II Business at the Cabinet Meeting.

8 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted that there had been no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR