

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 8 October 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Coleen De Freitas, Jackie Hollywell, Tom Plater, Loraine Rossati, Simon Speller and Nigel Williams

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 3.30pm

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

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - CABINET 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 September 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 issues covered at the most recent meetings of the Environment and Economy Select and Community Select including:

Environment and Economy Select Committee had considered recycling in flat blocks; the promotion of recycling champions and working with young residents; and consideration of the use of CCTV at Bring Bank sites to deter fly tipping;

The Community Select Committee had received a presentation on the Council's response to cases of damp and mould in the light of the implementation of Awaab's Law from 27 October 2025.

Members thanked the Members of the Scrutiny Committees for their work and welcomed the scrutiny undertaken on these matters and looked forward to working with them and receiving the outcomes of the reviews undertaken.

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

4 **FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7**

Cabinet received a report seeking approval for the proposed Fees and Charges for the financial year 2026/27, covering both the General Fund (GF) (some commencing

in January 2026) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance advised that the Council's 2026/27 Fees and Charges proposals formed a key part of the financial strategy to address ongoing budget pressures and supported the sustainability of vital services for the community.

It was noted that the proposals were aligned with the Council's 'Balancing the Budget' priority. The charges were also informed by inflationary pressures, service cost recovery, and benchmarking, and were reviewed by the cross-party Council's Financial Security Group (CFSG), with the majority of proposals receiving unanimous support.

Members were advised that the proposed changes were expected to generate an additional £314k for the HRA.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the General Fund (GF), as shown at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That Fees and Charges 2026/27 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as shown at Appendix B to the report, be approved.
3. That 2026/27 Retail Outdoor Seating fees as shown at Appendix C to the report, be approved.
4. That 2026/27 Fast track/Accelerated Planning fees (pilot) as shown at Appendix D to the report, be approved.
5. That the Strategic Director & S151 Officer be given delegated authority to approve any final changes required to the Fees and Charges, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

5 **FEES AND CHARGES 2026/27 - TAXI TARIFFS**

Cabinet received a report considering the Council's proposal to increase the fees and charges relating to taxi and private hire licensing. The aim of the increase was to ensure that the fee structure remained fair, transparent, and proportionate to the actual cost of administering the service.

Members were advised that the findings of an assessment undertaken indicated that the existing fee structure fell short of fully recovering the costs of delivering the service. To address this, the proposed revised fees reflected material costs and officer time with the intention of ensuring sustainable service delivery from 1 January 2026.

The Portfolio Holder advised that in support of the Council's environmental objectives, it was also proposed that a subsidised licence fee be introduced for electric and hybrid vehicles, encouraging the transition to cleaner fuel alternatives.

It was noted that public consultation with the sector and taxi drivers had been undertaken and following analysis of the feedback received, it was recommended that the revised fees and charges be implemented through a phased approach over a two-year period.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the proposed fee increase with a phased implementation, whereby 50% of the proposed increase is applied in 2026/27, with the full increase coming into effect in 2027/28 plus any inflation related increase part of normal 2027/28 fees and charges review be approved.
2. That the advice of the Council's Climate Action Team be supported and a reduced fee structure to incentivise the use of environmentally sustainable vehicles be approved.
3. That it be noted that the discounted licensing structure will remain in place until the end of 2030 to align with the Council's target to achieve zero emissions by 2030 and National policy commitments, including the planned phased out of new petrol and diesel vehicle sales by 2030.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

6 **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2025**

Cabinet received the Climate Change 2025 update report outlining the Council's progress in implementing Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy setting out the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in. Key initiatives included:

- Retrofitting homes to improve energy efficiency.
- Decarbonising the Council's vehicle fleet.
- Launching a Green Business Grant to support sustainable practices.
- Enhancing biodiversity through tree planting schemes.
- Engaging communities via the Climate Change Community Fund.

The report also highlighted action being taken by the Council at county level through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) and the work being undertaken at neighbourhood and individual level to drive behavioural change across the town.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to report that in order to improve the accuracy and consistency of future emissions tracking, the Council was developing a new greenhouse gas baseline and a transparent reporting framework. It was noted that while Stevenage continued to make progress towards the national net zero target, achieving this by 2030 would require ongoing legislative and financial support from central Government.

Cabinet paid tribute to those Officers and Members who had worked to ensure

Stevenage was in the forefront of the Climate Change agenda. Members were pleased to note that all new developments in the town were taking on the best environmental standards in Climate Change quality assurance guarantees.

Members were keen to ensure that all Councillors used their Climate Change Community Fund for opportunities in their wards to fund schemes to improve the environment in their areas.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the progress made in delivering the 2020 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy over the past year across the eight strategic areas be noted. Of particular note is Stevenage's lowest historical GHG emissions in 2023, delivering a 7.2% decrease from 2022 levels, and 22.6% lower than in the baseline year (2018) resulting in Stevenage's per capita emissions in 2023 being lower than county, regional, and national averages.
2. That work to secure ongoing external funding, partnerships, and income-generating opportunities be endorsed, particularly in terms of renewable energy generation, to support delivery of the 2030 net-zero target and build long-term resilience.
3. That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change to review and update the Strategy over the coming year as required, to ensure it continues to align with the Council's corporate priorities.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

7 **RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY 2025/27**

Cabinet were presented with the updated Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy for 2025–2027, which set out the Council's approach to rent and service charge setting across its housing stock.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the policy reflected recent legislative updates and changes to the Rent Standard, and introduced rent flexibility.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That a new Rent Setting and Service Charge Policy 2025-2027 (Appendix A).
2. That the relevant Strategic Director, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor updates and changes to this policy arising from new legislation.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

8 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part I business.

9 **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.

10 **PART II MINUTES - CABINET 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the Cabinet held on 17 September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 **ESTATES COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of a commercial opportunity.

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.

12 **SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE**

Cabinet received a Part II report outlining the progress towards delivering the Council's new Stevenage Sports and Leisure Centre.

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.

13 **REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Executive considered a Part II report giving a programme wide update across the Government's Towns Fund programme being delivered by Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Development Board partners.

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 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES AND
SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

Cabinet received an update on the Council's subsidiary companies and those the Council has an interest in. The report set out the current financial position for each company, identifying any financial and operational risks and any mitigation measures that were being or needed to be implemented.

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 **LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE DELIVERY AND DISPOSAL**

Cabinet received a report seeking to update Members on progress across the existing Land and Development programme, including updates on key sites and new opportunities.

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.

16 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR