

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 17 September 2025

Time: 3.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Jackie Hollywell, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller

Start / End Time: Start Time: 3.00pm
End Time: 4.00pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Coleen De Freitas, Tom Plater and Nigel Williams.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - CABINET 9 JULY 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 July 2025 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

3 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

Cabinet received a summary of the most recent meetings of the Environment and Economy Select, Community Select and Overview and Scrutiny Committees including:

Environment and Economy Select Committee – receipt of the formal Cabinet response from the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Skills into the local skills agenda; the Committee's work programme items for the year and the draft scoping document for the upcoming review into Waste and Recycling in flat blocks.

Community Select Committee – confirmation of the work programme which included the new Housing Allocations Policy, Tenant Enforcement and Tenancy Audits, an update on Housing Damp and Mould, completion of the Equalities and Diversity review, a focus on Older People, an update on Community Centres, a session on Public Health and the Statutory item on Crime and Disorder.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny of the Cabinet's decisions including Housing Health and Safety Requirements, Corporate Performance and Flat Block Recycling Improvements.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committee meetings be noted.

4 **GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2025/26 - 2029/30)**

Cabinet received a report updating Members on the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which provided a comprehensive overview of the financial landscape and strategic planning for the Council.

The report highlighted the significant changes and challenges faced by the Council, including the impacts of Local Government Reform (LGR) and the upcoming Fair Funding reforms. Members were pleased to note that the changes were projected to improve the Council's funding position, allowing for better financial resilience.

Officers advised that although the provisional settlement would not be known until mid-December, when the Fair Funding reforms took effect, there would be the opportunity to include some one off revenue or capital growth once known, and future years savings targets were now projected to be much lower than in recent years.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the MTFS principles, as outlined in paragraph 3.10 be re-approved.
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.
3. That the updated inflation assumptions used in the MTFS as set out in section 4.1 of the report be approved.
4. That the impact of Fair Funding grant funding as set out in the report be noted, noting this could be subject to change following consultation feedback.
5. That the approach to the 'Balancing the Budget' options as set out in section 4.10 be approved.
6. That the Balancing the Budget options identified of £776K be noted (excluding the Fees and Charges estimates including taxi licence fees) to be presented to the October 2025 Cabinet and General Purposes Committee.
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.
8. That the indicative General Fund borrowing costs for the Oval as set out in of the paragraph 4.10.3 (3) be approved and included in the MTFS.
9. That 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)) be approved.
10. That the set aside of £150K per year to support the Council's apprentice programme as set out in paragraph 4.10.3 (2) be approved.
11. That the General Fund growth allowance of £75K be noted and approved for the use of the Council's FTFC priorities.
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.
13. The MTFS be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect any material financial

pressures, so forecasts are updated and re-presented to the Cabinet for approval.

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.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

5 **FIRST QUARTER REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2025/26 - GENERAL FUND AND HRA**

Cabinet received a report updating Members on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2025/26 net expenditure and seeking approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.

Members noted that there was a projected net underspend of £548,850 in the General Fund, driven by increased investment income, off-street parking revenue, and transformation savings. It was noted that both the General Fund and HRA balances remained above minimum thresholds, ensuring financial resilience. Members were pleased to note that the Council was broadly on track to deliver its planned savings.

It was **RESOLVED:**

General Fund

1. That the 2025/26 first quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £548,850 be approved.
2. That the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.2.1 be noted.

Housing Revenue Account

3. That the 2025/26 first quarter net decrease in HRA expenditure of £35,540 be approved.

Capital Programme

4. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £9 Million from 2025/26 to future years be approved.
5. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £9 Million from 2025/26 to future years be approved.
6. That net changes to budgets fully grant funded of (£5K) in paragraph 4.9.2 be noted.

7. That General Fund and HRA virements in section 4.10 be approved.
8. That the proposed changes to the funding of the General Fund and HRA capital budgets in section 4.11 be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

6 **ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2024/25 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**

Cabinet considered the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2024/25. Members were advised that the Council had successfully delivered its treasury management responsibilities for 2024/25, operating within all approved prudential indicators and maintaining compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Members were also advised that all treasury activities had been conducted in line with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy, with no breaches of authorised borrowing limits. Looking ahead, it was noted that the Council remained well-positioned to manage interest rate risks and support its capital and revenue plans sustainably.

It was noted that the report had been approved by the Audit Committee with no further comments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

7 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER ONE 2025/26**

Cabinet received a report highlighting the Council's performance across key priorities and projects for Quarter 1 2025/26 and providing an update on progress against current strategic risks.

Members were advised that where there were concerns about performance, the report explained the challenges faced and the mitigations that were being applied including specific attention and management by officers and the relevant portfolio Holder going forward.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation including updates in relation to delivery against Corporate Plan Priorities and the key themes emerging from the Quarter 1 performance data including highlights from:

- More Social, Affordable Good Quality Homes;
- Transforming Our Town;
- Warm Home delivery;
- Beryl bikes scheme;

- Rent collection targets;
- Customer Service Satisfaction targets.

Members were advised that the one red measure related to repairs fixed first time. The Chief Executive advised that the Repairs service had been identified as a challenging service area, and improvements plans were in place. A new management team had been appointed, support contractors have been procured, policies had been updated, and processes had been reviewed to improve the customer experience and the efficiency of the service.

Members made the following comments:

- Thanks were given to all officers who had contributed to the much improved performance ratings;
- The improvement in the performance of the Repairs Team was welcomed although it was acknowledged there were still work to be done and the Portfolio Holder for Housing gave reassurances to members and residents that measures had been put in place to address the issues and that this was a top priority for the Council;
- Members were pleased to hear of the improved performance for both the Planning Service and the Customer Service Centre;
- Tribute was paid to the former Portfolio Holder responsible for Culture, Leisure and Arts, Councillor Rossati, for the work on the Arts and Heritage Trail;
- Members noted the positive figures included in the Tenant Satisfaction measures and paid tribute to those officers and councillors responsible for them.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the service performance against 53 corporate performance measures and progress of key projects in Quarter 1 2025/26 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.
2. That the issues with the Repairs fixed first time measure are noted (section 4.3.2).
3. That the work to create a new suite of Damp & Mould measures to support the introduction of AWAAB's law be noted (section 4.3.6).
4. That the Regulator of Social Housing Provider Improvement Plan (PIP) be noted (section 4.4.5).
5. That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.
6. That the revised Risk Management Policy (Appendix D), with formal approval to be given by the Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder following consideration of any further comments from Cabinet, be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

8 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1976 –
REVOCATION OF TAXI RANK, DANESTRETE, STEVENAGE.**

Cabinet received a report requesting consideration of proposals to revoke the taxi rank on Danestrete, Stevenage, to facilitate the safe continuation of the SG1 regeneration scheme (Plot A) by repositioning the existing hoarding line to the kerb edge, thus allowing necessary scaffolding access and additional working space. The proposal would also ensure the safety of pedestrians and maintain access in and around Westgate by installing a temporary walkway.

In response to a question, Officers advised they would keep Members updated on the safety measures being put in place to protect pedestrians while the works were underway.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the revocation of the adopted taxi rank in Danestrete, Stevenage be approved.
2. That it be noted that officers are looking at the potential for relocating the aforementioned taxi rank to another site within the Town Centre.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

9 **GRENFELL INQUIRY PHASE 2 UPDATE REPORT**

Cabinet received a report providing an update to Cabinet on the Council's response to the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire. The public inquiry concluded in September 2024 with the publication of the phase 2 report which provided a summary of the key updates following the Inquiry. The report presented 58 recommendations aimed at improving fire safety, emergency preparedness, and accountability across multiple sectors, including local authorities and social housing providers.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the Council was doing all it could to keep residents safe, to make sure lessons were learned and that safety was always paramount. The Council had been actively working with the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum and other local authorities to implement the ten new emergency planning recommendations.

It is **REVOLVED:**

1. That the action being taken by the Council to strengthen its resilience position, including working in partnership with other Hertfordshire Local Authorities and other Category One Responders to ensure that emergency and business continuity plans across the county are current and robust be acknowledged.

2. That a comprehensive review of reception centres and support for individuals that may be impacted by local incidents be approved. This review will incorporate the introduction of digital processes to improve information capture and situational awareness and will explore ways to strengthen regional coordination during emergencies.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

10 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part I Business.

At this juncture, the Leader, Councillor Richard Henry, spoke of former Councillor Anne Wells' decision to stand down from the Council due to ill health reasons. Councillor Henry thanked Anne for all her work on behalf of the residents of Stevenage and in particular the Roebuck Ward and wished Anne well for the future.

The Leader then referred to Councillor Mason Humberstone's decision to leave the Labour Group and join another political party.

11 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

12 **PART II MINUTES - CABINET - 9 JULY 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the Cabinet held on 9 July 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 **APPROVAL OF CONTRACT AWARD TO DELIVER WARM HOMES: SOCIAL HOUSING FUND WAVE 3 WORKS.**

Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of approval for the award of a contract for the completion of energy efficiency and decarbonisation works to the Council's housing stock associated with a successful bid for Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 (previously known as SHDF Wave 3), a £1.29 billion Government fund to deliver warm, energy efficient homes, reducing carbon emissions and tackling fuel poverty.

In response to Members' requests, Officers agreed they would ensure as much publicity as possible as this was a good news story benefitting many tenants across the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

14 **WRITE OFFS OVER £10K**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of Write Offs over £10k.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report

Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

15 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR