

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 11 December 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Ellie Plater (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi, Dermot Kehoe and Carolina Veres

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.20pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Brady, Lynda Guy, Sarah Mead and Peter Wilkins.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - TUESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 11 November 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME ITEM - OLDER PEOPLE

The Committee received a presentation from Officers on the Council's work in relation to older people, following the Council motion agreed in October 2025. This was to establish a lasting and suitable commitment to age-friendly communities and dementia-friendly action in Stevenage.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Older People welcomed the focused session and emphasised that the motion aimed to develop new initiatives, and to highlight existing work being delivered by officers and partners.

The Committee noted that significant work had been undertaken in relation to a Dementia Friendly status. This included collaboration with the Council's Licensing team to support dementia awareness training for taxi drivers, delivered in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society.

Officers presented key demographic and health data to the Committee and highlighted increased dementia diagnosis.

Falls amongst those aged 80 years and over were highlighted as a major cause of hospital admissions. It was noted that dementia diagnosis rates in Stevenage were

higher than both Hertfordshire and national averages. These factors underlined the need for strengthened prevention, support and inclusive design.

The Committee was informed that Stevenage achieved Age-Friendly Community status in 2024, and had since supported the Hertfordshire Age-Friendly application alongside Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK.

It was noted that the Age-Friendly Communities survey had been completed, and officers highlighted the findings which included the positive access to green spaces and community facilities. Areas of improvement included access to public toilets, safety and perceptions of rest areas. Officers noted that perceptions were an important factor and did not always align with physical audits, such as the availability of benches across the town.

The Committee were provided with an update on the dementia-friendly work. This included the development of a dementia services booklet to help residents and carers navigate support following diagnosis.

Officers also discussed community engagement activities such as International Day of Older People on 1 October each year. This year the event included an intergenerational focus and partnership working with school and voluntary organisations. It was noted that plans were shared to expand future events into a week long programme of coordinated activities across Stevenage.

An overview of sport and leisure provision for older people was presented, including strength and balance classes, the health walks programme and community-based activities delivered through the Council's leisure contract. These were highlighted as supporting mobility, independence and social connection.

It was noted that while short-mat bowls would be available in the new Leisure Hub, there were no current plans for a dedicated indoor bowls facility, and ongoing engagement with local bowls clubs was continuing.

During questions, concerns were raised by Members regarding access to swimming and aqua-based exercise classes. It was noted there were digital booking barriers, limited session availability and capacity constraints. Officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that they would be taken away for further consideration with relevant officers and partners.

It was noted that while some issues fell outside the Council's direct control, the Age-Friendly Hertfordshire Partnership would provide an opportunity to influence wider transport and infrastructure discussions.

The Committee received a presentation on housing related support services for older and vulnerable residents. Members were informed about the CareConnect 24/7 community alarm service, which supported residents of all ages who felt vulnerable. This provided monitoring or a full emergency response.

This service currently supported 317 customers and responded to 594 emergency calls between April and September.

An update was provided on the Council's 14 independent living schemes, including two extra care schemes. In total, 863 properties were managed across the town, all fitted with emergency alarm systems and supported by staff presence.

It was noted that 2,045 emergency calls had been attended within the schemes and that demand for accommodation remained high, with 109 applicants on the waiting list.

Members were also updated on recent and planned developments, including Brodie Court and future schemes at Rowland Court and Brent Court.

The Committee noted the positive impact of lottery funded activity programmes delivered across all schemes, with 688 sessions and 2,182 attendances in the first year. Reported outcomes included improved health, mobility, reduced isolation and enhanced mental wellbeing.

Members were informed about the Community Support Service for Council tenants aged 55 and over living independently, which provided visits, telephone support and access to scheme activities. Between April and October, 587 visits and 1,081 calls were delivered.

The Committee also noted the Council's provision of aids and adaptations, the availability of Disabled Facilities Grants, and the importance of partnership working to embed age-friendly and dementia-friendly principles across Council services.

Members discussed the importance of dementia-friendly awareness and noted that 75 members of staff at the Council had received dementia training, with plans to explore making training mandatory.

Members highlighted the importance of dementia-friendly design, including the use of appropriate colour contrast in street furniture and benches.

Members raised issues relating to digital inclusion, particularly for residents who may struggle with online only processes. Officers outlined ongoing work through the Council's digital strategy, alternative communication methods, and practical assistance for residents who cannot access digital services.

Members were also informed about the support provided within independent living schemes, including scam awareness and online safety advice.

The Committee raised a question regarding pavement design and accessibility, particularly uneven surfaces and poor visual contrast. It was noted that these issues would be recorded and referred to relevant officers for further consideration.

Members welcomed recent additional funding secured by Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK to support Age-Friendly Hertfordshire, which would help strengthen partnership working and advocacy on issues such as transport.

The Committee thanked officers and partners for their contributions and noted the

importance of continuing to embed age-friendly and dementia-friendly principles across Council services.

4 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR