

Meeting: CABINET**Agenda Item:**

Portfolio Area: RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

**Date: 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2025/26 – 2029/30)

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To update Members on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.2. To update Members on the 2026/27 Fair Funding proposals nationally and locally for Stevenage Borough Council.
- 1.3. To advise Members concerning the current and future position of the Council's General Fund budget over the next five years, noting this covers changes as a result of Local Government Reform (LGR).
- 1.4. To update Members regarding the revised inflation projections and pressures for the General Fund MTFS.
- 1.5. To update the 'Balancing the Budget' Future Town Future Council (FTFC) financial targets for the period 2026/27 – 2028/29.

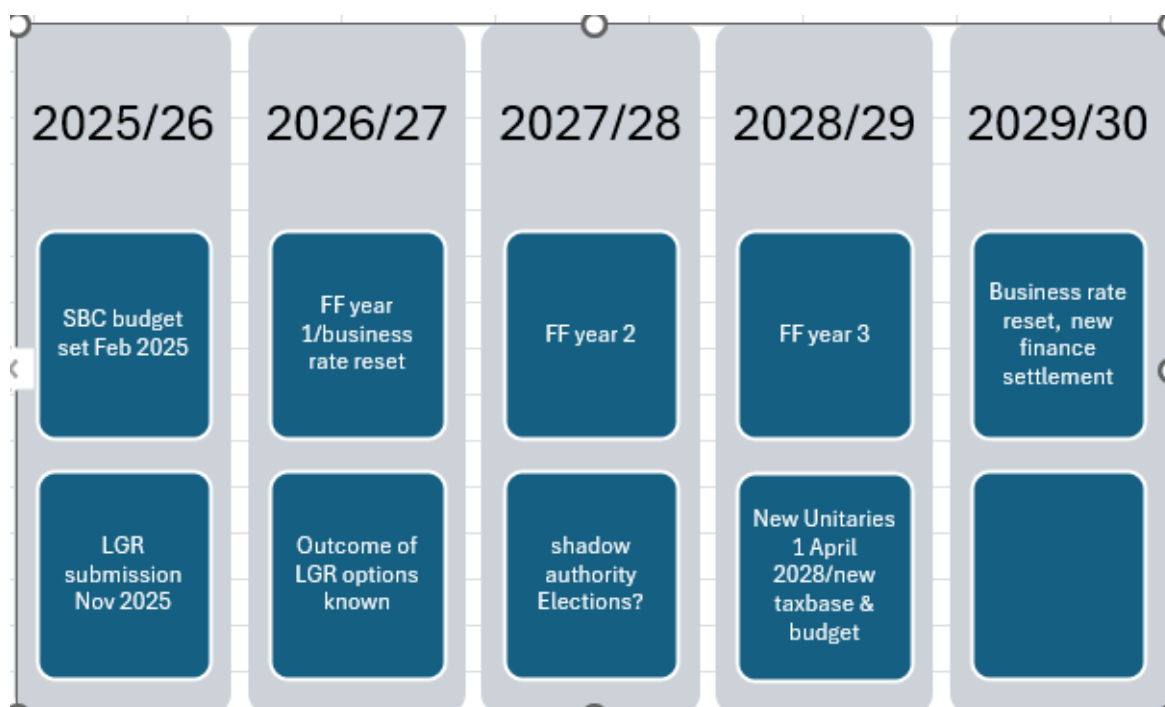
2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members re-approve the MTFS principles, as outlined in paragraph 3.10.
- 2.2 That, for modelling purposes, Council tax increases be set at the threshold assumed by the Government in the Fair Funding consultation in order to support the resilience of the Council's finances as set out in paragraph 4.7.5.
- 2.3 That the updated inflation assumptions used in the MTFS as set out in section 4.1 of the report be approved.
- 2.4 That Members note the impact of Fair Funding grant funding as set out in the report, noting this could be subject to change following consultation feedback.

- 2.5 That the approach to the 'Balancing the Budget' options as set out in section 4.10 be approved.
- 2.6 That the Balancing the Budget options identified of £776K are noted (excluding the Fees and Charges estimates including taxi licence fees) to be presented to the October 2025 Cabinet and General Purposes Committee.
- 2.7 That the Balancing the Budget target of £2.284Million, be approved for the period 2026/27- 2029/30, as set out in section 4.10 of the report.
- 2.8 That the indicative General Fund borrowing costs for the Oval as set out in of the paragraph 4.10.3 (3) are approved and included in the MTFS.
- 2.9 That Members approve the additional funding to be set aside in an earmarked reserve for the Council's Queensway LLP of a further £50K per year, (paragraph 4.10.3 (6)).
- 2.10 That Members approve the set aside of £150K per year to support the Council's apprentice programme as set out in paragraph 4.10.3 (2).
- 2.11 That the General Fund growth allowance of £75K is noted and is approved for the use of the Council's FTFC priorities.
- 2.12 That a minimum level of balances for the General Fund of £3.57million be approved for 2026/27 as set out in paragraph 4.11.7.
- 2.13 The MTFS is regularly reviewed and revised to reflect any material financial pressures, so forecasts are updated and re-presented to the Cabinet for approval.
- 2.14 That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the MTFS and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

3. BACKGROUND

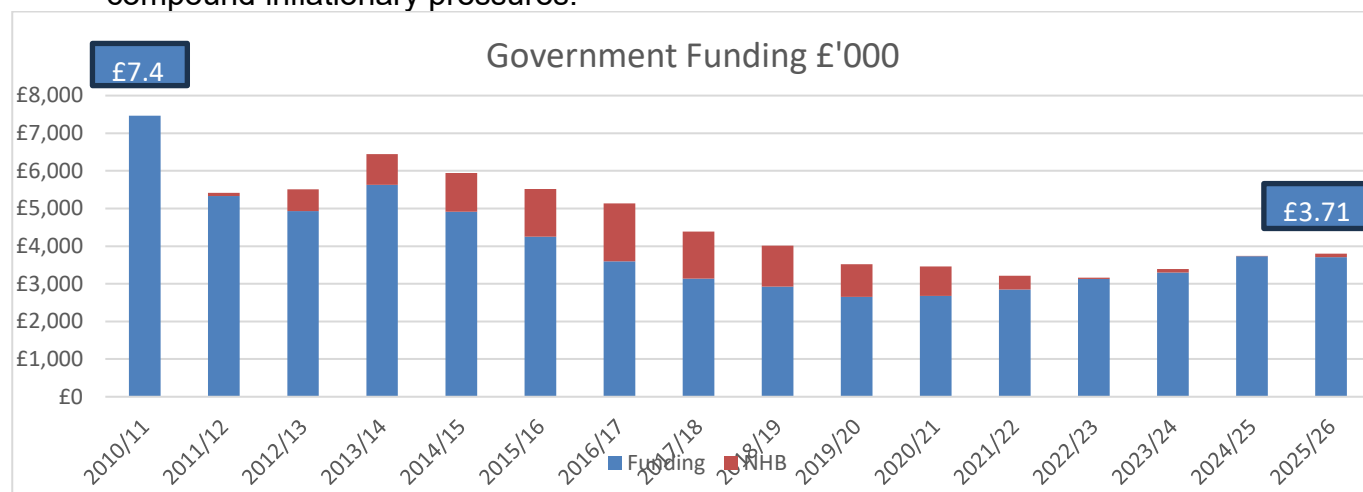
- 3.1 The MTFS is presented at least annually to the Cabinet and more often if financial risks are heightened which have included when impacts relating to COVID and the recent cost of living crisis have heightened financial risk.
- 3.2 This report will update Members on a projection for the General Fund for the period 2025/26-2029/30, with particular emphasis on the current and next year's budgets. The MTFS has been written under the backdrop of some fundamental change for Districts like Stevenage, as a result of the Government's Local Government Reform (LGR) Agenda and the Fair Funding 2.0 reforms which the Government has recently consulted on, both impact the years within the MTFS period.



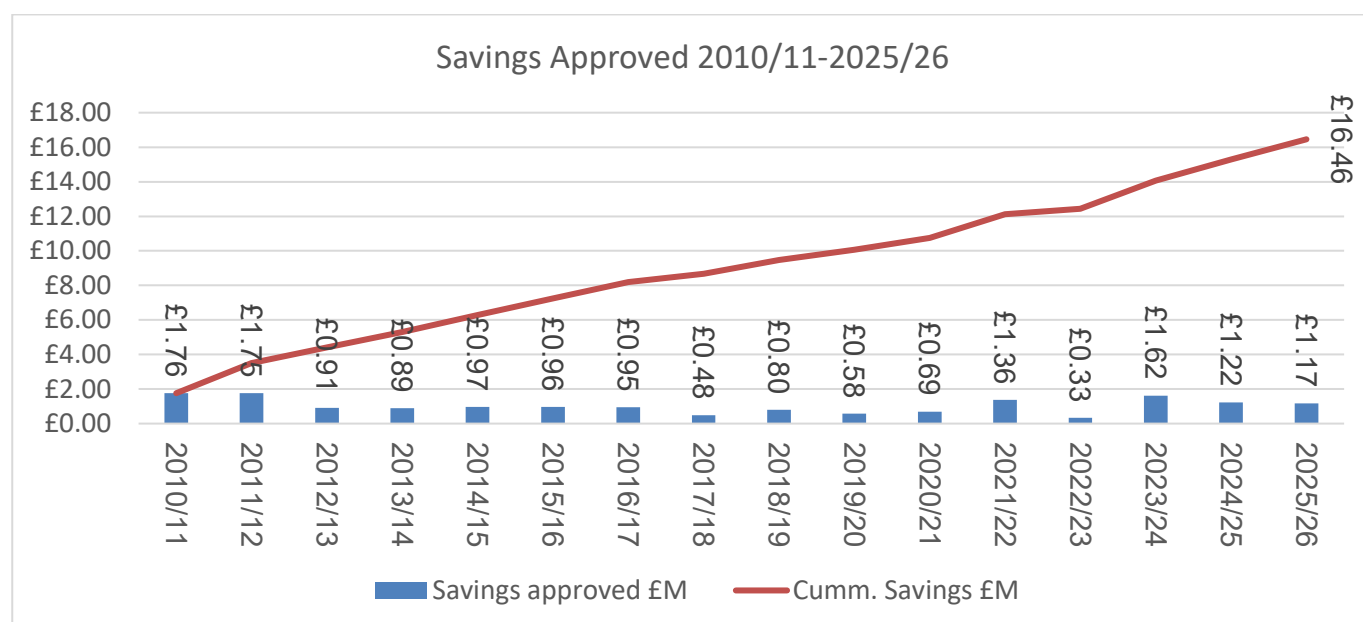
- 3.3 The changes set out in para. 3.2 presents challenges in the construction of the MTFS, in that the current Council Member administration will change (if the timetable is met) from 2028/29 into a larger unitary with a shadow authority from 2027/28. This means combining upper and lower tier functions into a larger geographical area. It is important to demonstrate the financial resilience of the Council as it enters into a new unitary model. More information on LGR can be found here on the Council's website <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/devolution-and-local-government-reorganisation#:~:text=About%20the%20Council-.Devolution%20and%20Local%20Government%20Reorganisation,-Devolution%20and%20Local>
- 3.4 The financial challenges set out in the Council's previous MTFS's and Budget reports have outlined more than a decade of local authority funding cuts between 2010/11 and 2019/20 and even 2025/26 levels are still well below historic levels pre 2010/11. Which, when considered alongside the need to have absorbed inflationary pressures and legislative taxation changes has resulted in the delivery of significant savings in order to balance the Council's books. The current government has set out its intention to review the funding distribution for individual Councils that ensures it is truly based on need within a set cost envelope. This change is due to be implemented in 2026/27 and based on the current consultation information has a positive financial impact for Stevenage, this is discussed in more detail in sections 4.4-4.7 of the report. The changes for Stevenage improve the Council's funding position and this report will also set out some options for Members to consider in light of the improved financial position, see also (para. 4.10.3).
- 3.5 The Institute of Fiscal Studies (report dated 7 June 2024) noted that *'taking the period 2010/11 to 2024/25 as a whole, Councils' overall core funding is set to be 9% lower in real terms and 18% lower in real terms per person this year than at the start of the 2010s. The reduction is set to be larger for councils serving deprived areas (e.g. 26% per person for the most deprived tenth) than for the less deprived areas (e.g. 11% for the least deprived tenth). This reflects the fact that the funding increases seen since 2019/20 have offset only part of the overall cuts seen in the 2010s, which fell hardest on poorer areas. Average council tax bills are around 2% higher in real terms than in 2010/11, and*

little changed since 2019/20, with high inflation offsetting high nominal increases over the last few years. This compares with a real-terms increase of over 60% between 1997/98 and 2010–11. This is the current Governments challenge in resetting any funding distribution among local authorities.

- 3.6 At a local level Stevenage's 2010/11 government funding adjusted for subsequent changes for council tax support etc is £3.69Million lower for 2025/26 after 15 years and before consideration of the impact of a 10% population growth and 15 years of compound inflationary pressures.



- 3.7 Despite the significant financial pressures the Council has faced since 2010/11 Stevenage has had a track record of identifying and delivering permanent savings to reduce the overall financial footprint of the Council and to date has delivered £16.5Million of savings through its priority, 'Balancing the Budget', as summarised in the chart below.



- 3.8 These historic funding challenges further evidence the importance the need for Local Government Funding reform and MTFs planning which is the mechanism through which the Council assesses the financial impacts of national and local pressures. All budget challenges are modelled and the impacts on the draw and level of balances are considered, such as:

- National and local government policy on the five year forecast of resources for the General Fund (and Housing Revenue Account);
- Local pressures emerging from service provision,
- Inflationary pressures on the Council's finances
- Impact of the implement of LGR

3.9 The current approved MTFS principles are set out below.

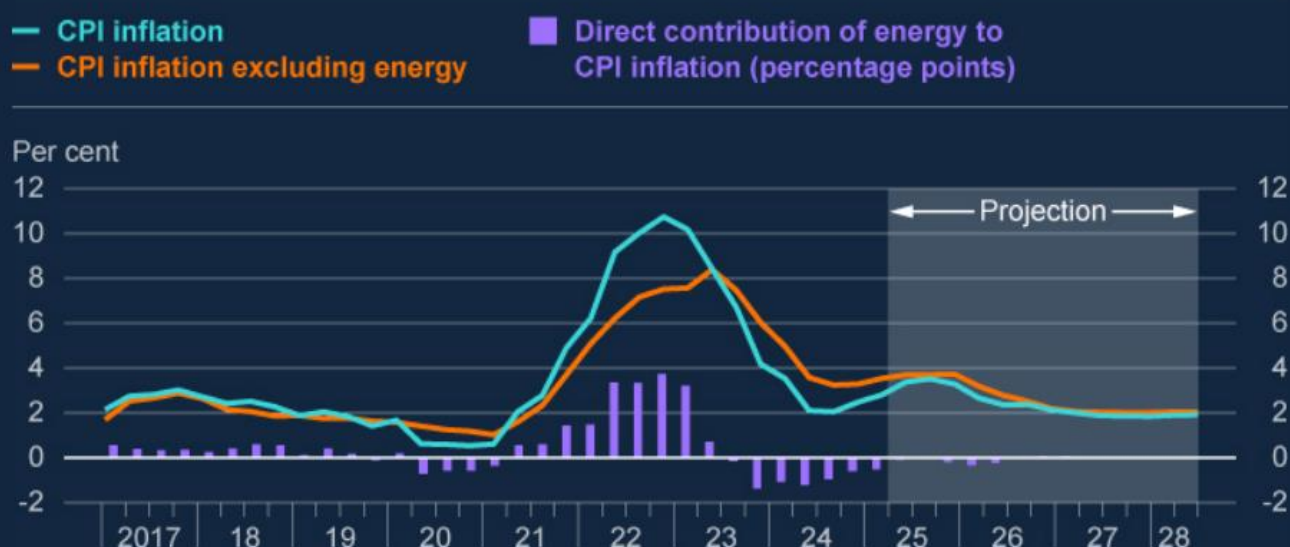
No	MTFS principles
1	To ensure the financial resilience of the General Fund that any net funding gap is reduced by 2028/29.
2	To consider as part of the budget setting process, and throughout the year as necessary, what support can be given to the community, tenants, leaseholders and businesses in times of particular hardship.
3	To use the Council's reserves in a cost-efficient and planned manner to deliver the Council's priorities.
4	To maximise the Council's income by promptly raising all monies due and minimising the levels of arrears and debt write-offs.
5	To identify alternative means of resourcing the Capital Strategy to minimise the impact of borrowing (GF only).
6	In setting General Fund balances a % for overruns (currently 1.5%), specific known risks, loss of savings & risks associated with new ventures and the cost of borrowing for the capital programme is included.
7	To identify variations to the approved budget via quarterly monitoring and only incur additional on-going spending when matched by increased income or identified savings.
8	To propose Council tax increases in line with the Government 's annual thresholds for modelling purposes to ensure that the General Fund core resources are sufficient to meet the cost of running the Council's services.
9	To ensure that resources are aligned with the Council's Strategic Plan and FTFC priorities and growth limited to the Council's top priorities
10	The Council does not depend upon short term sources of funding such as business rate gains and in any one year only allows a proportion of the gains to be retained in the General Fund based on the MTFS projections.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 General Fund pressures -Inflation

4.1.1 The inflation included within the MTFS is modelled using estimates for salary and direct pay inflators. This takes into account current levels of inflation and predictions over a five year period, with pay being the biggest inflation element for the Council. Pay awards have gradually reduced over the last few years from an average in excess of 5% to 3.2% in the current year. Looking ahead the Bank England CPI forecast (May 2025) predicted a reduction to 2% over the medium term with lower energy prices contributing to the falling CPI increase to circa 2%, despite higher inflation figures today.

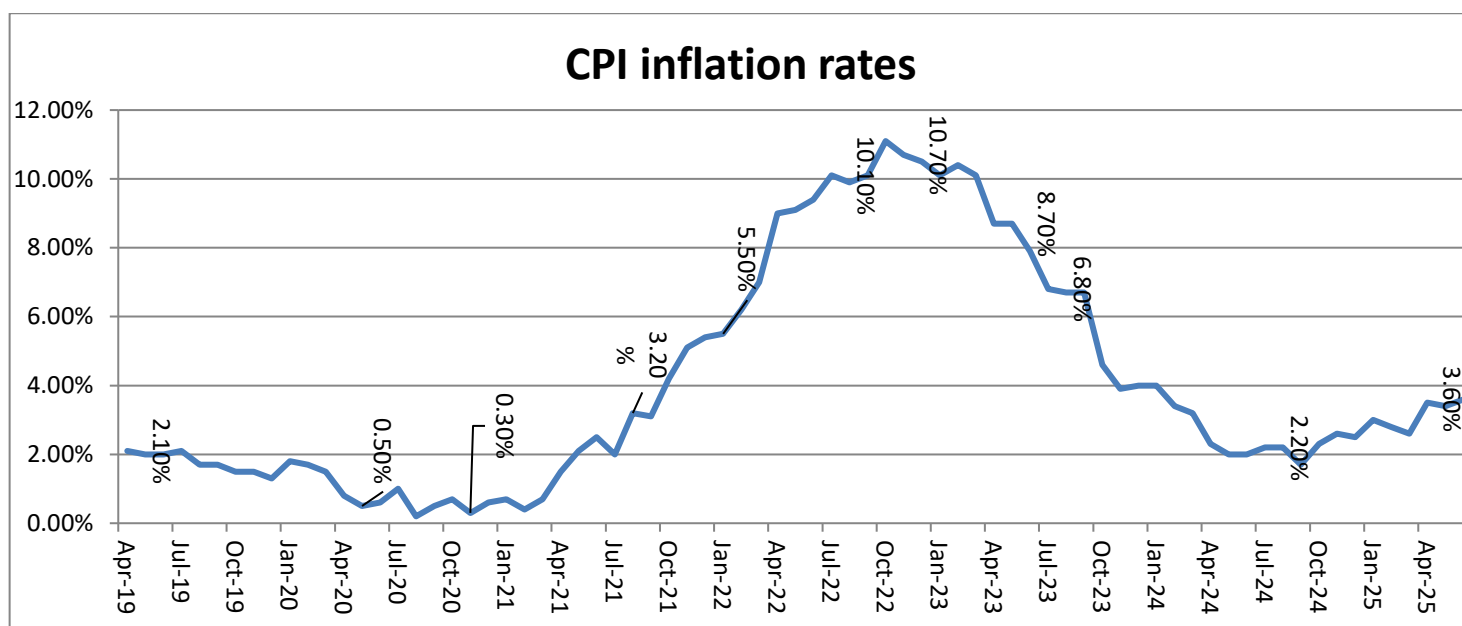
Chart 1.1: CPI inflation and CPI inflation excluding energy (a)



4.1.2 The indices used in the 2025 MTFS update have due regard to current levels of inflation, Bank of England forecasts and the 2026/27 onwards inflation assumptions are summarised in the table below. For note the July Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 3.8% (June 2024 2%). Clearly any levels of higher inflation will increase cost pressures in the MTFS.

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Inflation-Applied to:				
Salaries - % increase	2.75%	2.25%	2.00%	2.00%
CPI indices increases	2.75%	2.50%	2.00%	2.00%
CPI September NNDR increase	3.50%	2.50%	2.00%	2.00%
Investment interest	3.00%	2.50%	2.25%	2.00%
Fuel Increases	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
Gas & Electric Increases				
Gas (unit charge only)	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%
Electricity (unit charge only)	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%

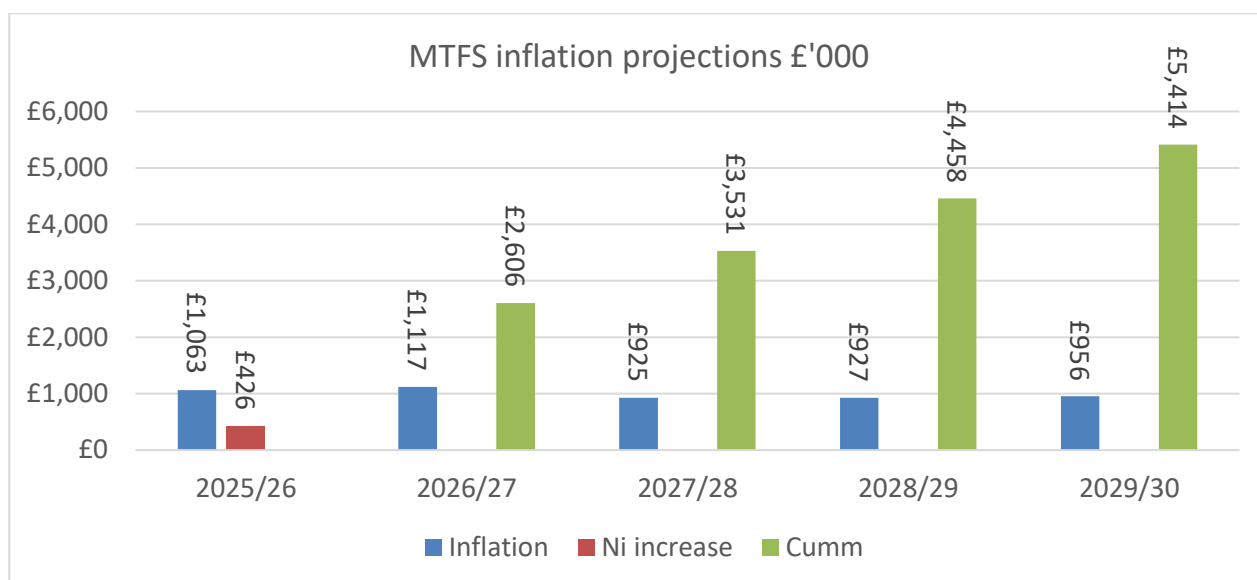
4.1.3 CPI is the tracked measure for inflation used by the government and also used for increases to business rates and Council housing rents, (September CPI). The historic CPI trend is shown below and the volatility with the impact of the cost of living crisis and higher utility costs and is still well above the Bank of England 2% target.



4.1.4 It is difficult to predict the sustainability of lower inflation over the medium term but the MTFS rationale and alternative scenarios are set out below.

Rationale for inflation assumption	
Salaries - % increase	The employer offer has fallen from 5.67% in 2023/24, to 3.2% in 2025/26 (slightly above the budgeted 3% amount) Based on lower inflationary increases the projection is 2.75% 2026/27 and 2.25% and then 2% thereafter. This outside the control of the Council and subject to collective bargaining and whether pay offers will continue above CPI to reflect years of below inflation increases.
Utility increases	Overall utility costs have decreased from the high of 2023/24 and lower increases are projected for 2026/27 onwards. The level of increase going forward in the MTFS are based on historic average increases (excluding the spike in 2023/24) and may fluctuate between individual years.
Consumer Price Index (CPI) indices increases	The July CPI was 3.8% and the MTFS has modelled inflation reducing to the Bank of England target 2% during the MTFS.

4.1.5 The amount of inflation projected for 2025/26 to 2029/30 is summarised in the chart below and totals £5.4Million, this included the 2025/26 £426K for increased Employer's National Insurance contributions announced in the 2024 Autum budget. One of the main reasons the annual inflation increase reduces during the MTFS period is the gradual reduction in estimated pay inflation from 3.2% in 2025/26 to 2% by 2028/29, (see also para 4.1.2). However this maybe subject to change if subsequent government budgets introduce national tax changes.



4.1.6 The 2026/27 inflation projections include £100K additional costs for the Hertfordshire triennial pension review, this is only an estimated allowance at this stage and the financial impact will not be known until later in the current year prior to the 2026/27 budget setting.

4.2 Other General Fund Pressures

4.2.1 In addition to meeting the inflation funding gap, the MTFS makes assumptions about other General Fund pressures and these are summarised in the table below.

Additional MTFS Pressures	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Rationale
Housing subsidy administration	£10,000	£20,000	£30,000	Subsidy payments are based on caseload which is reducing although the workload has not reduced at the same rate due to the increased real time information and changes of circumstances. The MTFS is assuming an additional £10K reduction per annum in subsidy per year.
Elections Budgets	£0	£50,000	£50,000	Elections budgets have not increased for a number of years, monies were transferred to an elections reserve to adequately resource the 2025/26 bi-election and 2026/27 District elections. However extra funding is required beyond that.
External support for the new Forster Country park	£20,000	£0	£0	The 1st Quarterly Monitoring report to this Cabinet meeting identified £15K required for 2025/26 and a further £20K is recommended for 2026/27.

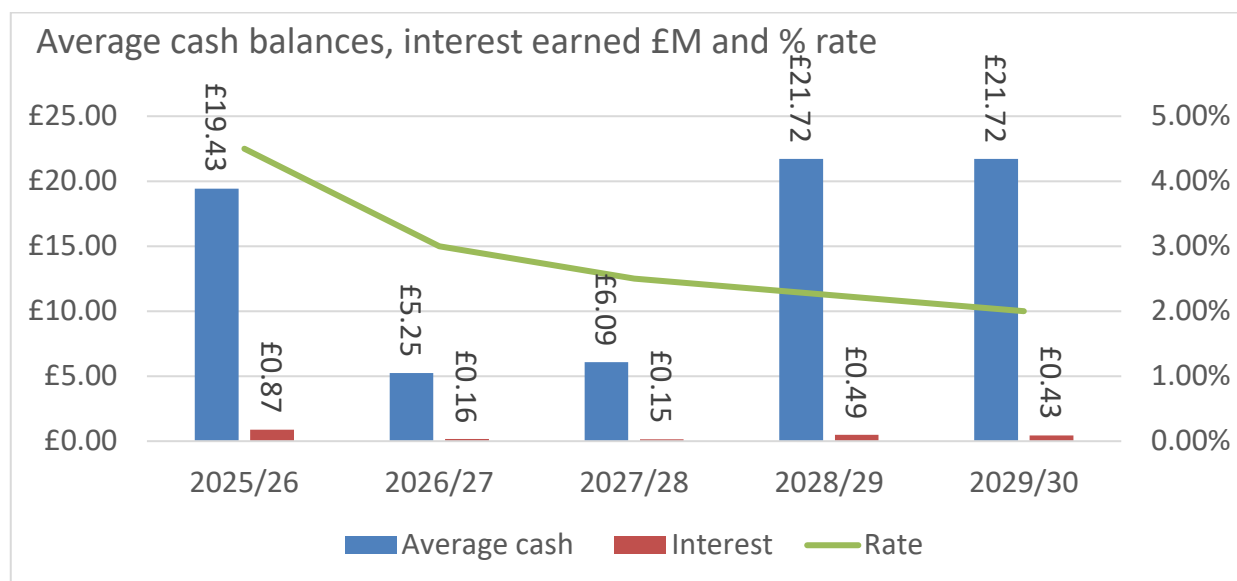
Additional MTFS Pressures	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Rationale
Car parking income	£31,720	£51,720	£181,000	The MTFS previously assumed a loss of £300K in 2024/25, £200K 2025/26 onwards, however 2024/25 parking income exceeded the budget and the current projections in the 1st Quarter Monitoring, show an improvement. The projection has been reduced from 2027/28, when current compounding income on Swingate car park ceases (full year impact 2028/29).
Cost of Local Government Reorganisation	£150,000	£150,000		The CFO recommends setting aside a budget for additional officer capacity or external advice to ensure the Council has enough funding for advice and officer capacity for LGR activities.
Queensway LLP reserve	£50,000	£100,000	£150,000	The Council set up the LLP to act as a catalyst for regeneration in the town centre as set out in the 4th Quarter Monitoring report to the July 2024 Cabinet. In order to ensure that funding to invest in the asset and/or support the LLP over the 37 year lease, the CFO recommended a new contribution of £50K per year to the Queensway reserve was included in the 2024/25 MTFS. This is to ensure the financial resilience of the asset and town centre, (see also 4.10.3 (6))
Total Revised Pressures	£261,720	£371,720	£411,000	

4.2.2 Additional financial pressures/growth are identified in the report and set out in paragraph 4.3.10 and are recommended taking into account the revised funding position of the Council. In addition, the MTFS includes a limited growth allowance of £75K per year. Growth bids will be put forward for Member consideration in the November Balancing the budget report.

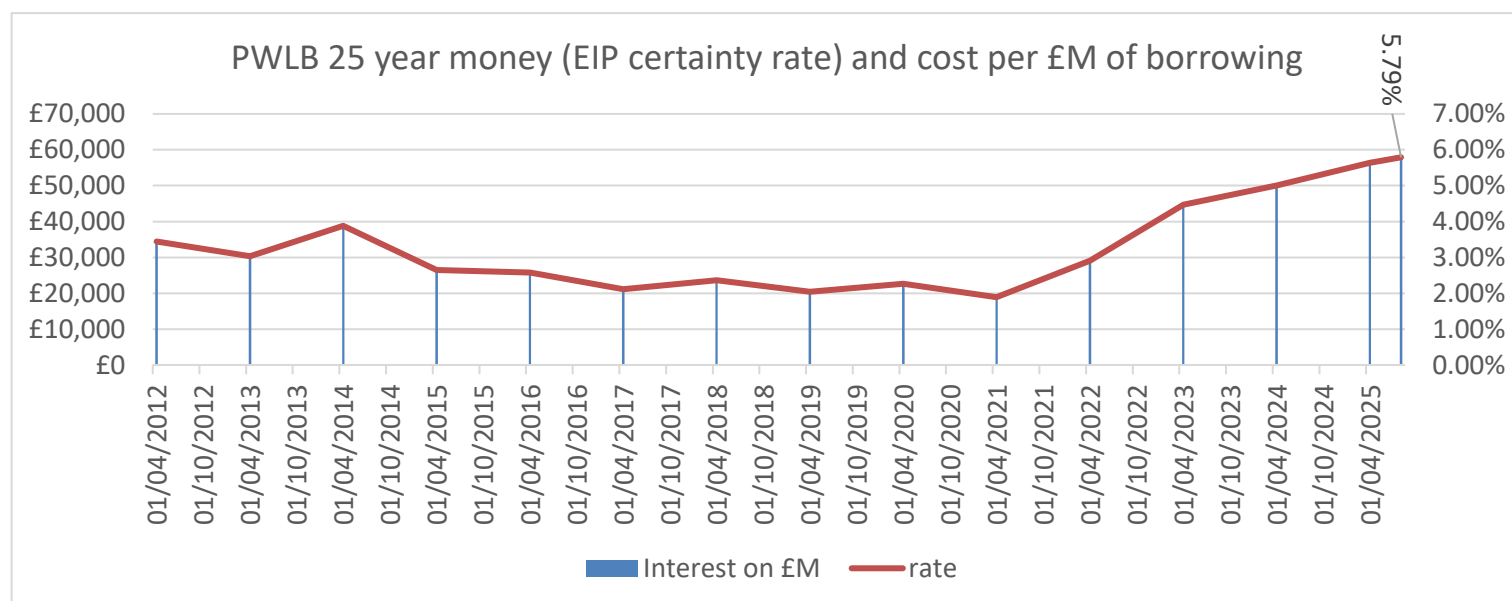
4.3 Investment interest projections and borrowing costs

4.3.1 investment income projections are based on an estimate of the amount of cash reserves the Council will hold in any one year, (both revenue and capital) and provisions such as business rate appeals, less any internal borrowing (using the Council's cash), rather than taking external borrowing via Public Works Loan Board (PWLb). The Council has used internal borrowing to fund capital expenditure rather than take

external loans particularly when PWLB rates are high and the cost of lost investment interest is lower. The current projections for investment interest are summarised in the table below.



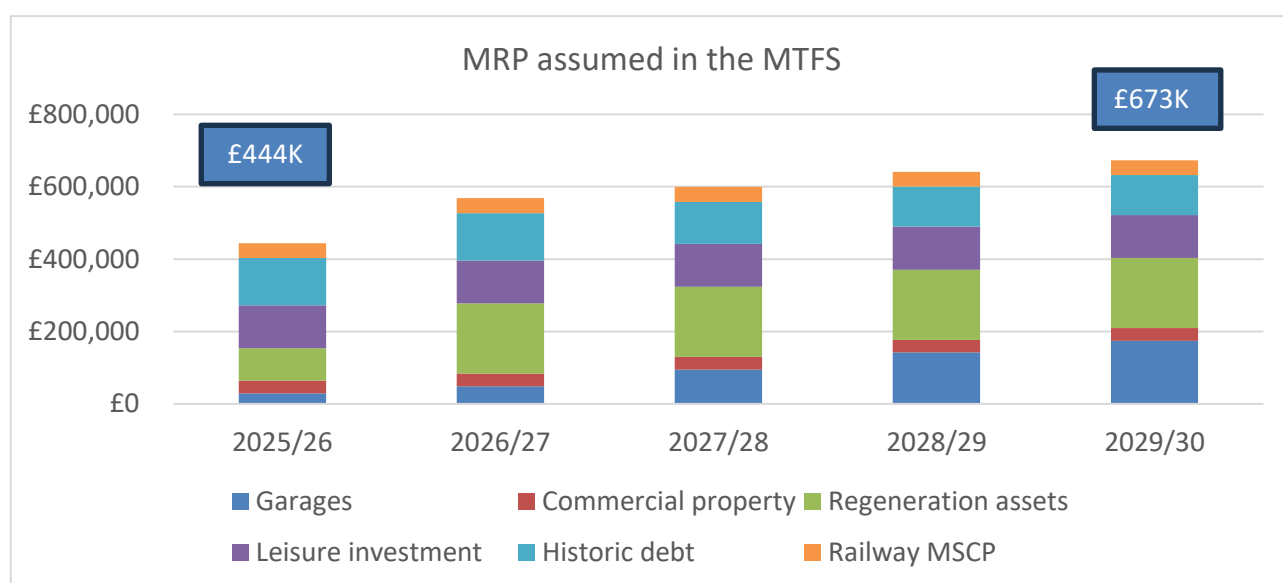
- 4.3.3 The average cash balances reduce significantly in 2026/27 and 2027/28 due to the temporary use of internal balances for Swingate LLP and the projected use of other ring- fenced receipts.
- 4.3.4 The Council has not borrowed for General Fund prudential borrowing for the Garage Improvement Programme, Railway MSCP and leisure centre improvements as there have been available cash balances and investment interest rates have been low. However, a consideration for current and medium-term borrowing (rather than using cash balances) is that PWLB rates (which are the government gilt rate + % uplift), are significantly higher than in recent years and has a significant adverse impact on the cost of borrowing particularly for Housing Revenue Account financing.



- 4.3.5 If the General Fund needs to externally borrow as cash balances reduce below that required for day to day running of the Council, then this will increase expenditure in the

General Fund for example, based on an average investment rate lost of 4.5% versus a borrowing rate currently of 5.79% is an extra £12,900 per million externally borrowed.

- 4.3.6 There is no allowance in the General Fund MTFS for new borrowing costs, other than that already approved for the new Garage Improvement Programme (2026/27-2028/29 £2.6Million in total), the remainder of required prudential borrowing is currently funded through internal borrowing, other than the historic purchase of the commercial asset. There is provision for the cost of repaying the borrowing or Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), which is based on the cost of the asset divided by its life. The amount of MRP provided for is shown in the chart below.

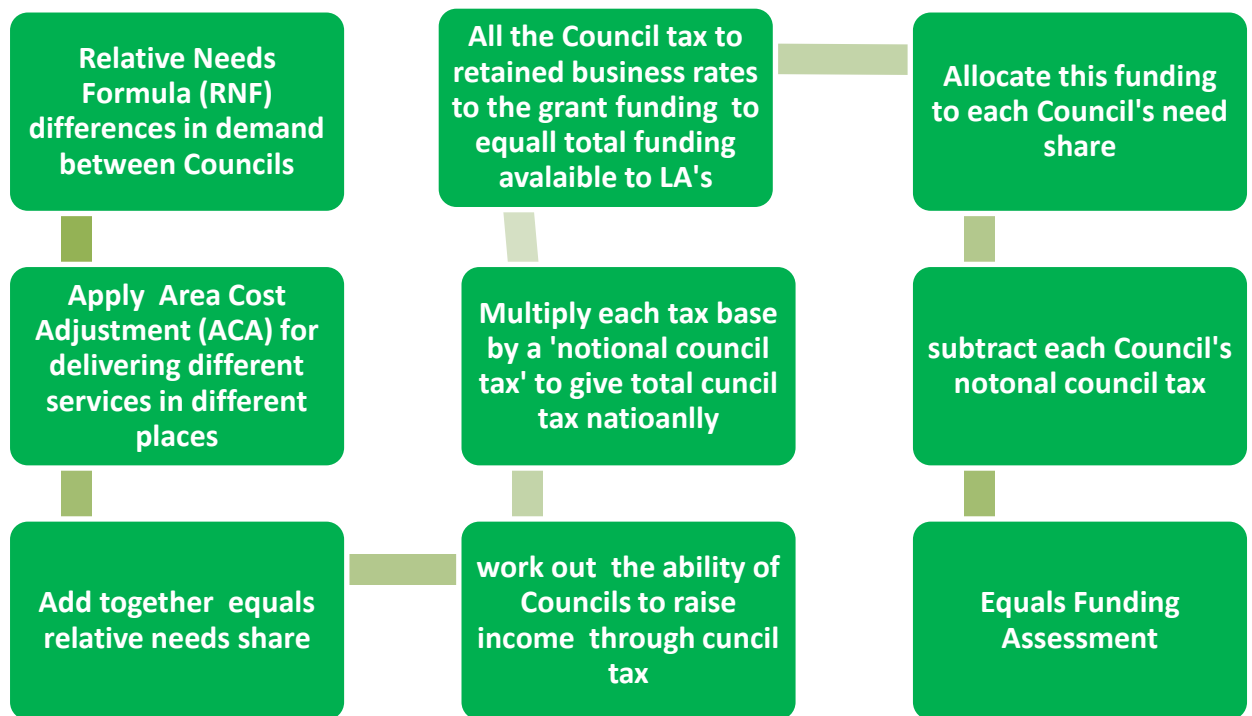


4.4 Fair Funding Reform 2026/27 onwards (Nationally)

- 4.4.1 The Fair Funding Review is the current Government's plan to change how money is allocated to Councils in England. The consultation document talks about taking *'tough choices to improve services for the working people of Britain – with a balanced approach that protects all local authorities but ensures funding is truly based on need'*. The reforms aim to account for the different needs and costs faced by communities across the country, including adjusting for the costs of remoteness faced by rural communities, and the ability of individual local authorities to raise Council Tax, while also resetting business rates income. This means an update to the formulae used to calculate funding allocations, which are a decade out of date. The aim is to make the system fairer and more current, so Councils get funding that better reflects their local needs based on a number of factors. So, from 2026/27, this revised system for allocating funding between Councils, will take account of those revisited factors of Councils' spending needs and their relative abilities to raise revenues themselves via council tax. The elements of the formula are listed below.

Fair Funding Factors	What It Means
Relative Needs	How much support a local area requires (e.g. for social care, housing, deprivation etc.)
Area Costs	How expensive it is to run services in that area (e.g. wages, property costs)
Resource Adjustment	How much money the council can raise itself (mainly through council tax)
Core Spending Power 2026/27-2028/29	

4.4.2 The formulas are then applied based on the graphic below.



- 4.4.3 The revised criteria includes a 'Foundation Formula' for general services and then specific formulas for services like adult social care and temporary accommodation with adjustments for labour, property, and travel costs.
- 4.4.4 The UK government consulted on the proposed reforms between 20 June 2025 and 15 August 2025. To dampen any large swings in funding, the proposed changes will be phased in over three years to ease the transition for Authorities, with funding floors in place to limit losses for those receiving less funding under the new system than currently. However, unlike the previous system there is no ceiling on the amount of increase gaining Council's will receive.
- 4.4.5 The argument for reform is that it has not be reset for current demographic and deprivation factors and is based on no change to a government funding system since the introduction of 50% business rates retention in 2013/14, not to mention additional pressures faced by Councils today. The difficulty with a long overdue reset means any new scheme could and appears to lead to a significant redistribution of funding around the country.
- 4.4.6 Included in the funding consultation is the proposals for a full reset of the Business Rates Retention System for 2026/27. The aim is to ensure funding is targeted where it is needed most and restore the balance between aligning funding with need and rewarding business rates growth. The local share (the percentage share of locally collected business rates that will be retained by local government) will continue to be subject to redistribution across local government via 'top-ups' and 'tariffs'. Stevenage is a tariff authority and retains more business rate than the historic needs assessment and for 2025/26 the estimated gains are £1.2Million. The re-set would see those gains reduce through a higher 'tariff' paid to the government with the reset likely to be based

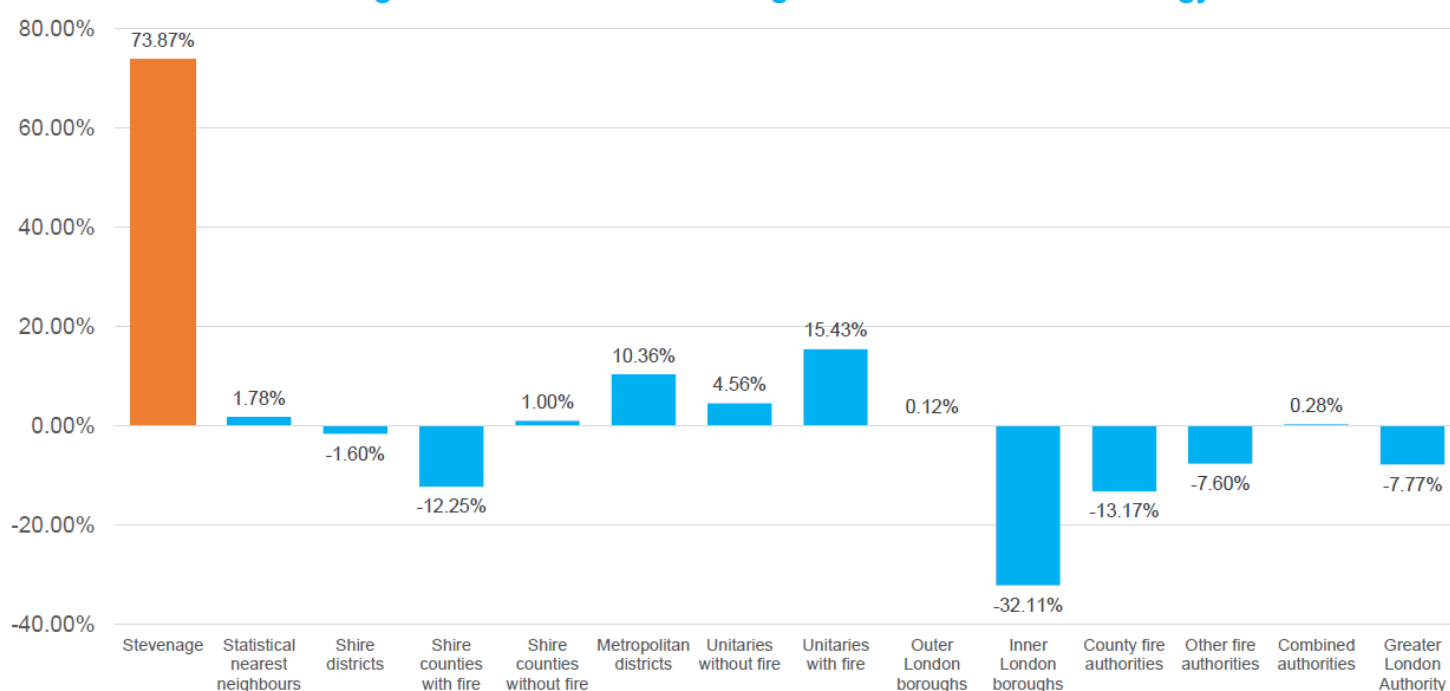
on the 2025/26 NNDR 1 submission and not 2025/26 or 2024/25 actuals realised, however this has not yet been clarified.

