

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Nazmin Chowdhury, (Mayor), Lloyd Briscoe (Deputy Mayor), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Philip Bibby, Stephen Booth, , Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Kamal Choudhury, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Dermot Kehoe, Andy McGuinness, Claire Parris, Tom Plater, Loraine Rossati, Simon Speller, Jeannette Thomas, Carolina Veres, Peter Wilkins and Nigel Williams

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

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

Apologies were received from Councillors Sandra Barr, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Rob Henry, Mason Humberstone, Lin Martin-Haugh, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker, Ellie Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Jade Woods and Tom Wren.

The Mayor advised that many of the Members who had given apologies had contributed to committee discussions, briefings and community meetings on Local Government Reorganisation and she thanked them for their contributions so far, and noted the exceptional circumstances of this meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN HERTFORDSHIRE - SUBMISSION OF FINAL PROPOSAL**

The Council considered a report in respect of Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire – Submission of Final Proposal.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the item which included:

- Reminder of the Government's Criteria;
- The vision for Hertfordshire;
- How all Authorities had worked together in Hertfordshire;
- The Unitary model options being considered and how those options had been identified;
- Hertfordshire's devolution ambitions; and
- The Government's timeline and decision making process.

Councillor Richard Henry, Leader of the Council moved the report and outlined his support for the 4 Unitary Model. He thanked Members and Officers for their support and spoke of the enormous amount of work that had been undertaken on this issue both cross boundary and cross political parties for the benefit of communities across Hertfordshire.

The Leader spoke of his commitment to investing in councils that were rooted in communities and with the ability to adapt to local needs and also to ensure the continuation of the Council's ambitious plans being at the forefront now and in the future. Councillor Henry advised that he had met with local partners, businesses and communities to hear their views during a number of different local engagement events across Hertfordshire.

In relation to devolution, the Leader expressed his support for powers moving from Westminster to local areas with a Strategic Mayor for Hertfordshire who could help to secure funding to continue regeneration plans, the creation of jobs for local people and improvements to the local area.

In seconding the report, Councillor Jeannette Thomas, Deputy Leader of the Council stated her support for the 4 unitary model as she believed that it was the closest way of working with the local community.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stephen Booth, advised that the options did not take into account the geography of the areas and would not enhance local accountability.

A number of Councillors spoke of their support for the 4 unitary model and raised the following points:

- The 4 unitary model was closest to communities with the smallest number in terms of population sizes of the new authorities;
- Smaller distances provided efficiencies, better connection and service delivery options in the future;
- The 4 unitary model was closer to neighbourhoods and the ability to manage services at the local level;
- Residents had made it clear 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.
- Regeneration and economic growth could continue but still be rooted in local knowledge;
- Smaller locally focussed councils would be able to join up services which mattered most to families;
- Unitary Councils would stop the confusion for residents in relation to which Councils were responsible for particular services;
- The 4 unitary model had been supported in indicative meetings of councils across Hertfordshire.

Opposition Members advised that they would be voting to abstain and referenced

the following points:

- The options did not take into account the geography of the areas;
- No options would enhance local accountability in the way that the current model did;
- the 4 unitary model had political footprints linked with it and the option least economically viable;
- Local Government Reorganisation would not deliver better outcomes for residents.
- The work of the Leader and other Members as well as officers in working through what had been a difficult process was acknowledged.

Councillor Bibby advised that he would be supporting the 2 unitary model as he believed that residents were not concerned with who delivered their services and that this model was the most advantageous economically.

At the end of the debate, in accordance with the Constitution, 10 Members indicated their support for a recorded vote* to be taken on the item and it was **RESOLVED** that the proposal be submitted and that the modified four unitary option (4UA modified) be indicated as preferred and that the Secretary of State be formally requested to modify the proposal by boundary changes as set out in the proposal.

*Recorded Vote

2 Unitary Model – Councillor Phil Bibby – 1

3 Unitary Model – 0 votes

4 Unitary Model – Councillors Myla Arceno, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Jim Brown, Kamal Choudhury, Forhad Chowdhury, Nazmin Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Coleen De Freitas, Alistair Gorden, Lynda Guy, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Dermot Kehoe, Claire Parris, Tom Plater, Loraine Rossati, Simon Speller, Jeannette Thomas, Carolina Veres and Nigel Williams – 21

Abstain – Councillors Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Andy McGuinness and Peter Wilkins – 4

Absent – Councillors Sandra Barr, Robert Boyle, Leanne Brady, Akin Elekolusi, Rob Henry, Mason Humberstone, Lin Martin- Haugh, Sarah Mead, Robin Parker CC, Ellie Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Jade Woods and Tom Wren – 13

CHAIR