

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 25 March 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Ellie Plater (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi, Mason Humberstone, Dermot Kehoe, Sarah Mead and Peter Wilkins

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm

Time: End Time: 7.05pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillors Lynda Guy and Carolina Veres.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 4 February 2026 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 CRIME & DISORDER COMMITTEE

The Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities addressed the Committee and emphasised the importance of residents' safety across the Town. The SoSafe Partnership was highlighted alongside the close working relationship the Council had with the Police, which was key to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Members were advised that the priorities for 2025–2028 included strengthening community engagement, encouraging reporting of ASB and working collaboratively with residents and partners. Supporting objectives included raising awareness of risks linked to drugs and crime, supporting victims of domestic abuse, addressing cuckooing, preventing involvement in ASB, and tackling issues such as county lines and online fraud.

Data on service demand through the Council was also presented, highlighting significant numbers of referrals across community safety, domestic abuse, homelessness, and ASB services.

Members were presented with a review of the ASB service, which identified key challenges around compliance, triage, and case management. Actions to improve the service included introducing a neighbourhood management policy, strengthening early intervention, improving data systems and enhancing partnership working.

The Police provided an update on operational activity, highlighting strong partnership

working with the Council. Over the past year, a number of targeted operations had been undertaken to address organised crime, retail crime, and ASB. Additional patrols in hotspot areas had contributed to the reductions in ASB and the recovery of weapons.

It was confirmed that these operations were delivered collaboratively with partners, with information sharing enabling both enforcement and preventative interventions. Members asked questions regarding e-scooter enforcement and partnership involvement, and it was clarified that while e-scooters were legal to purchase, their misuse on public roads remained an issue being addressed locally and nationally.

The Committee also received an update on suicide prevention work, including partnership efforts to identify high-risk locations, deliver staff training and work with transport providers to explore infrastructure improvements.

Discussions took place regarding public perceptions of safety. It was acknowledged that some residents felt unsafe due to changes in the town and increased anonymity. Officers recognised these concerns and advised that further work would be undertaken to improve communication about ongoing initiatives, and to promote positive activity in order to help reassure residents.

The Committee was informed of a range of community safety initiatives, including domestic abuse awareness campaigns, the development of a Safer Routes project to improve safety in the town centre, and the opening of a Community Hub providing support for homeless individuals. Officers advised members that they were welcome to organise with Officers to attend the Community Hub.

Additional projects included an educational film addressing county lines exploitation, which had been widely shared and positively received and discussions took place regarding the details of the film.

Members asked how progress from previous years was measured, noting that similar priorities appeared annually and requested clearer updates on outcomes. Officers noted that work was guided by crime data and evolving local needs, with ongoing multi-agency meetings forming the basis of project development. It was acknowledged that while some issues, such as domestic abuse, may not show reductions in data, increased reporting could indicate improved confidence in services. It was suggested that future reports include clearer comparisons against previous objectives and progress updates.

Discussion also highlighted concerns around the rise in scams and fraud, with Members emphasising the need for greater public awareness and education campaigns. It was noted that scams affected a wide range of age groups and that simple preventative messaging could be beneficial to residents.

Members sought clarification on specific initiatives, including the Safer Routes project, where officers confirmed that routes had been carefully assessed with partners to prioritise visibility, safety, and natural footfall, with planned signage and design measures to guide safer movement through the town.

Discussions took place regarding the community initiatives, including the summer holiday programme for young people. It was noted that this was a free scheme delivered in partnership with local organisations, providing activities in parks and community venues.

A question was raised regarding attendance at these events, as well as the football club's portable pitch, and whether any further information was available on its potential use across the town. Officers confirmed that a response would be provided to the Committee.

The Chair thanked Officers and the Police for their presentation and responses.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Members requested clearer updates on outcomes from previous years and that future reports would include clearer comparisons against previous objectives and progress updates.
- Officers would provide attendance statistics for community initiatives which happened throughout the summer holiday programme for young people.
- Officers would provide further information on the football clubs portable pitch and its use across the town.

4

CABINET MEMBER RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EQUALITIES DIVERSITY & INCLUSION REVIEW

The Committee considered the Cabinet Member's response to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Review. It was highlighted that additional time had been allowed to ensure a comprehensive response, and Members welcomed the opportunity to observe the Council's equalities group in operation.

Clarification was sought regarding engagement with the LGBTQ+ community, and it was agreed that a further response would be provided following additional officer input. It was noted that some engagement had taken place through community events including Stevenage Day, although further detail was requested.

Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of clear timescales for certain actions, such as the bench audit. Members suggested that defined timelines should be provided to ensure progress could be monitored effectively. Officers agreed to take this feedback forward and seek further clarification.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Officers would provide information regarding engagement with the LGBTQ+ community.
- Members suggested that defined timelines should be provided for the proposed bench audit to ensure effective monitoring.

5 **UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2025-26 AND POTENTIAL ITEMS FOR 2026-27**

The Committee received an update on the progress of the agreed work programme. It was noted that a number of items, including statutory reports on crime and disorder, had been delivered during the municipal year. A request was made for future reports to include clearer year on year progress against previously agreed actions.

Members welcomed the inclusion of the public health items but suggested that future contributions from partners could be more locally targeted, including the provision of ward-level data where possible.

The Committee was invited to propose additional items for inclusion in the future work programme. Members requested further information on damp and mould, particularly in relation to the impact of recent legislative changes, current processes, and the number of outstanding cases.

In addition, a review of community cohesion was proposed, as well as a particular emphasis on issues affecting young people.

It was noted that any outstanding items not addressed within the current municipal year would remain on the work programme. Members were advised that there would be a further opportunity to review and update the programme following the Annual Council meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- Members suggested that for future public health programme items, contributions from partners could be locally targeted, and include ward-level data where possible.

6 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

7 **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.

8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR