

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 22 May 2025

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Mayor), Nazmin Chowdhury (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Philip Bibby, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Kamal Choudhury, Forhad Chowdhury, Nazmin Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Alistair Gordon, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Mason Humberstone, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater, Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Simon Speller, Jeannette Thomas, Carolina Veres, Anne Wells, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 7.10pm
Time: End Time: 8.10pm

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

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Sandra Barr, Akin Elekolusi, Lynda Guy, Loraine Rossati, Tom Wren and Deputy Youth Mayor Frankie Duncan.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 22 FEBRUARY 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2025 be approved as a record and signed by the Mayor.

3 **ELECTION OF MAYOR**

The Mayor presented two Long Service Awards to Councillor Richard Henry and Councillor Simon Speller in recognition of their 30 years of service to the Town and the Council.

The Mayor then welcomed all Members, and he recounted some of the highlights of his year, which included the Multi Faith Gathering at the Grace Church, Sargam Stevenage Onam Festival (Kerala), his indoor garden party, the Mayor's Charity Ball and Ceilidh, and a number of Park Run events.

The Mayor then thanked his Mayoress, Penny Schenkel, his PA Tracey Frost and Member Services Officer Sheila Scrivens for their support throughout the year along with Hilary Spiers from the Arts Guild for her contribution to a number of his Mayoral

events.

The Mayor then asked for nominations for the Office of Mayor for 2025/26.

Councillor Richard Henry firstly thanked the Mayor and Mayoress for their successful year in Office. He then nominated Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury for the Office of Mayor. In nominating Councillor Chowdhury, Councillor Henry informed the Council that as well as being one of the younger Members of Council and having represented the Bedwell Ward since 2022, she also represented the Bangladeshi Muslim community, reflecting the diversity of the town. Since her election, Nazmin had been involved in community development, collaborating with many organisations including the Stevenage World Forum.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor Ellie Plater who was pleased to nominate her fellow Bedwell Ward Councillor as someone who truly embodied the spirit of Stevenage and was a valued member of the community, helping people navigate challenges, standing up for fairness and ensuring that voices were heard.

There being no other nominations, a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury be elected as Mayor for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury then made the statutory declaration of office.

The Mayor then announced that Kier Williams would be the Mayor's Consort for 2025/26.

The Mayor thanked the Council for her election and all his guests for their attendance at the meeting. She thanked the outgoing Mayor Councillor Jim Brown for his representation of the Town and also as a support and friend in her role as Deputy Mayor for the past year.

The Mayor thanked her fellow councillors, her family, friends and the people of Stevenage for the trust placed in her. She then gave an inaugural speech, including the announcement that her theme for the year was 'Growing Together, Building a Kinder Future' and that her chosen charities for the year were the Young Carers Crew and the Rotary of Stevenage Grange.

The Mayor advised Council that she would continue to promote equity, compssion and community partnership and looked forward to working with charities, schools, faith groups and businesses to make Stevenage stronger, fairer and more connected.

4 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Office of Deputy Mayor for 2025/26.

Councillor Myla Arceno nominated Councillor Lloyd Briscoe. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Carolina Veres. In the nomination and seconding of Councillor Briscoe, he was described as a supportive colleague with a great spirit of

team working, exemplary judgement and with a deep understanding of the community.

There being no other nominations, a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Lloyd Briscoe be appointed Deputy Mayor for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

Councillor Lloyd Briscoe then made the statutory declaration of office. The Deputy Mayor announced that Sarah Pattison would be his Deputy Mayoress for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

5 **APPOINTMENT OF YOUTH MAYOR**

The outgoing Youth Mayor, Lahaina Sutherland, in her speech thanked the Councillors, Officers, family and friends for their support over the year and said that it had been an honour to serve as the Youth Mayor of Stevenage. She outlined some of the highlights of her year in office including the 80th Anniversary D-Day Beacon Lighting, Stevenage Day, the Stevenage Together Awards and a STEM event at Knebworth House. Lahaina wished the incoming Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor every success in their new roles.

It was then moved by Councillor Coleen De Freitas, seconded by Councillor Lloyd Briscoe and **RESOLVED** that Charlotte Gregory be elected as Youth Mayor for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

Charlotte Gregory then signed the declaration of office. In her acceptance speech, the new Youth Mayor thanked the Youth Council for her election. She further thanked the outgoing Youth Mayor and outlined a number of initiatives including helping young people to obtain real world life skills such as budgeting, financial literacy and understanding democracy as areas she would focus on during her year in office. She then announced that Lilly-Mai Bennett-Gutteridge would be her Deputy Youth Mayor for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

6 **RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6 MONTH RULE - SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

The Council considered a report in respect of an extension of the 6 month attendance rule – Section 85 local Government Act 1972 for Councillor Sandra Barr.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Council agree, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to approve Councillor Barr's non-attendance at meetings for six months, until 22 November 2025, on the grounds of ill health, and that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to her.

7 **APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS AND DEPUTY LEADERS OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that Councillors Richard Henry and Stephen Booth had been appointed as Leaders of the Labour and Co-operative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.

It was noted that Councillors Jeannette Thomas, and Andy McGuinness would be Deputy Leaders of the Labour and Co-operative, and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.

8 **APPOINTMENT OF LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

The Chief Executive advised that the Leader of the Opposition would be Councillor Stephen Booth and that Councillor Andy McGuinness would be his Deputy.

9 **CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

Council considered various matters relating to the Member level decision making structure of the Council and the Council's constitution for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**:

- 1 That the Terms of Reference, as detailed in the appendices to the report; and the size and political composition for the following bodies that form the non-Executive Member level decision making structure of the Council be approved subject to the rules of proportionality where appropriate for 100 Committee places where applicable (relevant Committees are identified thus*) -
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee* (Appendix A) – 14 Members (11 Labour Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Group, 1 Conservative Member)
 - Community Select Committee* (Appendix B) – 10 Members (8 Labour Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - Environment and Economy Select Committee* (Appendix C) – 11 Members (9 Labour Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - Planning & Development Committee* (Appendix D) – 14 Members (12 Labour & Co-operative Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - Licensing Committee (Appendix E) – 14 Members (12 Labour Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - General Purposes Committee* (Appendix F) – 14 Members (12 Labour Members, 2 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - Appointments Committee* (Appendix G) - 8 Members (7 Labour Members, 1 Liberal Democrat Members)
 - Standards Committee* (Appendix H) – 8 Members (6 Labour Members, 1 Liberal Democrat Member, 1 Conservative Member)
 - Audit Committee* (Appendix I) – 10 Members (8 Labour Members, 1 Liberal Democrat Member, 1 Conservative Member) + 1 Co-opted non-elected member

- Statement of Accounts Committee* (Appendix J) – 8 Members (7 Labour Members, 1 Liberal Democrat Member)
- Joint Consultative Committee* (Appendix K) – 3 Members (2 Labour Members, 1 Liberal Democrat Member)

* Indicates where those bodies covered by the rules of proportionality for the purposes of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups), Regulations 1990 – total Committee places being 100

2. The Housing Development and Regeneration Working Group be separated into two stand alone Working Groups
3. That the Borough Solicitor be authorised to make consequential amendments to the Constitution to reflect the proposal set out in Resolution 2 above.
4. That the membership of the Cabinet and the individual Portfolios, as set out below, be noted:

Councillor Richard Henry – Leader, Transforming Stevenage & Local Government Reorganisation

Councillor Jeannette Thomas – Deputy Leader, Resources & Performance

Councillor Loraine Rossati – Economy, Skills and Transport

Councillor Jackie Hollywell – Housing, Housing Development and Voids and Repairs

Councillor Simon Speller – Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing

Councillor Rob Broom – Environment

Councillor Coleen De Freitas – Equalities and Young People (Job Share)

Councillor Tom Plater – Stronger Communities (Job Share)

Councillor Myla Arceno – Neighbourhoods and Older people (Job Share)

Councillor Nigel Williams – Co-operative Council and Tenancy Involvement (Job Share)

3. That the various Cabinet bodies appointed by the Leader, detailed in Paragraph 4.4 of the report and the relevant Terms of Reference for each body set out in Appendix L to the report, be noted.
4. That the dates for Council meetings for the Municipal Year 2025/26, as shown at Paragraph 4.7 of the report, be approved, and that the calendar of formal meetings shown at Appendix M to the report, be noted.
5. That the appointment of Richard Protheroe, Deputy Chief Executive, as Deputy Electoral Registration Officer be approved.

10 CONSTITUTION REVIEW - PHASE 1

The Council considered a report in respect of Phase 1 of the review of the Council's Constitution.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the proposed revisions to Part 1 Summary and Explanation of the Constitution as detailed in Appendix A be agreed and adopted.
2. That the proposed revisions to Part 2 the Articles as detailed in Appendix B be agreed and adopted.
3. That the proposed revision to Part 3 Responsibility of Functions as details in Appendix C be agreed and adopted.
4. That the proposed revisions to the Community Presentation in Part 4 Rules of Procedure as detailed in Appendix D be agreed and adopted.
5. That the addition of a new Members' and Officers' Planning Code of Good Practice to Part 5 Codes and Protocols as set out in Appendix E be agreed and adopted.

11 **APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

Details of the individuals nominated to serve on each Committee, together with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of those Committees, where stated, had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Councillor Richard Henry moved and Councillor Jeannette Thomas seconded the appointment of Committees. Councillor Richard Henry moved and Councillor Jeannette Thomas seconded the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs to the Committees.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1 That the membership of Committees, together with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, where detailed, are appointed for 2025/26 Municipal Year as follows:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 Members (11-2-1)

Councillors – J Brown (Chair), A McGuinness (Vice-Chair), S Barr, P Bibby, S Booth, R Boyle, L Brady, K Choudhury, P Clark, A Elekolusi, A Gordon, L Guy, M Humberstone and E Plater

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

10 Members (8-2-0):

Councillors – E Plater (Chair), J Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), L Brady, K Choudhury, A Elekolusi, L Guy, M Humberstone, S Mead, C Veres and P Wilkins

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

11 Members (9-2-0):

Councillors – L Brady (Chair), A McGuinness (Vice-Chair), R Boyle, J Brown, F Chowdhury, A Gordon, C Parris, C Roopchand, A Wells, P Wilkins and J Woods

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14 Members (12-2-0)

Councillors – C Parris (Chair), C Veres (Vice-Chair), J Ashley-Wren, S Booth, R Boyle, K Choudhury, F Chowdhury, P Clark, C De Freitas, A Elekolusi, L Guy, E Plater, A Wells and N Williams

Substitutes - T Wren

+ 6 Labour substitutes (tba)

LICENSING COMMITTEE

14 Members (12-2-0)

Councillors – L Martin-Haugh (Chair), L Briscoe, P Clark, C De Freitas, A Gordon, L Guy, R Parker CC, C Parris, E Plater, T Plater, C Roopchand, C Veres, A Wells, T Wren

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

14 Members (12-2-0)

Councillors – L Martin-Haugh (Chair), L Briscoe, P Clark, C De Freitas, A Gordon, L Guy, R Parker CC, C Parris, E Plater, T Plater, C Roopchand, C Veres, A Wells, T Wren

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

8 Members (7-1-0)

Councillors – R Henry (Chair), S Booth, L Briscoe, L Martin-Haugh, L Rossati, S Speller, J Thomas and N Williams

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 Members (6-1-1)

Councillors – J Hollywell (Chair), M Arceno (Vice-Chair), P Bibby, R Broom, M Humberstone, L Rossati, J Woods and T Wren.

Independent Person who must be consulted on alleged breaches to the Code of Conduct – Dr. Robert Cawley

AUDIT COMMITTEE

10 Members (8-1-1) + 1 Independent Co-opted Member (S Uddin)

Councillors – C Veres (Chair), L Briscoe (Vice-Chair), P Bibby, R Boyle, L Brady, M Humberstone, T Plater, C Roopchand, A Wells and T Wren

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

8 Members (7-1-0)

Councillors – J Thomas (Chair), M Arceno, S Barr, L Brady, K Choudhury, F Chowdhury, L Martin-Haugh, R Parker, CC and S Speller.

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

3 Members (2-1-0)

Councillors – J Hollywell (Employer Side Chair), J Brown and R Parker CC.

APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Council considered a list of individuals nominated to serve on Outside Bodies which

had been circulated before the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Richard Henry, seconded by Councillor Jeannette Thomas and **RESOLVED** that the following individuals are appointed to represent the Council on the various bodies detailed below for one year, unless otherwise stated:

CO-OPERATIVE COUNCILS INNOVATION NETWORK – Portfolio Holder Co-operative Councils and Tenant Involvement

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND: THE HERTFORDSHIRE SOCIETY - Portfolio Holder for Environment

DISTRICT COUNCILS NETWORK – The Leader of the Council

EAST COAST MAINLINE AUTHORITIES (ECMA) CONSORTIUM – Portfolio Holder for Economy Skills and Transport

EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the Council

EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL PLANNING - Portfolio Holder for Environment

HERTS WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance

HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD – The Leader of the Council

HERTFORDSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND POLICY GROUP - Portfolio Holder for Environment

HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITIES LEADERS GROUP - The Leader of the Council

HERTFORDSHIRE FUTURES – The Leader of the Council

HERTFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder for Environment

LEISURE PROGRAMME BOARD – Portfolio Holder Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the Council

SOSAFE PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder Stronger Communities

STEVENAGE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities

STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - The Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader

UK INNOVATION CORRIDOR – The Leader of the Council

AGE CONCERN STEVENAGE – Jeannette Thomas

BEDWELL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Ellie Plater

CHELLS MANOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Andy McGuinness

CROSSROADS CARE – Anne Wells

DOUGLAS DRIVE SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION – Carolina Veres

HOME-START STEVENAGE – Coleen De Freitas

KADOMA LINK ASSOCIATION – Stephen Booth, Peter Clark and Alistair Gordon

LIVING ROOM PROJECT - Jackie Hollywell

OLD STEVENAGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Nigel Williams

OVAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Lloyd Briscoe

PIN GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Jeannette Thomas

SHEPHALL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Simon Speller

ST NICHOLAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Sandra Barr (Richard Henry and Claire Parris to cover)

STEVENAGE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU – Rob Broom

STEVENAGE COMMUNITY TRUST – Jim Brown and Nigel Williams

STEVENAGE CREDIT UNION LIMITED – Carolina Veres

SPRUSE – Lin Martin-Haugh

HAVEN FIRST – Mason Humberstone

STEVENAGE/AUTUN/INGELHEIM ASSOCIATION – Loraine Rossati and Jeannette Thomas

STEVENAGE WORLD FORUM FOR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES – Kamal Choudhury and Forhad Chowdhury

SYMONDS GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Jackie Hollywell

TIMEBRIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Tom Wren

HCC HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – Alistair Gordon

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION UNIT – Jim Brown

LUTON AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – Akin Elokolusi

CARERS CHAMPION – Forhad Chowdhury

DEMENTIA CHAMPION – Myla Arceno

MENTAL HEALTH – Lorraine Rossati

ARMED FORCES – Claire Parris

CHAIR