- 4.4.7 At a national level the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has estimated that the reformed funding allocation system will redistribute significant amounts of money between Councils. If it was introduced in full immediately, they estimate that the government's baseline reform proposals would see funding reduced by a **combined £2.1Billion for 186 Councils and increased by the same combined amount for 161 others. One-in-ten councils would see a fall in overall funding (including from council tax) of 14% or more, while another one-in-ten would see an increase of 10% or more.**
- 4.4.8 Alongside changes to government funding allocations the consultation document also proposes simplifying grant funding pots. In recent years, central Government has increasingly relied on ringfenced micro-grants in an attempt to ensure the continued delivery of siloed departmental priorities. In 2025/26, over 300 grants were awarded to local government from across Whitehall. Research published by the LGA in 2020 found that there were nearly 250 different grants provided to local government, around a third of which were awarded on a competitive basis. The LGA research estimated that the average cost to Councils in pursuing each competitive grant was in the region of £30,000 costing each local authority roughly £2.25Million a year chasing down various pots of money across Whitehall.
- 4.4.9 Local authorities will receive bigger, combined grants that replace several smaller ones, helping them focus more on delivering services than on managing payments. These grants will have their own rules for how money is shared, and some will use old methods while others will use new, single formulas. Starting in 2026/27, at least four grants will be merged:
1. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping- funding received by SBC
 2. Public Health,
 3. Crisis and Resilience, - includes the Discretionary Housing Payments received by SBC
 4. Children, Families and Youth.
- More details, including how money will be split and any restrictions, will be provided closer to the date, and the government has said they may consider merging more grants in future.
- 4.4.10 The Fair Funding review consultation also identified ending New Homes Bonus grant. In the current system, New Homes Bonus is funded through a portion of the Revenue Support Grant to incentivise additional housebuilding. However, the government sees this bonus is an ineffective incentive for new homes.
- 4.4.11 The new grant funding in the Fair Funding Settlement, sits alongside an assumption of a 3% core council tax referendum principle and a 2% adult social care precept, which will result in an average overall real terms increase in local authority core spending power of 2.6% per year between 2025-26 and 2028-29.
- 4.4.12 The next section of the report will outline the impact of funding reform for SBC, however this is heavily caveated, there is likely to be significant consultation feedback about the impact of the new regime. For instance, Hertfordshire County Council has identified themselves as a significant grant loser of circa £45Million which inevitably will have a knock on impact on Local Government Reform finances in Hertfordshire. The chart

below from LG Futures shows that while Shire Districts have on average lost 1.6% of funding through the new Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA), Stevenage in contrast has gained by 74%, with statistical nearest neighbours gaining 1.78% by comparison. As stated in para. 4.4.12 the level of funding should be caveated because changes could be made as a result of the consultation such as:

- Longer transition period than the proposed three years
- A ceiling on gains to allow more dampening for Councils losing funding
- Changes to factors to dampen the impact on big gainers and losers
- The consultation is also ambiguous about the share of the resource adjustment attributable to the GLA.

% change in 'new SFA' due to change in distribution methodology



- GLA figures exclude the £1.16 billion transport topslice which is carried forward without redistribution.

4.5 Fair Funding Reform 2026/27 onwards Stevenage borough Council

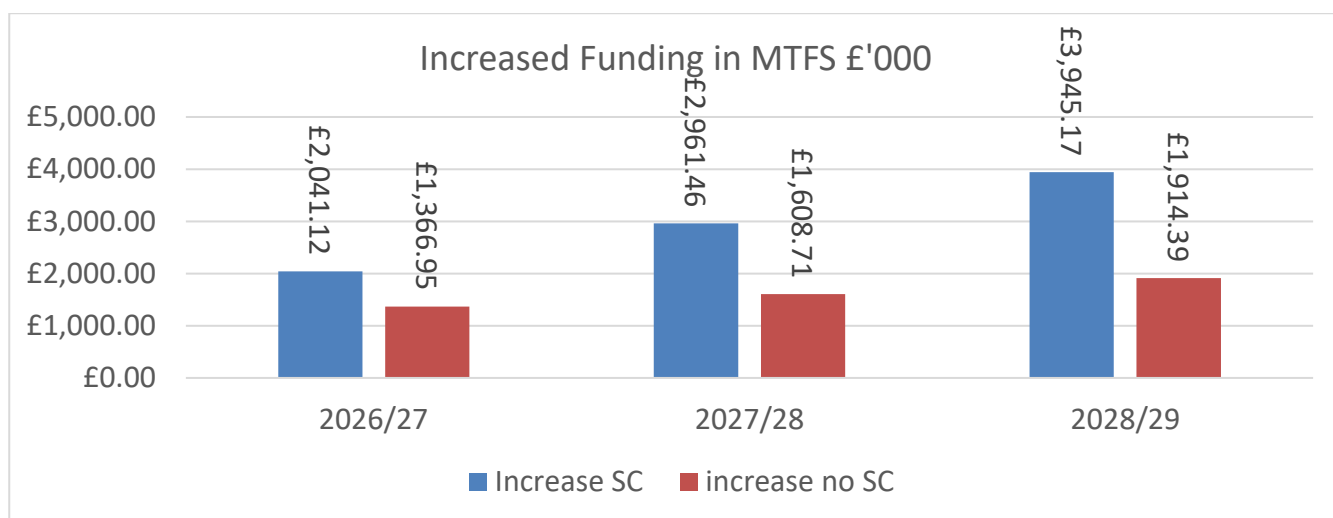
4.5.1 The Council's Chief Finance Officer (CFO) has reviewed a number of financial models identifying the impact of Fair Funding on the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). All of these models show Stevenage gains from Fair Funding 2.0, this is because Stevenage has a higher needs based assessment (including deprivation) and a relatively low ability to raise council tax due to the size of the tax base. The Council has engaged LG Futures to model the impact for SBC however there are a number of variables and the modelling below is based on social care grant being included in the overall funding pot and also excluded. Members should also be aware that:

- The MTFs assumes only £200K of business rate gains per year as they can fluctuate (2023/24 gains £343K, 2024/25 £960K, 2025/26 est. £1.39M)
- The models assume no business rate gains 2026/27-2028/29 as there is a proposed reset in 2026/27.

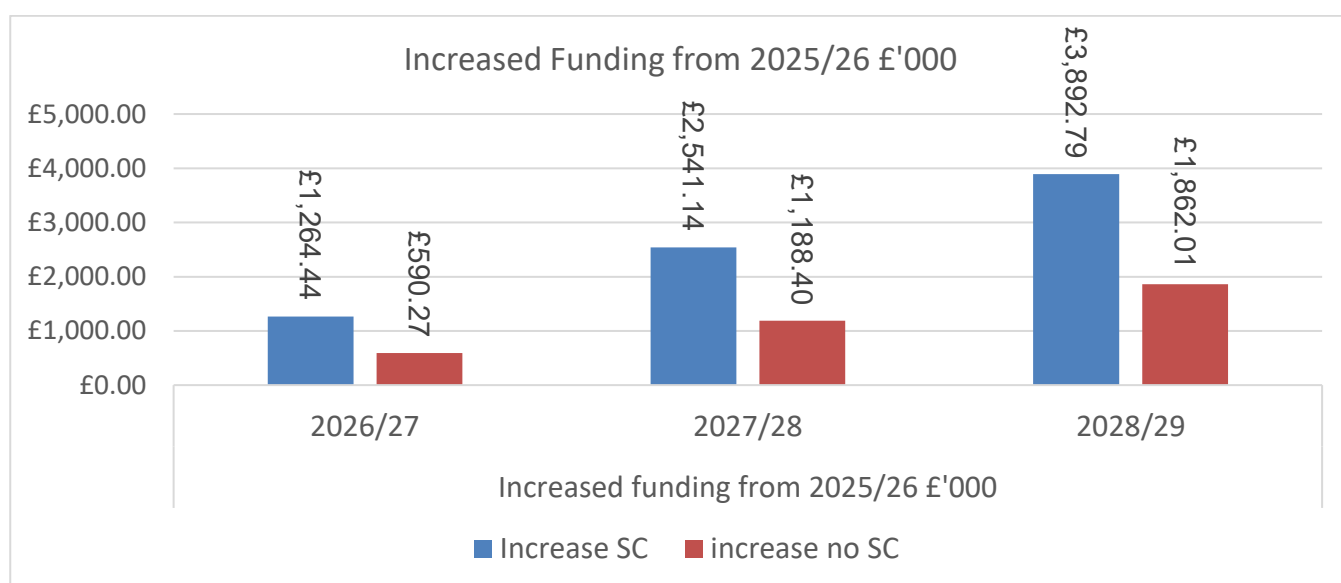
Funding:	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 MTFS	2026/27 (with SC) £'000	2026/27 (no SC) £'000	2027/28 MTFS	2027/28 (with SC) £'000	2027/28 (no SC) £'000
RSG	£149.05	£152.77			£155.83		
NNDR	£3,379.03	£3,470.30			£3,548.75		
Recovery grant	£283.82	£283.82			£283.82		
NIC	£200.82	£200.82			£200.82		
NHB	£97.00	£0.00			£0.00		
NNDR Gains	£1,239.58	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00
General Fair Funding	£5,349.29	£4,307.72	£6,348.35	£5,674.17	£4,389.22	£7,349.66	£5,996.92
Council tax	£7,040.51	£7,305.40	£7,305.89	£7,305.89	£7,580.26	£7,581.28	£7,581.28
Total excluding grants	£12,389.80	£11,613.12	£13,654.24	£12,980.07	£11,969.49	£14,930.95	£13,578.20
Total Gain from MTFS assumptions			£2,041.12	£1,366.95		£2,961.46	£1,608.71

Funding:	2028/29 MTFS	2028/29 (with SC) £'000	2028/29 (no SC) £'000	Incr. from 2025/26 £'000	Incr. MTFS £'000
RSG	£158.95				
NNDR	£3,628.37				
Recovery grant	£283.82				
NIC	£200.82				
NHB	£0.00				
NNDR Gains	£200.00	£0.00	£0.00		
General Fair Funding	£4,471.95	£8,415.54	£6,384.76	£1,035.47	£2,077.05
Council tax	£7,865.47	£7,867.05	£7,867.05	-£1.58	-£1.58
Total excluding grants	£12,337.42	£16,282.59	£14,251.81	£1,033.89	£2,075.46
Total Gain from MTFS assumptions		£3,945.17	£1,914.39		

4.5.2 With the scenarios outlined above (depending on the treatment of social care grant), the Council is a significant gainer under Fair Funding, **before** any post consultation changes are made. This means effectively that the Council converts fluctuating business rate gains into guaranteed increased grant funding over a three year period. Compared to the MTFS a minimum additional £1.9Million over the three years and an additional minimum £1.36Million in 2026/27. The does not include the impact of lower business rates in future years as set out in Section 4.6.



4.5.3 When Fair Funding projections are compared to 2025/26 grant awarded and estimated business rates, the gain is lower than in para 4.5.2. This is because the 2025/26 core funding included potential business rate gains of £1.2Million (approved in January 2025), versus the MTFS working assumption of just £200K per annum. Going forward business rates gains should be lower due to the reset as part of the Fair Funding review.



4.6 Business Rates

4.6.1 Retained business rates are the amount above which the government allows Councils to keep business rates generated within their boundary. This is calculated by:

Step one - The government sets a baseline need value - this is assessed as the amount needed based on the funding formula.

Step two – The Council collects business rates in Stevenage, net of reliefs, and keeps a notional 40%, (50% is sent to the government and 10% to Hertfordshire County Council).

Step three- Calculate the amount of section 31 grant due to the Council based on reliefs the government has legislated (post the business rate methodology was introduced), given to reduce the amount of collectable business rates (retail

reliefs, extended small business rate relief, zero rating increases in business rates).

Step four - The government applies a tariff which then reduces the collected 40% share of business rates and reliefs (based on the last revaluation on rates), so that it is closer to the baseline need (as identified in step 1).

Step five - If there are still gains after step 4, a further levy is applied at 50% so effectively any gains above baseline need are split 50:50 with the government.

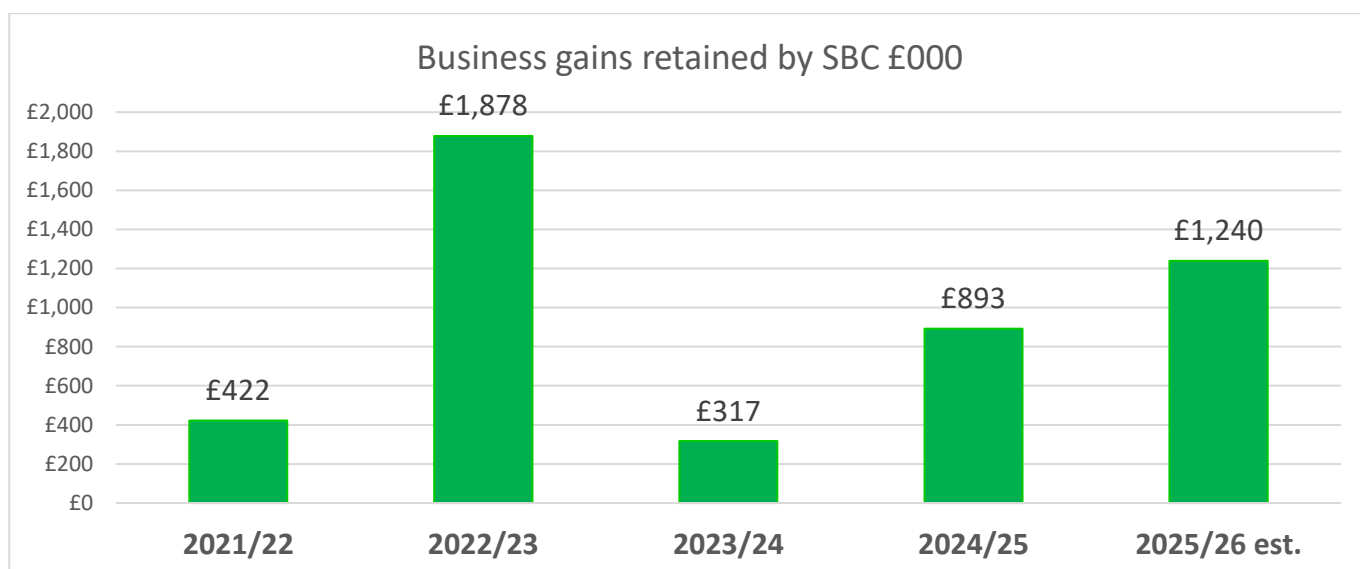
Or In the event that there are in fact losses (i.e. less business rate income was received than the baseline) SBC must fund the first 7.5% below the base line need (approximately £180,000). The rest of the losses are funded by the government via the 'safety net'.

Step six - The levy, safety net and section 31 grants are paid based on the amount due in year, all other payments are paid based on estimate with gains and losses due/paid in future years.

4.6.2 As a core part of the funding system proposed in Fair Funding 2.0 consultation, the government is delivering a full reset of the Business Rates Retention System in 2026/27. This reset is long overdue and crucial to the government's aims to ensure funding is targeted where it is needed most and restore the balance between aligning funding with need and rewarding business rates growth. The local share (the percentage share of locally collected business rates that will be retained by local government) will continue to be subject to redistribution across local government via 'top-ups' and 'tariffs', which will be updated at the Reset.

4.6.3 The Reset in 2026 is happening alongside significant changes to the business rates tax system. The proposed approach reflects a significant change to tax policy that will coincide with the reset: the introduction of further tax rates (also known as business rates multipliers) with permanent targeted support for retail, hospitality and leisure to replace the temporary time-limited relief currently in place. The reset will also coincide with the triennial revaluation of rateable values for nondomestic properties. Both these factors will lead to changes in the business rates that each local authority collects and retains locally and have impacts on how the system works.

4.6.4 Reallocating growth and resetting Business Rates Baselines in 2026/27 will expose authorities to a higher risk of falling below their Baseline Funding Level, particularly in the first year following a reset before any growth accumulates again. Furthermore, the 2026 revaluation and the reform to business rates multipliers mean there is higher risk in estimating levels of collectable business rates, again increasing the risk of falling below Baseline Funding Levels. Whilst Stevenage has benefited historically from business rate gains, the reset as part of the Fair Funding review will see the tariff element increased (step four) likely based on the 2025/26 NNDR 1 return. SBC Business rate gains have fluctuated significantly, influenced by a number of factors such as opportunities to pool gains among Councils or the 'pilot' in 2019/20 where Hertfordshire Councils kept 75% of all business rates. However, SBC has only been in the 'Hertfordshire pool' twice and the government has only allowed Hertfordshire Councils to be in one pilot scheme. This adds complexity to projecting income and, in addition to this gains are not realised in the year they were achieved but are based on an estimate for any particular year.



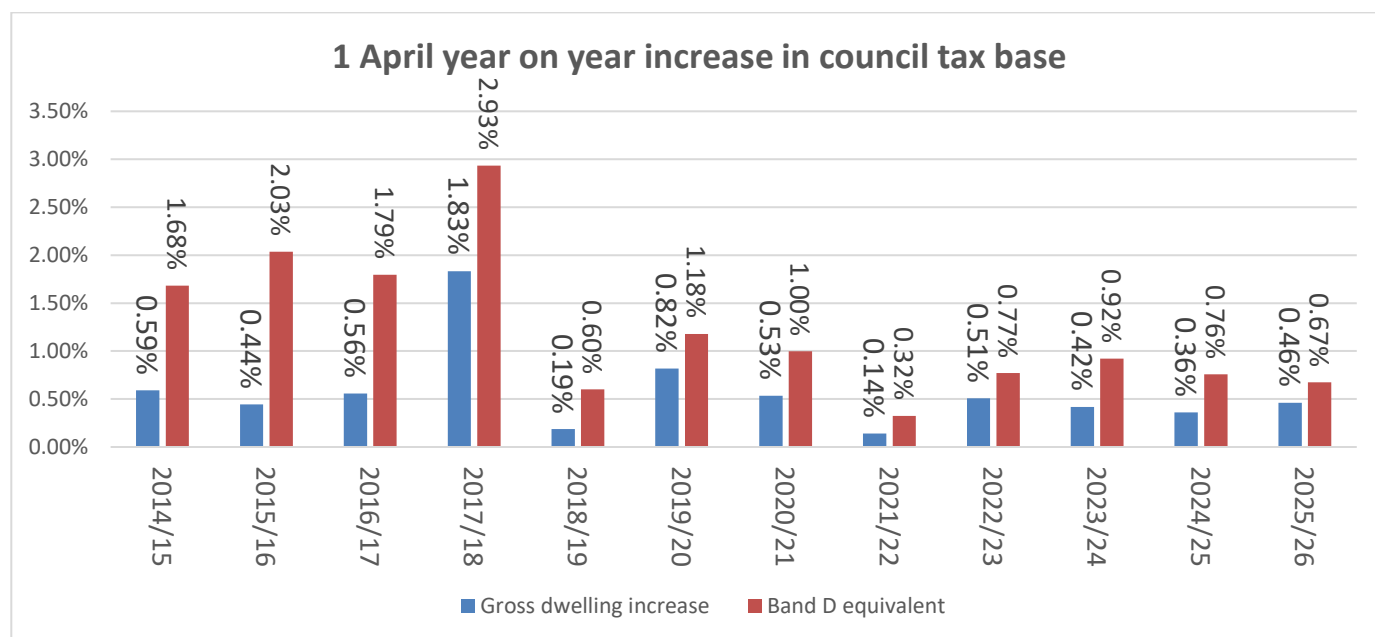
Note: 2022/23 was the release of the appeals provision following the 2023/24 revaluation.

- 4.6.5 In recognition of the additional potential for uncertainty in setting Business Rates Baselines in 2026/27 and estimating business rates income following the reset, the government proposes increasing the level of protection provided to local authorities by the Safety Net for 2026/27 before planning to scale protection back down to the current 92.5% level over the course of the multi-year Settlement period. Further information will be provided ahead of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. However, for budgeting purposes the CFO proposes including a 7.5% reduction in assumed business rates in the MTFS until further information is known for the first two years of the re-set. This would equate to circa £160K of cost per year to the General Fund before any safety net payments would be paid by the government.
- 4.6.6 As part of the recent consultation the Government is also asking about reforms to the levy rate which is currently 50% on any gains above the baseline for Stevenage. The levy may need to increase to pay for greater safety net payments as a result of the re-set and other changes set out in this report. The CFO recommends not assuming any business rate growth in the MTFS.
- 4.6.7 The proposed reforms for 2026/27 included a question on the continuing need for 'pooling' arrangements. This is where a configuration of four to five Councils including the County can form a 'pool' with the aim to retain a higher level of business rates by ensuring the optimum 'low' level rate on gains. The Government is considering whether pooling arrangements should continue from 2026/27. The Government's rationale is that due to the proposed newly designed levy rate and increased protection provided by the Safety Net in the first year of the Reset, this may reduce the need for pooling arrangements as it would increase the protection to business rate income and continuing to provide a reward for business rate growth.
- 4.6.8 The Business rate yield projections for 2025/26 are currently below the 2025/26 original estimate, this is partly due to anticipated known growth not realised in the taxbase to date (£180K lower for Stevenage) and the number of appeal payments recognised to 1 July 2025. Members will be updated as part of the November Balancing the Budget report on the projected level of business rates for 2025/26. However, Members should note the Council transfers business rate gains above the £200K assumed in the General Fund to

the NNDR earmarked reserve and does not use them to fund expenditure in year (see also para 4.12.2).

4.7 Council Tax

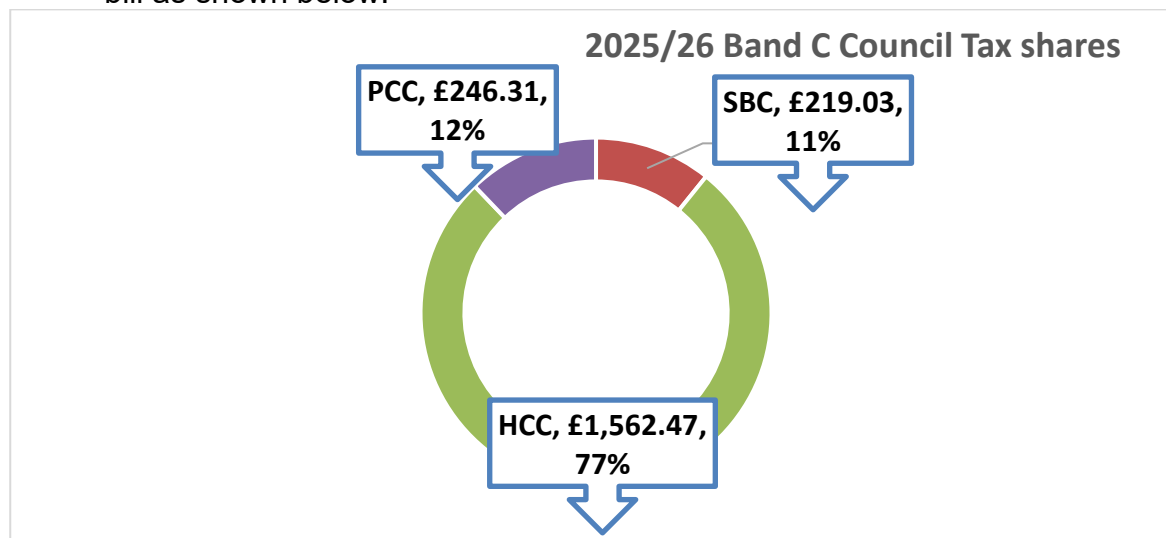
- 4.7.1 The amount of council tax that can be raised annually is influenced by two factors, firstly the growth in the tax base and secondly the inflationary increase applied each year. The tax base estimates when new properties will be brought into use and converts this to Band D equivalents for the year, together with all the existing properties and discounts given.
- 4.7.2 The tax base is calculated based on an estimate of the gross dwellings in Stevenage, reduced by the amount of discounts, (single person discount, council tax support and other exemptions). The increase in new properties fluctuates significantly based on economic development. The taxbase for 2025/26 was approved at the November 2024 Cabinet meeting and totalled 28,571.8 equivalent “Band D” properties after making allowances for a 98.0% collection rate. The Taxbase as at 1 September 2025 is 28,637.02 which is 65.21 Band D equivalents higher, with a further eight months for changes to the tax base meaning the approved taxbase will be exceeded, (conversely, 1 August 2024 the position was 143.82 Band D equivalents below the approved base).
- 4.7.3 The percentage increase in the taxbase does fluctuate from year to year the MTFS assumes an average increase of 0.75% per annum,(the average over the last six years was 0.74%).



- 4.7.4 When calculating any future taxbase, the level of collectable council tax must be estimated, (properties less reliefs and discounts) plus a deduction for bad debt. The taxbase for 2025/26 included an assumption of 2% deduction for bad debt increased from 1.75% for 2024/25. The tax collected in year continues to be challenging (94.5% in 2024/25) and generally lower than in other Hertfordshire Councils, however the Shared Revenues and Benefits service with East Hertfordshire District Council is to trying to improve this by:

- Looking at a banded discount council tax support scheme so those on universal credit who have small changes in monthly income levels will not need to be reassessed for 2027/28
- Review of processes around arrears which has now been implemented
- Introducing more automation

4.7.5 The MTFS includes a 2.99% increase in council tax for 2025/26 onwards, in line with the government assumptions for Fair Funding (see also para 4.4.11). Members will be aware that SBC only retains a relatively small part of the overall council tax raised for the year. To illustrate this, taking a Band C property (which makes up 55% of total properties in Stevenage as at 1 August 2025), SBC keeps £219.03 or only 11% of the total council tax bill as shown below.



4.8 Finance Settlement and assumptions in the MTFS

4.8.1 The funding assumptions in the MTFS have been updated using the lower level of fair funding increase as set out in para 4.5.1 together with an adjustment for business rates losses after the reset (for the first two years) and an allowance for the consultation changes such as the introduction of a ceiling on increases/longer transition period due to the level of gainers and losers.

4.8.2 The outcome of the consultation will not be known until circa October/November 2025 and the provisional funding settlement just before parliament rises on the 18 December 2025, therefore the CFO considers it prudent to revise down the numbers (as set out above) until clarification is given later in the year. The provisional settlement will be multi year and will mean the future years position will be clearer in terms of budget decisions.

Funding projections £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total 2026/27-2028/29
Business Rates	(£4,090)				
Under indexing	(£529)				
Total Business Rates	(£4,619)				
Revenue Support Grant	(£149)				
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	(£97)				
Recovery Grant	(£284)	£0	£0	£0	

Funding projections £'000		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total 2026/27- 2028/29
NIC's (in net cost of services in 2025/26)	(£201)		£0	£0	£0	
Fair Funding			(£5,674)	(£5,997)	(£6,385)	
Loss of Business rates before safety net			£160	£160	£0	
Allowance for ceiling on gains after consultation			£500	£500	£500	
Total	(£5,349)		(£5,014)	(£5,337)	(£5,885)	(£16,236)
MTFS Assumptions			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total 2026/27- 2028/29
Total			(£4,308)	(£4,389)	(£4,472)	(£13,169)
Increase 2026/27-2028/29						(£3,067)

- 4.8.3 The finance settlement is likely to roll in other grants such as temporary accommodation and Discretionary Housing payments (DHP) but these have not been factored into the numbers above until further clarification is given by the Government and they are currently assumed in the Net Cost of Services. While the simplification of grant funding is welcome the proposal for DHP is to retain the existing allocations for 2026/27 with the grant from 2027/28 allocated to upper tier Councils, this will be consulted on but means that the support currently given to help residents stay in their homes through DHP will be lost at a District level. The CFO will respond to the consultation once open and recommend that the existing funds are allocated as currently until LGR is implemented.
- 4.8.4 The MTFS also makes no assumption about '**Extended Producer Pays**' funding an initiative which the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) the amount is only guaranteed for 2025/26 (£1.078Million). A report to the July 2025 Cabinet set out how the money could be spent including improving flat block recycling. It is likely that further funding will be due in 2026/27, however there is no indication at the moment about the amount to be given and Members will be updated when further clarification is set out in the Finance Settlement.
- 4.8.5 From April 2026 Councils must collect weekly food waste, the MTFS assumes that the Council will be fully compensated by the government for the increased costs incurred. The Council has been notified of the 2025/26 grant determination (transitional grant) to support the implementation of weekly food waste collections which is insufficient to cover the estimated cost and representation has been made to DEFRA. The 2026/27 allocations will be included in the 2026/27 Finance Settlement (December 2025). An amount of the EPR grant has been held in the earmarked reserve to bridge the gap of any shortfall.
- 4.8.6 Included in the MTFS core resources are prior years gains and losses for council tax and business rates to/from the Collection Fund. When the budget for the year is set an estimate is made of business rates (NNDR1), this is revised as part of the following years return and again at the outturn for the year (NNDR3). The business rate adjustments are 'matched' by a transfer to/from the NNDR reserve as no gains are spent until realised and used for one off spend (with the exception of the £200K supporting General Fund services). Variations arose because:

- There was a significant adverse swing in business rates losses for 2023/24 (actual or NNDR 3) due a rating adjustment given by the valuation office which was significantly higher than expected. For note the actual loss was lower as the levy on gains reduced but this is paid to the government in the year it arose, (2023/24)
- There was a reduction in business rate gains for 2024/25 of £359K, however the gains achieved were still £893K.

