

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 14 October 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Philip Bibby, Stephen Booth, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Peter Clark, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Ellie Plater and Ceara Roopchand

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.25pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received Councillors Sandra Barr and Peter Clark.

Councillor Roopchand declared a personal interest in Item 11 – Estates Commercial Opportunity as she had a relative working for the Company detailed in the report.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Part I Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the inclusion of Councillor Peter Clark in the list of apologies.

3 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7

The Assistant Director Finance gave an update on 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).

Members were 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. The charges were 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.

A Member expressed concern that although fees and charges had increased generally just above 3%, the first hour for car park charges had increased by 20% from £1 to £1.20.

Officers advised that there was a wide differential between car parking prices across the Town and would collate comparative figures across these car parks and also

those in neighbouring authorities. It was suggested that if the Member's concerns still persisted once the detailed costings had been shared, the option of bringing forward an alternative budget proposal relating to car parking charges was available to Members during the upcoming budget process.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

4 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - FEES AND CHARGES 2026/7 - TAXI TARIFFS**

The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing Manager presented the Cabinet's decision 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.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

5 **PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE 2025**

The Head of Climate Action gave an update on the report submitted to Cabinet which set out the annual summary of actions taken, and progress made, on the eight strategic themes set out in Stevenage's 2020 Climate Change Strategy. 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.

It was noted that Cabinet had paid tribute to those Officers and Members who had worked to ensure Stevenage was in the forefront of the Climate Change agenda and Members had been pleased to note that all new developments in the town were taking on the best environmental standards in Climate Change quality assurance guarantees.

It was reported that Cabinet 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.

A question was raised in relation to recycling rates and the reasons why Stevenage performance appeared lower than neighbouring authorities. Members were advised that multiple factors were being considered by the Council to increase these rates. These factors included significant work by Officers and also the Environment and

Economy Scrutiny Committee who were currently carrying out a review to introduce improvements to the recycling facilities in flat blocks which should increase recycling rates significantly.

In response to a question regarding the levels of residual waste and non-recyclable items and packaging in Stevenage, officers agreed to ask the Assistant Director, Stevenage Direct Services, to look into this matter but it was agreed that although the Council could not directly influence what people should buy, they could encourage the proper disposal of waste and help make residents aware of purchases that are recyclable

Officers agreed to respond in writing regarding a question from a Member about how the tree canopy cover was measured.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

6 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGE POLICY 2025/27

The Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhoods provided an update to the Committee on 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.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that the National Formula Rent calculation took into account national average rent, the property's relative value, and the number of bedrooms and that the calculation increased annually in line with inflation.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

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

There was none.

8 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

There were no Part II Minutes.

11 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - ESTATES COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Strategic Director (CF) informed the Committee of a commercial proposition and responded to a number of questions from members relating to this.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

12 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE**

The Assistant Director, Regeneration informed the Committee of the current position in relation to the Sports and Leisure Centre and responded to a number of questions from Members.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

13 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Regeneration gave an update to the Committee on the current position with the Regeneration Programme.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

14 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES AND SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES**

The Strategic Director (CF) presented to the Committee a report 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. Members asked and Officers responded to a number of questions on the report.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

15 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET - LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE DELIVERY AND DISPOSAL**

The Chief Officer, Land and Development updated Members on progress across the existing Land and Development programme, including updates on key sites and new

opportunities.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

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

There were no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

17 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR