

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 18 November 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

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

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 3.10pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Rob Broom and Tom Plater.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE - SUBMISSION OF FINAL PROPOSAL

Cabinet received a report requesting approval of the Council's proposed response to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution's formal invitation to develop proposals for a single tier of local government in Hertfordshire.

The report had been presented to Full Council and an indicative vote taken as to which option was preferred

The Leader of the Council thanked Cabinet colleagues for their continued support and engagement on Local Government Reorganisation and Members of all political parties who had engaged so constructively on this vital topic. The Leader also thanked the officer team who had been tireless in their work on LGR, in developing the options, working with the community to listen to their views, keeping Members involved and engaging Council teams positively.

In relation to Devolution, The Leader advised that he had supported the proposal to request a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Hertfordshire which would help secure funding for many more council homes, to continue regeneration, to create jobs for local people and to improve the local area.

The Leader stated that he would be supporting the 4 Unitary Model (4UM) option based on a number of factors including the clear messages that had come through from local people preferring councils that were close to their communities and wanting value for money and well managed services.

Tom Pike, Chief Executive, gave an overview of the reports and proposals and a summary of the debate and outcome of the Council meeting held on 17 November. He advised that the 4 unitary model had been supported by 21 Members at the meeting with 1 supporting the 2 unitary model and 4 abstentions.

Clare Fletcher, Strategic Director and Victoria Wilders Monitoring Officer and Borough Solicitor gave a summary of the financial and legal implications of the report. The Monitoring Officer also informed the meeting that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has agreed to disapply call in in relation to Cabinet's decision today in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules under the Constitution.

The decision to disapply the call-in would be reported to the next available meeting of the Council.

Members made a number of comments on the report in support of the 4 unitary model including:

- The 4 unitary model was closest to communities and the smaller distances provided efficiencies, better connection and service delivery options in the future;
- As well as the huge amount of investment in Stevenage, merging with North Herts and Welwyn Hatfield brought the University of Hertfordshire as well as extensive construction bringing homes and jobs into the combined authority;
- A 4 unitary model would enable social care, education and housing to be brought together supporting young people, vulnerable families and looked after children
- Residents had made it clear to Members that they wanted Councils to be close and not remote;
- In the Central Authority within the 4 unitary model, Stevenage would sit at the heart of a corridor of towns that shared daily connections for work, study and services.
- Unitary Councils would stop the confusion for residents in relation to which Councils were responsible for particular services;
- The 4 unitary model was the option which would ensure the public would remain protected, recognised and listened to;
- The 4 unitary model had been supported in indicative meetings of councils across Hertfordshire.

In relation to the Equalities Impact Assessment that had been undertaken, the Chief Executive advised that the Assessment had considered how the Council could support the needs of the different individuals and groups within the community. This would take account of digital exclusion, the loss of local engagement within communities and within particular groups with potential disruption of support networks.

In relation to employees, the assessment addressed the potential of barriers to progression for staff who were from under represented backgrounds.

The Chief Executive advised that the Assessment would be kept as a live document

bearing in mind that the Secretary of State had not chosen an outcome and that this would not be known for some time

Following debate, each Member of the Cabinet was asked to indicate their preferred option and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. The indicative resolution of Full Council be noted.
2. That the preferred Option C be approved to submit the proposal and identify the modified four unitary option (4UA modified) as preferred and request that the SoS formally modify the proposal by boundary changes as set out in the proposal.
3. That the report be endorsed and that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, having consulted with the Leader of the Council, to work with Hertfordshire County Council and District and Borough Councils to finalise and submit Hertfordshire's proposals for Local Government Reorganisation to Government by 28 November 2025.

3 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

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.

TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

It was reported that The Leader had consented to the report being dealt with as a matter of urgency for the reasons set out in the report.

It was also confirmed that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed to disapply call in in relation to the Cabinet's decision in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules under the Constitution on the basis that the decision was reasonable in all the circumstances and should be treated as urgent

The Cabinet then received an update on Town Centre Development Finance.

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

CHAIR