4.8.7 The projected 2024/25 council tax deficit on the collection fund for SBC, (the approved taxbase less the raised in year and provision for bad debt) was predicted at £196K, however the actual 2024/25 deficit came in at only a £36K loss, which means there is a corresponding credit back to the General Fund in 2026/27.

Collection Fund Core Resource movements	2025/26	2026/27	Total
2023/24 Business rate losses (para. 4.8.6)	£1,056,964	£0	£1,056,964
2024/25 Business rate losses (para 4.8.6)	£175,793	£183,637	£359,430
2024/25 Council Tax (surplus)/deficit (para 4.8.7)	£196,632	(£160,330)	£36,302
Total	£1,429,389	£23,307	£1,452,696

4.8.8 Council tax surplus and deficits tend to be much smaller as they not complicated by NNDR appeals and large revaluations. No assumption has been made in the MTFS for changes to 2025/26 gains and losses for business rates and council tax, this will be reviewed later in the year (see also para 4.6.8 and para 4.7.2).

4.9 Balancing the Budget

4.9 1 Balancing the Budget is one of the Council's key Making Stevenage Even Better(MSEB) priorities to ensure that the Council remains financially resilient whilst striving to deliver against its service and high-level ambitions across both the General Fund and the HRA. Balancing the budget consists of four main streams and work on potential budget options is carried out all year round. The graphic below sets out the process for 2024/25 onwards.



- 4.9.3 **Business Change and digital (formally Transformation)** –Members approved a set of principles to be applied to securing improvements to customer access to services, through the use of digital design at the August 2021 Executive meeting Further reports were made to the Executive in October 2022 and September 2023, updating on the delivery so far. Customers are at the heart of the Council’s services, so the aim of the programme is to ensure that they will be served in a straightforward way, with resolution at the first point of contact and, where deemed possible, through the provision of easy to access online services that are so good, people choose to use them.
- 4.9.4 With the advent of LGR the programme has been redirected (under the New Assistant Director for Business Change and Digital) to focus on getting the Council ‘match fit’ for LGR through improving customer journeys through digital interventions but without the need for significant staff restructuring.
- 4.9.5 Some restructuring has been completed and an Officer Key Decision was taken 9 April 2025 following consultation with the Portfolio holders for Transforming Stevenage, Communications and Strategic Partnerships, Resources and Transformation, Environment and Performance, Co-operative Council and Neighbourhoods, Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing and Stronger Communities. The anticipated 2026/27 savings are circa £156K and £26K for the General Fund and HRA respectively and will contribute to the 2026/27 savings target.
- 4.9.6 In reducing the scope of the business change activity, the team has been ‘right sized’ with the additional ability to draw on the Business Change earmarked reserve for upfront investment or support, which stood at £773K at the 1 April 2025. This right sizing is anticipated to save the General Fund and HRA £262K and £57K respectively. A summary of the Business change savings is shown in the table below.

General Fund and HRA Business Change Savings £'000	2025/26		2026/27	
	General Fund	HRA	General Fund	HRA
Localities Review (reported quarter 1 monitoring report)	£123	£28	£156	£29
Right sizing the Business Change Team	£0	£0	£262	£57
Total	£123	£28	£418	£86

- 4.9.7 **Commercialisation & Insourcing** -The Council approved the latest Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy at the October 2023 Executive. This strategy set out a number of work streams which are overseen by an Executive working group.
- 4.9.8 A further update on the work arising from the Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy will be included in the November 2025 Balancing the Budget Report to the Cabinet. However, a number of commercial options have been identified through the Commercial Team, the work of the Estates Team and are summarised below.

General Fund Commercial Savings £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Fees and charges (provisional and subject to approval October Cabinet)	£0	£314	£314
Taxi Licence fees to recover costs (provisional and subject to approval General Purposes October meeting)	£0	£44	£44

General Fund Commercial Savings £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Commercial parking deal (reported Qrt 1 monitoring report)	£97	£100	£104
Commercial property lease rent renewals (reported Qrt 1 monitoring report)	£80	£106	£106
Additional income from billboards	£0	£13	£19
Additional income from parcel lockers	£0	£2	£5
Additional bus operator income above the budget (included in Qrt 1 monitoring report)	£16	£16	£16
Total	£193	£595	£608

4.9.9 **Efficiency savings** are reported and removed from the General Fund as part of the formal quarterly monitoring process and are included in the 1st Quarter monitoring report if identified. In addition, the star chamber review (see also para 4.10.5), identified a number of budget efficiencies some of which have been reported in the quarter one monitoring report to this meeting. A summary of the efficiency savings identified to date are shown in the table below and included in the MTFS totalling £121K for 2026/27.

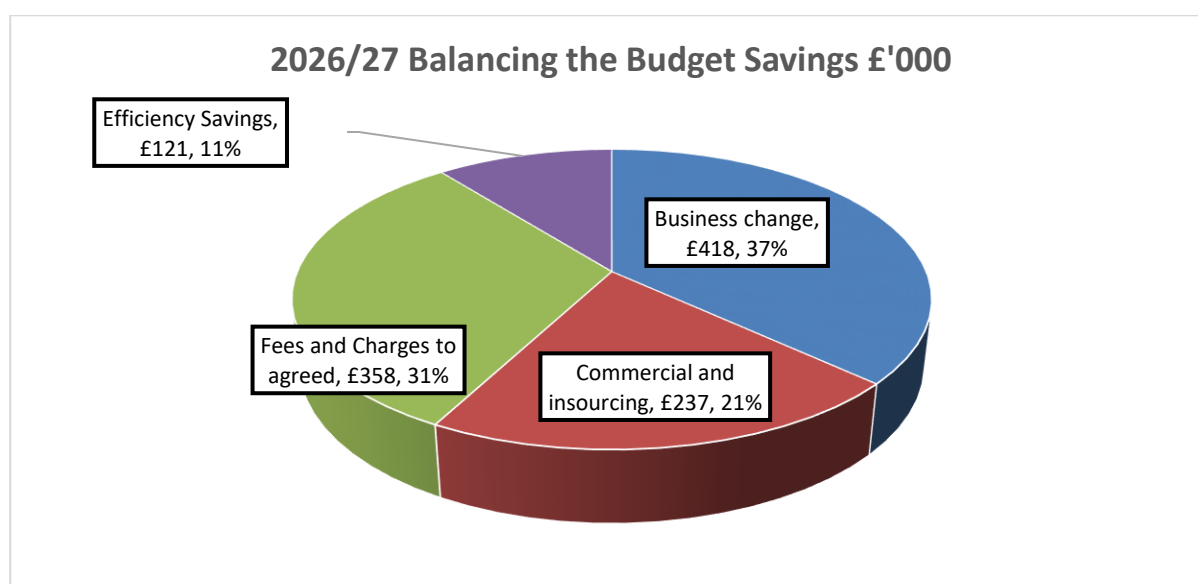
General Fund Efficiency Savings £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
HCC agency agreement full increase not in budget	£20	£20	£20
Change acquirer bank for credit card payments resulting in savings.	£0	£18	£18
Director remuneration for Building Control Company (for attending meetings)	£11	£11	£11
External Audit fees budget not required	£16	£16	£16
Aligning Revenue and Benefits Court fees in line with previous actuals	£10	£10	£10
Align Shared Internal Audit Service budget	£6	£6	£6
Align Third party tipping income budget to current levels (reported quarter 1 monitoring)	£33	£33	£33
Review of cleaning contract prior to tender (reported quarter 1 monitoring)	£21	£28	£28
Review of software budgets and further utilisation of Microsoft 365		£49	£66
Removal of vacant post in ICT structure not required	£17	£17	£17
Budget insufficient for Waste Disposal costs increased and reported Quarter 1 monitoring)	(£49)	(£49)	(£49)
Budget insufficient for reletting of commercial properties (reported quarter 1 monitoring)	(£38)	(£38)	(£38)
Total	£47	£121	£138

4.9.10 If a funding gap is still identified for the General Fund after efficiencies, Business change and commercial, then the final lever is to reduce the level of **service provision**. However, the Fair Funding settlement set out in section 4.8 negates the need for any reduced service provision in 2026/27 supported by savings already identified above. Beyond 2026/27 there is a much lower target that could be met from future fees and charges increases. This is of course dependent on any growth approved and the actual numbers once known for Fair Funding 2.0.

4.9.11 There are other financial unknowns in addition to the finance settlement as set out in this report including:

- If inflationary pressures exceed that included in the MTFS (see section 4.1 and 4.2) and significantly if higher pay awards are agreed if inflation remains above the assumptions in the MTFS
- The impact of LGR and the ability to attract and retain staff in the interim period to LGR and or if it drives higher salaries.
- Higher transition costs into LGR requiring further General Fund contributions
- The pension scheme triennial review is due for 2026/27 this could increase the cost of employer's contributions beyond that included in the MTFS (£100K).
- The General Fund recharges circa £9Million in recharges to the HRA and the HRA requires significant levels of savings per year circa £2Million and may need the General Fund to reduce support costs.
- The cost of collecting food waste is higher than the grant awarded in the finance settlement
- Savings set out above may change between now and budget setting

4.9.12 A chart of the savings options identified and included in the MTFS are summarised below (subject to Fees and Charges being agreed at the October Cabinet and General Purposes Committee).



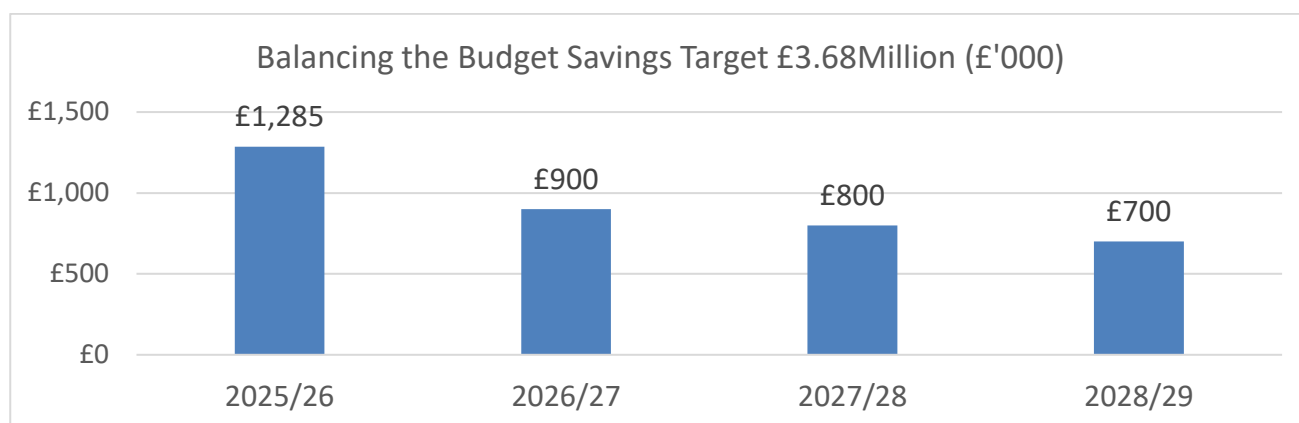
4.9.13 A further report will be presented to the November 2025 Cabinet on any other savings options that have arisen as part of the officer star chamber process together with growth proposals. This MTFS is different in tone to previous reports in that the financial position of the Council is projected to be greatly improved as a result of the Fair Funding projections. However, there is uncertainty in not knowing the actual financial benefit until mid December 2025, at which point Members may wish to consider additional capital and revenue one off growth. In particular, capital funding has been severely restricted in recent years, and the CFO recommends that:

- identify further available cash balances to supplement the 2026/27 capital programme once the funding position becomes clear
- Future savings targets are reduced

- One off revenue projects are considered in line with Council's priorities
- Consideration is given to increasing balances to ensure the financial resilience for LGR

4.10 Balancing the Budget Target

4.10.1 The General Fund MTFS has had to set an annual Balancing the Budget savings target due to the gap between funding and expenditure as set out in section 3 of this report. The target prior to any positive impact of Fair Funding was £2.4Million for the period 2026/27-2028/29 as shown below (as published in the Final General Fund and Council Tax Setting 2025/26 to the February Cabinet.



4.10.2 In setting the savings target, consideration needs to be given as to whether the target sum is achievable in any given year versus setting an amount which delivers no draw on balances. This should be done whilst at the same time, ensuring the Council is still able to deliver on its priorities and that a budget can be set with a prudent level of balances. However, the change in government funding as set out in section 4.8 considerably alters the need for significant savings as even on a prudent estimate that funding will increase a total of £3.067Million (para. 4.8.2).

4.10.3 Set out in section 4.9 are savings already identified of £1.034Million which is higher than the original 2026/27 target of £900K, (but does include fees and charges yet to be approved and estimated only at this stage). Any further Balancing the Budget savings identified for 2026/27 will further lower future saving targets. While the savings targets mean there is a contribution to balances (based on current projections), there are a number of things to consider:

1. Fair Funding may be less than that included in the MTFS
2. Windfall NNDR receipts have been used for a number of initiatives such as Regeneration including funding the Swingate equity share, Apprentice scheme and the financial resilience of the General Fund it is unlikely there will be gains for a few years due to the reset and increase in tariff. This means those type of projects will need to be funded from the General Fund resources. The CFO recommends the £150K per year required from balances 2025/26-2029/30 is included in the MTFS

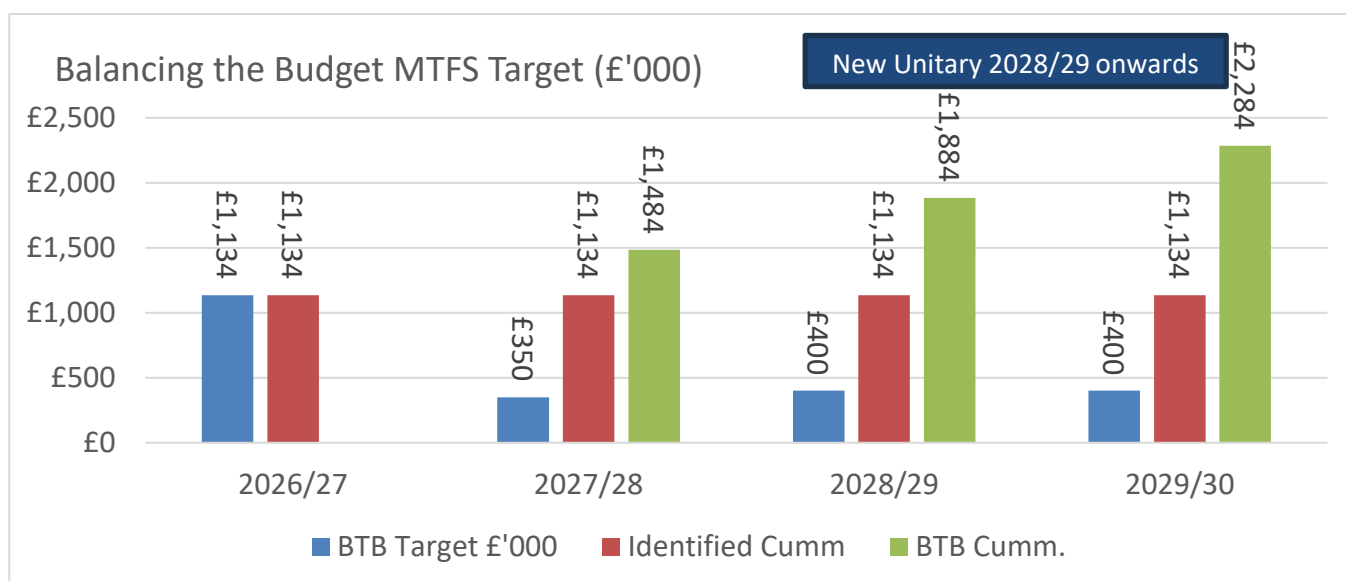
Apprentice Scheme approved 2024/25 Budget setting	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
Cost per year		£203	£255	£301	£308	£315	£1,381
Funded by:							
NNDR Reserve	£0	(£203)	(£255)	(£301)	£0	£0	(£758)
Underspend General Fund	(£150)	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	(£150)
Recommended use of budgeted General Fund reserves	£0	(£150)	(£150)	(£150)	(£23)	£0	(£473)
Total Income	(£150)	(£353)	(£405)	(£451)	(£23)	£0	(£1,381)

3. There is a need to fund the Community and Retail cost of the redevelopment at the Oval (General Fund assets) and indicative numbers (subject to the final capital bid) could require borrowing costs of £303K per annum by 2029/30. The CFO recommends the indicative borrowing costs are included in the MTFS or the identified Capital of £5.5Million set aside in full or part from any available cash balances.

Indicative costs of Oval Redevelopment for the General Fund	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Loans to support Capital	£137,500	£275,000	£275,000
Minimum revenue Provision			£137,500
Higher rental income offsetting borrowing costs Yr 1			(£108,750)
Total	£137,500	£275,000	£303,750

4. Capital funding has been severely restricted and having available reserves in the General Fund would allow some limited capital investment the CFO recommends that the capital bids are reviewed in October/November to identify schemes that could be funded from revenue if recommended and officers will consult with Members on options to be considered
5. Revenue spend has also been curtailed and consideration could be given to some spend on Council priorities and officers will consult with Members on options to be considered
6. The Council's retail and residential income strip Queensway LLP faces a challenging retail environment as set out in the part two report to this Cabinet and the CFO recommends an additional £50K per year is set aside in the Queensway earmarked reserve to support the company
7. The costs going into LGR could be higher than assumed in the MTFS at £150K per year from 2026/27 (assumed in MTFS)
8. Borrowing is required for the new Leisure Centre (report to the October 2025 Cabinet) which is reliant on the improvement in the management fee having headroom in the General Fund would ensure borrowing head room.

4.10.4 The proposed savings targets for 2026/27 onwards are set out below taking into account the need to potentially fund some of the spend set out in para. 4.10.3 with the 2026/27 surplus projected (para. 4.11.12) allowing for further one off spend on capital and revenue priorities once the provisional settlement has been received. The savings targets beyond 2027/28 will if the timetable is followed be the preserve of the new unitary Council, however officers and Members will want to ensure the new Council is financially resilient. The level of savings 2027/28 onwards equates roughly to the annual fees and charges increases.



4.10.5 The Council's Senior Leadership Team held 'Star Chamber' sessions in June 2025 and there are a number of further saving and growth items still to be finalised and these will be presented to the November 2025 Cabinet for consideration and approval. Members should note there is a growth allowance of £75K each year in the MTFS, which includes any support for the 80th Stevenage Anniversary .

4.10.6 This prudent approach to looking beyond the next year in conjunction with the BTB work streams will enable the Council to achieve a level of savings whilst continuing to deliver on priorities and potentially headroom to fund the Council's priorities such as the General Fund element of the regeneration of the Oval.

4.10.7 This level of savings target will be more achievable than in future years if annual fees and charges increases of circa £320K per year are agreed, together with the certainty of a multi- year-settlement.

4.11 General Fund Balances and Reserves in the MTFS

4.11.1 Council's General Fund reserves are classified as either general or as being held for a specific purpose. The General Fund or the Council's main reserve is designed to cushion the impact of unexpected events/emergencies and to help absorb the impact of uneven cash flows.

4.11.2 The Council's General Fund balances projected in the MTFS are summarised in the table below and include the recommended budget items:

1. Inclusion of apprentice scheme assumed funding from underspends not budgeted for (para.4.10.3 (2))
2. Inclusion of indicative General Fund Oval redevelopment borrowing costs (para 4.10.3 (3))
3. Inclusion of a further £50K per year for the Queensway LLP (para 4.10.3 (6))
4. Includes BTB savings of £1.15Million between 2027/28-2029/30.

General Fund balances	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000
Opening Balance	£6,506	£6,550	£7,300	£7,574	£7,902
In Year	£45	£750	£275	£328	(£16)
Closing Balance	£6,550	£7,300	£7,574	£7,902	£7,887

4.11.3 Guidance issued by CIPFA emphasises this requirement, particularly in light of the responsibilities placed upon the S151 Officer on an annual basis (under the Local Government Act 2003), to report on the adequacy of proposed reserves when Council sets the council tax for the forthcoming year.

4.11.4 The Act includes a reserve power for government to lay down the minimum reserves local authorities must allow for when they set their budgets. It is therefore expected, that authorities will have regard to the CIPFA guidance when considering the adequacy of balances and allocated reserves.

4.11.5 Reserves can be held for three main purposes:

- A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing;
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies; and
- A means of building up funds to meet known or predicted liabilities (this is often referred to as allocated reserves).

4.11.6 In order to assess the adequacy of unallocated general reserves when setting the budget, the CFO must take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the authority.

4.11.7 In terms of determining the level of general balances, the CFO has based her advice on consideration of the factors included in the table below which projects a £3.57Million (2025/26 £3.45Million) minimum level. This assessment is indicative at the current time and will be further reviewed as part of the budget setting process and is significantly lower than the projected level of balances in the MTFS.

General Fund balances Minimum Level Assessment	2025/26 £Million
Amount to cover a 1.5% overrun in gross expenditure	£1.02
Amount to cover a 1.5% overrun in gross income	£0.85
Amount to cover pay award above the budgeted amount	£0.80
Amount to cover higher prices with higher than forecast inflation	£0.50
Amount to cover fee and charges losses through price fluctuation	£0.30
Amount to cover risk of higher LGR transition costs	£0.10
Total Estimated General Fund Reserves	£3.57

4.12 Allocated Reserves

4.12.1 The Council's Allocated revenue reserve projections are summarised in the table below. The reserves have been categorised as being allocated for a specific use or available to support the General Fund.

Reserves £'000	Closing 2024/25	Use	Closing 2025/26	Use	Closing 2026/27
NHB reserve	(£10)	£0	(£10)	£0	(£10)
Transformation Reserve	(£773)	£9	(£764)	£0	(£764)
Homeless reserve	(£420)	£0	(£420)	£0	(£420)
Planning Delivery	(£198)	£95	(£103)	£0	(£103)
Queensway Reserve	(£215)	(£193)	(£408)	(£293)	(£701)
Regeneration Reserve	(£245)	£107	(£139)	£0	(£139)
Town Centre Reserve	(£0)	(£56)	(£56)	£0	(£56)
Town square reserve	(£1,711)	(£23)	(£1,735)	£130	(£1,605)
Insurance reserve	(£62)	£0	(£62)	£0	(£62)
ICT reserve	(£142)	£0	(£142)	£0	(£142)
Leisure Reserve	(£219)	£219	£0	£0	£0
Stevenage works	(£20)	£0	(£20)	£0	(£20)
Asylum seekers reserve	(£147)	£0	(£147)	£0	(£147)
Future Councils reserve	(£198)	£198	(£0)	£0	(£0)
Commercial Property repair reserve	(£41)	£0	(£41)	£0	(£41)
Home office funding for Refugees	(£870)	£0	(£870)	£0	(£870)
Domestic abuse reserve	(£196)	£0	(£196)	£0	(£196)
Extended Producer Pays grant	£0	(£229)	(£229)	£0	(£229)
Elections Reserve	£0	(£50)	(£50)	£50	£0
Apprentice Reserve	(£150)	(£150)	(£300)	(£150)	(£450)
Total Allocated for use	(£5,617)	(£73)	(£5,690)	(£263)	(£5,953)
Gains (NNDR)	(£4,580)	£647	(£3,933)	£540	(£3,393)
Income equalisation Reserve	(£758)	£200	(£558)	£0	(£558)
Total Available to support the GF	(£5,338)	£847	(£4,491)	£540	(£3,951)
Total allocated reserves	(£10,955)	£774	(£10,181)	£277	(£9,904)

- 4.12.2 There are balances of £3.951Million estimated at the end of 2026/27 in the NNDR business rates gains reserve, but this includes ‘unrealised’ gains and future approved commitments which is summarised below.

NNDR Gains Reserve £'000	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Opening Balance	(£4,580)	(£2,893)	(£2,354)
Return of NNDR reduced 2023/24 gains	£1,057	£0	£0
Return of NNDR reduced 2024/25 gains	£176	£184	£0
Cost of Swingate LLP Equity share loss of interest	£251	£102	£0
Graduate Scheme	£203	£255	£301
Total Commitments or use of reserves	£1,687	£540	£301
Balance before Unrealised gains	(£2,893)	(£2,354)	(£2,053)
Unrealised gains:			
Opening Balance Unrealised Gains:		(£1,040)	(£1,040)
2025/26 gains not yet realised transferred to reserve	(£1,040)		
Gains from Swingate LLP			(£1,742)
Total Unrealised Gains	(£1,040)	(£1,040)	(£2,782)
Total Reserve Balance including realised gains	(£3,933)	(£3,393)	(£4,835)

- 4.12.3 The table above identifies there is circa £2Million that could be utilised for key priorities particularly if the Council's government funding position is realised as set out in para. 4.8.2. However, Members should note that as a result of the Fair Funding changes new gains are likely not to be replicated in the medium term, (see also para 4.6.4-4.6.5).
- 4.12.4 The Council also has an income equalisation reserve with a total of £558K as at 31 March 2027, this reserve can be used if fees and charge are impacted such as recycles and parking income.
- 4.12.5 The remaining earmarked reserves are held for a number of specific reasons such as the holding costs of the regeneration sites in Town Square and to support the Council's Queensway LLP asset holding to maintain its financial resilience. The CFO will review the earmarked reserves between the MTFS and budget to determine whether all the balances are still required.

4.13 CFO commentary

- 4.13.1 The MTFS projects that 2026/27 general balances will be well above minimum levels - positively impacted by the changes to government funding and the level of balancing the budget savings identified to date. However, the General Fund and Council faces a level of financial uncertainty including for the reasons set out below:
- The consultation on Fair Funding has only just concluded and could change, the CFO has taken a prudent view to future years government support and should the position become clearer those monies will be available to fund priorities.
 - LGR means a shadow authority could be in place for 2027/28, the final LGR proposal has yet to be submitted (November 2025) and there will be a level of one off and transition cost that need to be funded. The Council's finances should remain financially resilient to absorb these up-front costs as part of the new unitary.

- There is a potential on-going risk to income streams from higher cost of living and specifically parking income may not fully recover to pre-pandemic levels. The Council holds an income equalisation reserve to neutralise this impact in medium term.
- The 2025/26 pay negotiations settled at 3.2% and a lower amount of 2.75% has been included in the MTFs for 2026/27, the impact of the living wage on the national pay scales and a higher cost of living may lead to higher pay settlements than budgeted.

4.13.2 Growth should be limited to that which is necessary to deliver the Council's top priorities based on the ability to deliver the existing Corporate Plan commitments to ensure there is sufficient monies to maintain the resilience of the new unitary authority Stevenage becomes part of. There may be some opportunity to use balances to support capital bids which have been severely curtailed due to a lack of funding and a report will be presented to a later Cabinet meeting.

4.14 Approach to Consultation

4.14.1 The Council consulted on the 2025/26 budget via an on-line form on the SBC's website the responses were a small sample of 30 so not statistically sound. The growth for apprentices was supported and the graffiti growth was only narrowly not supported.

2025/26 Budget Feedback	Yes	No
Stevenage Resident	87%	13%
Stevenage business owner	3%	97%
Agree to increase council tax by 3%	63%	37%
Pay more council tax for more services	43%	57%
Support Apprentice growth	70%	30%
Support graffiti growth	47%	53%
Support savings delivered through more digital and on-line	67%	33%
savings delivered from more commercial income	40%	60%
Only cutting services if no other options available	67%	33%

4.14.2 The consultation asked respondents to comment on future areas to invest in and the following areas were identified in a free form text box, with Council responses in *italics* to the comments.

- Improving the Town Centre and parks and open spaces- *the Council has a regeneration programme for the Town Centre and work has started on the former Swingate site in 2024. The Council is working on both a Green Spaces and Trees & Woodland strategy which will be reported to cabinet in the summer of 2025. This will outline our approach to enhance our parks and open spaces going forward. The Council will also be spending an estimated £830K on parks and open spaces in 2025/26*
- Pavements cleaning generally and landscaping and maintaining the overall appearance of the streets across the town. *—Funding from the UK Shared*

Prosperity Fund has been utilised to undertake an enhanced cleansing routine of Stevenage's neighbourhood centres and pathways over the last two years. The Council will also be spending £1.5Million in 2025/26 on street cleansing and litter picking.

