

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Monday, 15 June 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Ellie Plater (Chair), Matthew Hurst CC (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Andy McGuinness, Jeff Bullock, Leanne Brady, Peter Clark, Claire Parris, Jackie Hollywell, Ricki Rands, Jade Woods and Tom Wren

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.05pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Phil Bibby.

Councillor Tom Wren declared an interest in items 6 and 7 due to being a residential landlord and would not take part in the discussion of these items.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 17 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was noted that the Terms of Reference be noted.

4 WORK PROGRAMME 2026 - 27

The Committee considered the proposed work programme for 2026 – 27 and noted the inclusion of items such as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), ICT and cyber security, the social value of contracts, and routine Budget and Policy Framework matters.

It was noted that the Action Tracker would be reviewed by the Committee in July.

5 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - PAVEMENT LICENCE POLICY

The Committee received an update from the Director of Planning and Regulation regarding the Pavement Licence Draft Policy.

Members were advised that the policy established a clear framework for the granting, monitoring and enforcement of pavement licences.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

6 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - CIVIL PENALTIES POLICY

The Committee received a presentation on the Civil Penalties Policy, which set out the Council's approach to determining civil penalties for regulatory breaches under the incoming Renters' Rights Act.

Members noted that the policy supported a robust enforcement approach where landlords failed to meet their legal obligations, and that income generated from civil penalties would be ring-fenced for private sector housing enforcement activities.

In response to questions, officers advised that the intention was for enforcement activity to be cost-neutral, supported by both civil penalty income and government funding.

Members were informed that the current number of civil penalties issued was low, however the new enforcement-first approach and increased penalty levels under the Renters' Rights Act were expected to result in more penalties being issued and a greater cost recovery.

Officers also advised that work was ongoing with the Council's legal team to strengthen arrangements for recovering unpaid penalties. Members requested that future updates on the implementation of the policy, enforcement activity and penalty recovery be reported back to the Committee and incorporated into the Council's performance reporting framework.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

7 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - RENTERS' RIGHTS ACT ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Committee received a presentation on the Renters' Rights Act Enforcement Policy, which outlined the Council's approach to enforcing the new requirements introduced by the Act.

Members were advised that the policy largely reflected statutory requirements prescribed in legislation and had been developed following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health, Licensing and Housing Services teams. It was noted that the policy had previously been considered by the General Purposes Committee and subsequently approved by Cabinet.

Members welcomed the policy and commended officers for their work in ensuring the Council was prepared for the implementation of the legislation.

In response to questions regarding awareness and publicity, officers advised that communications had been undertaken to inform residents of the changes and that engagement with landlords had taken place to explain their new responsibilities. Members were informed that further communication and engagement activities

would continue as the legislation was implemented, including promotion of the proposed landlord database.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

8 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - ADOPTION OF STEVENAGE BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the adoption of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update. Members were advised that the Partial Update had followed a public examination and incorporated a number of modifications recommended by the Planning Inspector.

Officers noted that broader issues relating to future growth and infrastructure would be considered through the preparation of a new Local Plan, which would be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.

Members questioned whether an adoption of the Partial Update would help protect the Council from the risk of being placed into planning special measures. Officers explained that having an up-to-date Local Plan provided additional protection against this risk.

The Committee also discussed the potential impact of LGR on the Local Plan and officers advised that the current plan would remain in force until its end date. However, forthcoming changes to the planning system, alongside LGR proposals, would require the preparation of new Local Plans and the introduction of Strategic Spatial Development Strategies at a wider authority level.

It was noted that LGR would include additional considerations, but officers would seek to minimise costs through shared evidence bases, efficient consultation processes and careful project management to avoid unnecessary expenditure.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

9 PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - ADOPTION OF REVISED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Committee received a report on the adoption of the revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule.

Officers advised that the revised schedule had been subject to an examination process and was primarily focused on development viability.

Members were informed that the revised charging rates increased contributions in certain areas, particularly for residential and industrial development, and would help ensure that appropriate infrastructure was secured through future development proposals.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

10

PART I DECISION OF THE CABINET - LGR STRUCTURAL CHANGES ORDER SUBMISSION

The Committee received a report seeking approval of the Council's response to the Government consultation on the proposed Structural Changes Order for Hertfordshire as part of Local Government Reorganisation. Members were advised that the response had been developed collaboratively by all eleven Hertfordshire councils and would be submitted to Government by the consultation deadline.

Members were informed that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to waive call-in of this item due to the necessity to provide a joint response for Hertfordshire in the timescales that the secretary of state had implemented.

Members sought clarification on the proposed governance arrangements, including the expected term of office for councillors elected to shadow authorities and the role of future joint committees.

Officers explained that, based on current proposals, the shadow authority councillors would serve an initial year preparing for vesting day followed by a four-year term. This however would be confirmed through the final Structural Changes Order.

Members were also advised that formal joint committee meetings would be held in public and would support preparations for the formation of the shadow authorities.

The Committee discussed the importance of maintaining Stevenage's local identity, civic traditions and ability to respond to local needs following reorganisation. Officers confirmed that proposals included arrangements to preserve civic functions through Charter Trustees and acknowledged the importance of ensuring local communities continued to be represented within any future governance structure.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

11

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

There was no Urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

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EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

14 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - LAND AND DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME UPDATE WITH CONTRACT AWARDS/LAND SALES BRAGBURY
END SCHEME**

The Director of Land, Development and Neighbourhood Regeneration provided an updated to the Committee regarding the land development programme, contract awards and land sales at the Bragbury End scheme.

The Committee asked a number of questions which officers responded to.

The Committee noted the decisions of Cabinet.

15 **PART II DECISION OF THE CABINET - BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
CONTRACT**

The Director of Planning and Regulation provided an updated on the Business Technology Centre Contract.

The Committee asked a number of questions which officers responded to.

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