- *Hedge and verge trimming to keep cycleways clear and accessible. -The council is currently delivering a 10-year programmed Shrub Bed Improvement programme to remove old, tired, or operationally constrictive shrub beds to help keep pathways and cycleways clear and accessible.*
- *Regeneration culture and leisure -The Council has jointly invested in a JV with their Development Partner Mace to build new homes in the town centre and has consulted the public on a new leisure centre.*
- *Solar panels to reduce energy costs. Improved bus service so residents are less reliant on cars.- The Council has installed solar panels on refuse freighters and new buildings such as the bus interchange.*
- *Council housing- The Council is investing £51Million into existing and new homes in 2025/26*
- *Town centre events - make the space more welcoming out of hours and provide a safer environment to encourage more evening venues- The council has invested in 'Events Island' in the Town Centre and has a programme of events throughout the year.*
- *more investment in digital logging/ online services -The Council has a digital team and Transformation Plan to improve the on-line offer.*

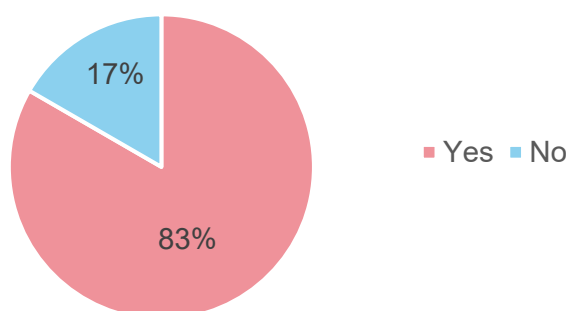
4.14.3 The consultation also asked respondents what areas the council should make savings in the future:

- *High street- The Council is working with businesses in the Indoor Market to transfer their services into the empty shopping units along the new Park Place development in the town centre. This will bring greater attention to local businesses in the council's high street. This builds on the new 'Event Island' space in the town centre, which has a busy event schedule throughout the coming year.*
- *Repairs -Members approved a further £2Million spend on council home repairs in 2025/26.*
- *Council should use the staff they currently have to tackle the graffiti problem in the town and invest in more artwork in underpasses to prevent it- The Council successfully tested an enhanced Graffiti response, utilising funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund over the last year. This growth request establishes that level of response within core budgets going forward rather than relying on time limited external funding. The Council has a programme of artwork installations in underpasses and buildings as part of the Councils Towns Fund works.*
- *Black bin collection once a month- In setting the frequency of residual waste collections, Council's need to consider a range of factors including the size of the bin, the number of occupants and storage facilities, for example, the Council wants to increase recycling rates and reduce residual waste volumes going forwards, and will be looking to improve recycling facilities in a number of locations, including flat blocks.*
- *Stop investing in car infrastructure – The Council has invested in the Stevenage cycle ways through the new Arts & Heritage trail as part of its ambitious Regeneration programme of the town centre. This reemphasises the council's commitment and investment into alternative travel options in the town.*

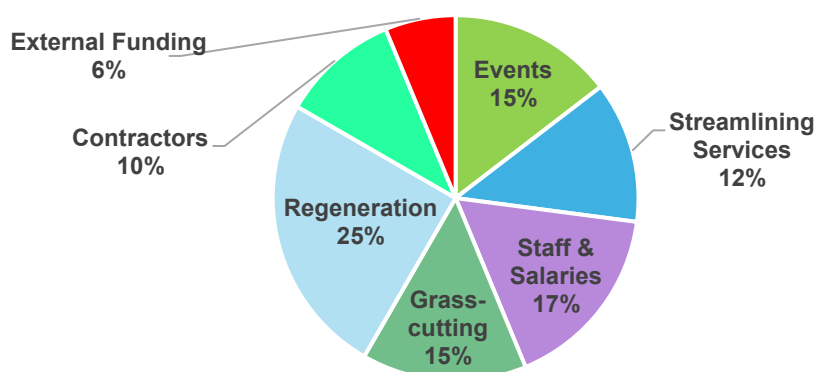
- Outdated and incompatible ICT systems *The Council along with East Herts Authority have jointly invested in the shared ICT service in 2024/25 & 2025/26 to ensure that both Councils have fit for purpose software.*
- Staffing and pensions -*staff pay is governed by the collective pay agreements as agreed with the unions.*

4.14.4 Development of the Councils 2024/25 Corporate Plan included a period of public and stakeholder engagement and consultation to include ascertaining if:

- Agree that Balancing the Budget should be a priority so that the Council can remain financially resilient and continue to deliver key services as set out in the Corporate Plan?
- If no, is the alternative is to reduce services and provide less?
- If yes, what should the Council stop doing to generate £1.23Million savings?
- 83% of respondents to the consultation agreed that Balancing the Budget should be a priority:



4.14.5 All survey respondents were asked for financial savings suggestions. The responses can be categorised into seven themes:



- The Transforming Our Town programme will attract new businesses to the area which would increase business rate revenue and car parking income (25%). – *The Council has opened a new Multi Storey car park and is working with partners to bring new business into the town, also improving the business rates collected and retained by the Council.*
- Reduce Staff and Councillor salaries (17%). – *The Council's Member allowances are reviewed and agreed by an Independent Remuneration Panel and staff pay is governed by the collective pay agreements as agreed with the unions.*

- The Council should consider selective grass-cutting allowing green spaces to grow wilder (within safe reasons) and reduce maintenance costs for grass cutting etc. (15%) – *The Council has already implemented this as a measure with an associated cost reduction.*
- Streamlining services (12%) – *The Council has a business change programme which is targeted at streamlining processes and reducing costs.*
- Reduce use of Contractors (10%) – *The Council has a Commercial and Insourcing Strategy which includes reviewing contracts to see if they can be brought back in-house where deemed viable to do so at the point of re-tendering.*
- Reducing or cancelling events such as the November Fireworks Display, or those held on the Event Island and the Stevenage Museum. (15%) – *the Council has been looking at how it manages and delivers future event activity with a view to driving out efficiencies where possible.*
- Seeking external funding to plug the financial gap (6%). *The Council has actively sought external funding and has received circa £80Million of revenue and capital funding over the last few years.*

Resident Survey (2021)

4.14.6 The 2021/22 Residents survey shows that resident's preferences with regards to achieving budget savings are firstly to reduce costs through the provision of more online services. This was ranked the highest (out of five options in 2021 and 2017) with 41%. This first rate ranking has increased from 2017 and supports the Transformation programme as a method to reduce costs and improve efficiency / productivity.

Please tell us your order of preference for each of the following options by ordering them 1 to 5	2021 rank	2017 rank	1st
Reduce time and money spent on paperwork by interacting with more residents and customers online	1	1	41%
Increase income from fees and chargeable services, to keep the council's element of Council Tax as low as possible	2	3	24%
Spend less by reducing or cutting the services that you tell us are not a priority	3	2	16%
Make money by selling more of our services to residents and customers	4	5	9%
Increase our element of Council Tax (for example from 51p per day to 55p per day)	5	4	10%

4.14.7 The 2021 residents' survey asked residents whether the council tax represented value for money. While strongly disagree has increased (from 7% to 15%), overall 52% up from 46% of residents agree it represents value for money as shown in the chart below.

	Responses	2021	2017	2015	2013	2011
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides good value for money?	Strongly agree	16%	10%	7%	6%	6%
	Tend to agree	36%	36%	39%	39%	40%
	Neither	18%	30%	30%	35%	33%
	Tend to disagree	10%	17%	18%	17%	16%
	Strongly disagree	15%	7%	6%	5%	5%

	Responses	2021	2017	2015	2013	2011
	Don't know (DNRO)	4%				
	Summary: Agree	52%	46%	46%	45%	46%
	Summary: Disagree	26%	24%	24%	22%	21%

4.14.8 The Council has commissioned a new Residents survey in 2025/26 the results of which will be shared with Members in due course.

4.14.9 The CFO has responded to the Fair Funding Consultation broadly supporting the proposals and a number of further questions were asked with the response shown below.

Question	Consultation Response
Do you agree with the government's plans to simplify the grant landscape?	SBC agrees as it will reduce the effort of grant chasing and allows LA's to use the funding most appropriately at a local level. There is some concern about combining upper and lower tier grants such as the DHP which is used to support those stay in their accommodation and this grant is being combined with an upper tier grant so concern over its distribution methodology going forward
What measures could the government use to incentivise local authorities to specifically support affordable and sub-market housing?:	<p>Lower borrowing for HRA's who now have significantly higher borrowing costs even with the enhanced rates. When the self financing deal was done SBC's average borrowing rate was 3.42% borrowing and as at August 25 year money is 5.79% (including the preferential rate -0.6%) which is a significant burden for HRA's So for HRA and regeneration projects including residential, lower borrowing rates are required.</p> <p>The Council has benefited from Homes England funding for 2 schemes in Stevenage Brent Court and Oval and more of that would be welcome</p> <p>Writing off of some self financing debt would allow affordable headroom to build, to date SBC has built over 500 homes but could do with less historic debt</p> <p>lower borrowing rates as the increased cost of building safety is reducing the ability to build more homes through borrowing combined with higher interest rates</p>
Are there any further flexibilities that you think could support local decision-making during the transitional period?	<p>Council's really need early certainty we are all interpreting the data and models produce different answers which means knowing in December is too late for setting a balanced budget for the next year.</p> <p>In addition the 3 year period crosses LGR year 1 timetable and under current funding splitting the Counties funding between different options is difficult and may lead to different outcomes based on current funding assumptions. This because it is difficult to interpret and model and different sector consultants have different funding outcomes and then translating that to different unitary LA's overlays another complexity</p>

Question	Consultation Response
Do you agree that the government should work to reduce unnecessary or disproportionate burden created by statutory duties?	The current format of the Statement of Accounts it provides zero transparency to residents and it costs the taxpayer circa £250K per year that's the equivalent of over 3% on council tax. The simplification has been promised and hasn't happened, in addition Councils have to get valuers to value assets like swimming pools and offices that are held for operational use and then the value is disputed by external audit valuers and then the annual audit bill is increased

4.15 Decision Making Process

4.15.1 It is currently planned that the following approval process will be followed:

Date	Meeting	Report
Oct-25	Cabinet	2026/27 Fees and Charges
	Overview and Scrutiny	2026/27 Fees and Charges
Nov-25	Cabinet	Balancing the Budget Report with the savings proposals for the General Fund and HRA
	Overview and Scrutiny	Balancing the Budget Report with the savings proposals for the General Fund and HRA
Dec-25	Cabinet	Draft 2026/27 HRA budget and rent setting report
	Overview and Scrutiny	Draft 2026/27 HRA budget and rent setting report
Jan-26	Cabinet	Final 2026/27 HRA budget and rent setting report Draft 2026/27 General Fund budget, Council Tax and Council Tax Support
	Overview and Scrutiny	Draft 2026/27 General Fund budget, Council Tax and Council Tax Support
	Council	Final 2026/27 HRA budget and rent setting report
Feb-26	Cabinet	Final 2026/27 General Fund budget, Council Tax and Council Tax Support
	Overview and Scrutiny	Final 2026/27 General Fund budget, Council Tax and Council Tax Support
	Council	Final 2026/27 General Fund budget, Council Tax and Council Tax Support

4.15.2 Following the approval of the proposed options for 2026/27, the Council will have an obligation to begin consultation with staff and partners.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

5.1.1 The CFO view is set out within this report. The impact of LGR has had a positive impact on the Council's finances with a contribution to balances in the medium term.

5.2. Legal Implications

5.2.1 The objective of this report is to outline a MTFS and forecast for the next five years. There are no legal implications at this stage of the planning cycle, however, Members are reminded of their duty to set a balanced budget.

5.2.2 Balancing the Budget savings options considered will have due regard to any consultation carried out, if consultation is required.

5.3. Risk Implications

5.3.1 A review of the risks facing the General Fund budgets has been listed in the table below, not all the impacts are known at the present time. The current MTFS projections are based on prudent assumptions and include the CFO's best assessment of the financial risks. However, if any of these risks become a reality then the MTFS will need to be updated once the actual impacts are known.

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
Anticipated savings options not achieved (Negative Risk) –agreed options do not deliver expected level of savings either on a one-off basis or On-going.	Regular monitoring and reporting takes place, but the size of the net budget reductions increases the risk into the future. Non achievement of options would require other options to be brought forward. General Fund reserves should be held to ensure that decisions to reduce net costs are taken in a considered manner. This may become more of a risk as options around commercialisation are explored.	Medium	Medium
Council Tax Support (CTS) (Negative Risk) – increased demand is under- estimated.	An increase in demand would impact on future years as the deficit in the collection fund would need to be repaid by the General Fund. However, the modelling in the MTFS leaves the higher level of CTS caseload	Medium	Medium
Council Tax collection rates remain lower and the taxbase is reduced	The trend has been towards lower collection rates and this could mean the amount included in the taxbase will need to increase for bad debt. The CFO is tracking trends across other Herts Councils	High	Medium

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
	and looking at measures to reduce arrears		
Localisation of Business Rates (Potential Negative) – A major employer leaves the town and impacts the business rate yield due to the Council	Negative: The safety net means a maximum loss in year of £160K which the council has included in core resources.	Medium	Medium
Loss of Business Rates due to Companies going into administration	As above.	Medium	Medium
The NDR Check Challenge Appeal process impacts on the Council's baseline assessment and increases the level of successful appeals and reduces the yield (Negative risk)	Officers will be monitoring changes to the NDR system and will be talking to the Valuation office. However, since the system has been introduced. There are still appeals outstanding on the 2017 list and the revaluation for 2023 has seen an increase in business rates which inevitably will lead to an increase in appeals for the new list.	Medium	Medium
Recession risk due to high inflation	General balances are risk assessed to ensure overall levels are maintained that meet an in-year short fall in income and higher costs. In addition the Council has an income equalisation reserve to mitigate against fluctuating income levels.	Medium	High
Impact of Future Welfare Reforms (Negative Risk) – There could be an increase in the need for the council's services requiring additional resources to be put into those services	Regular monitoring and reporting and the council has a welfare reform group which monitors impacts.	Medium	Medium
All MTFS risks not adequately identified (Negative or Positive Risk) – Financial risks and their timing are not accurately judged leading to either a pressure or benefit to the MTFS.	Council's risk management framework ensures operational and strategic risks are identified as part of the annual service and MTFS planning process.	Low	High

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
Impact of future years capital programme (Negative) There could be increased pressure from the capital programme on the General Fund.	There is a robust challenge process for capital bids. Officers will be required to confirm that resources are in place to deliver any approved spend. With the new funding arrangements from 2026/27 there may be an opportunity to increase revenue funding to capital.	Medium	High
The Council's regeneration of SG1 increases the financial resources the Council must find.	The Council has already approved the use of ring fenced NDR gains for this purpose and the MTFS recommends this continues. The Council has identified NDR reserves to support the holding costs associated with the Swingate site in conjunction with Mace.	High	High
Fees and Charges target may not be reached (negative risk)	Non achievement of the target may require other options to be brought forward, for future years. But the Council has an income equalisation reserve to meet in year losses and an assumption is also contained within the minimum level of balances to meet an in year loss.	High	High
Homeless Bed and Breakfast costs increase	A budget of £80K budget is included within the General Fund for this.	Medium	Medium

5.4. Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.4.1 The Council has committed itself to providing high quality services that are relevant to the needs and responsive to the views of all sections of the local community, irrespective of their race, gender, disability, culture, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status. The General Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the exercise of its functions. The Equality Duty and the impact of decisions on people with protected characteristics must be considered by decision makers before making relevant decisions, including budget savings.
- 5.4.2 The process used to develop the Council's budget has been designed to ensure appropriate measures are in place to ensure the impact of decisions on the community is considered as part of the decision making process. It is officers' view that undertaking an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIAs) on the strategy is not appropriate at this stage. EqIAs will be done on individual savings proposals (when relevant) at an early stage in

the budget savings process to aid decision makers in their consideration of the Equality Duty. This work is being planned into the budget setting process.

5.5. Policy Implications

- 5.5.1 The approval of the revised budget framework includes a link for the Council's service planning requirements to ensure service priorities are identified. In addition, the budget framework represents a development of a policy led budgeting approach across Council services and the overall Financial Strategy.

5.6 Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.6.1 There are no staffing implications in this report, other than the localities review set out in para. 4.9.5.

5.7 Climate Change Implications

- 5.7.1 The Budget and Policy setting process has prioritised growth for climate change as part of the 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 budget setting process. However, there will be a need to provide more resource than is currently included in the budget to meet the 2030 deadline. The 2025/26 process should have due regard for climate change implications based on the Council's approved Climate Change Strategy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 – 2024 September MTFS Strategy

APPENDICES

Appendix A MTFS