

Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report 2025-2026





Message from Richard Henry, Stevenage Borough Council



Welcome to our 2025/26 Annual Report. I am proud to share that over the past year, our ongoing efforts have continued to make our award-winning town a great place to live, work and visit.

We also introduced a new Simpler Recycling weekly food waste kerbside side collection service to all our residents, which involved the rollout of 77,000 new caddies to residents with the help of our five new Recycling Superheroes! We've also made key investments in improving recycling at flat blocks, with the invention of a new three-wheeled bin that is designed to be used on stairs easier. These key investments aim to improve the everyday lives of our residents, and that has always been the key priority of Stevenage Borough Council.

“Investing in our young people’s futures has also continued to be a key priority for us.”

Through the Council’s Corporate Plan – Making Stevenage Even Better (2024-2027), we have continued to deliver on the priorities that we know are important to you. We have achieved a balanced budget all whilst still progressing our plans to regenerate the town, including by sharing designs and beginning construction on the new Sports and Leisure Centre that brings together sports, leisure, swimming facilities and a cafe under one roof. We have also signed a development agreement with Muse this year for the delivery of Stevenage Station Gateway to help revitalise the town centre. Partnerships with organisations, such as Everyone Active and Muse, have enabled us to enhance future local prospects and strive to provide a town worthy of our great residents.

Investing in our young people’s futures has also continued to be a key priority for us. We have carried on opening up access to outstanding skills, training and educational opportunities in growing local sectors through various job fairs, grant funding and business workshops. Securing a further £1.1million in funding over the next five years for our Pioneering Young STEM partnership with Mission 44 was a particular highlight as this partnership has already brought together local businesses, education leaders and key strategic partners across a variety of events and will now continue to improve opportunities for the young people in Stevenage.

As we await the Government’s local government reorganisation plans for Hertfordshire, following the publication of their Devolution White Paper in 2024, we look to work with our neighbouring Borough and County Councils to determine what this collaboration could look like. In light of this, I want to reassure you that our residents will remain at the forefront of every decision we make and I hope that this is reflected in this report through the volume and variety of work we have achieved this year.

Within this report, you will see just a few of the Council’s highlights and achievements from the past year, as well as a look at what our future ambitions are for the year ahead including beginning to invest £20 million Pride in Place Government funding for community-led development to the St Nicholas ward. I hope you enjoy reading this year’s Annual Report and join me in looking forward to seeing the Council have another productive and fulfilling year in 2026/27.

Message from Tom Pike – Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council



This is my second Annual Report as the new Chief Executive of Stevenage Borough Council and I am thrilled to show you how much we have achieved over the past year, as well as how close partnership working

has enabled us to support the community through a tough financial climate. As we prepare for what local government reorganisation changes may bring, I will carry on ensuring that we focus on prioritising what matters most to our residents and make Stevenage an even better place to live.

Our town has continued to evolve through the regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas over the last year. The recent introduction of new and improved indoor market, skate park, homes, and businesses have demonstrated just how we have been transforming our town into a place that has something for everyone. Investing in a vibrant, cultured town has been a long-standing priority for us here at the Council, and you may recently noticed a number of arts and culture-centred additions to the town, including the unveiling of new permanent public artwork at the Stevenage Bus Interchange and the launch of the Stevenage Heart Trails across the town to connect over 27 miles of public art, cultural landmarks and green spaces.

We have also been investing in the futures of our local young people through opening up access to outstanding skills, training and educational opportunities in growing local STEM sectors such as life science, space and defence, and construction. Initiatives such as Generation Stevenage that welcomed local schools to explore future career opportunities from local businesses directly, revitalising the

old indoor market site into a new Engineering and Construction Campus for North Hertfordshire College, and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme has enabled us to directly invest in the local community's skills, economic growth and job prospects. Further, our Stevenage Works programme aims to develop skills and increase opportunities related to construction, with direct links to our regeneration ambitions. I look forward to seeing what new initiatives we can support throughout 2026/27 to continue to enhance the skillsets of our residents.

As a Council we have also surpassed our ambition to deliver 500 new affordable and sustainable homes by 2025, providing a total of 627 homes since 2014. The demand for local homes has never been higher, so through the great work of our council employees we are now aiming to exceed previous ambitions and provide a total of 1000 homes by 2030. Through schemes such as Claxton House and the Oval Regeneration, we're well on our way to achieving this goal, with 289 new homes currently on site and under construction, and a further 250 undergoing design development. As a Council, we provide circa 120 different services, and our work does not stop once these new homes have been built. Another key, long-standing focus for the council has been to provide a good quality tenancy, housing maintenance and repairs service to residents, and this year has been no different, with over 98% of our properties now deemed 'decent' as a result of our recent improvement programme; one of the highest proportions in the country.

I am extremely proud of what this council achieves on behalf of those we serve, and this report highlights just some of our many successes. Please take some time to read through what we have been doing to improve the town and Council, along with what we have planned for 2026/27.

Making Stevenage Even Better

The Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan set out the Council's priorities for 2024-2027. Residents were at the heart of developing this plan as what matters most to our residents, matters to us. We have listened to these views, and as a result provide a clear framework by which existing partnership commitments and programmes can be reflected. Our services are categorised into five strategic priorities and three cross cutting themes that are delivered across all Corporate Plan priorities:

- Transforming our Town
 - Regeneration
 - Enterprise & Skills
- More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes
 - Building New & Sustainable Homes
 - Maintaining Good Quality Homes
- Thriving Neighbourhoods
 - Clean Neighbourhoods & Green Spaces
 - Community Safety
 - Culture & Leisure
- Tackling Climate Change
- Balancing the Budget
- Cross-Cutting Themes
 - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - Technology & Innovation

Each cross-cutting theme represents the need to raise awareness of important social benefits and the importance we place on effective partnership working and existing commitments to tackle health inequalities, champion equality, encourage inclusivity, embrace diversity and provide innovative solutions for residents. By maintaining focus on these three themes, we aim to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to delivering outcomes for the benefit of our community.

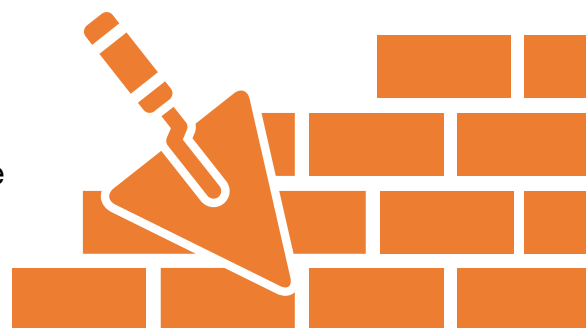
At Stevenage Borough Council, we have circa 722 members of staff who deliver a range of different services including customer service support, housing, waste, environmental health, planning and leisure services. In 2025/26, we continued to ensure that council services operate for the benefit of local people and to a high-quality that provides value for money. This Corporate Plan ensures we provide a framework for our thinking, decision-making and resource allocation.

For each of our five strategic priorities and three cross-cutting themes, a set of accompanying outcomes and actions is published within this report and monitored annually to ensure we are on track to deliver on the outcomes we want to see. Progress over the last financial year (April 2025 – March 2026) and priorities for 2026/27 are summarised over the subsequent pages:



Transforming Our Town

Our town is evolving and becoming Even Better, with the introduction of new and improved play areas, arts and culture, workspaces, and homes. By providing new spaces for our communities and improving the vibrancy of the town centre, we are supporting our businesses and transforming our town into a place which has something for everyone. We are on a mission to create a radiant town centre where people want to live, work and play.



REGENERATION

The aim of the regeneration of the town centre and surrounding areas has always been to deliver a range of increased benefits to residents. Improved public services, local amenities, employment opportunities, homes, transport links and access to green spaces has helped to achieve this.

To continue this mission, this year we have:

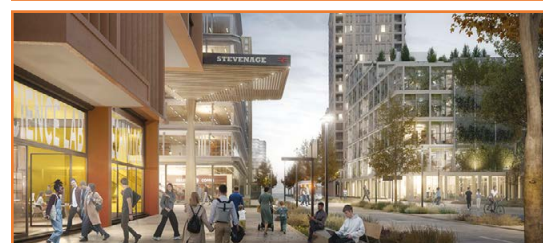


- Relocated Stevenage Indoor Market to a new, prominent town centre location at the ground floor of Boston House in Park Place. The new bespoke facility has been designed to increase footfall through a bright, welcoming and flexible trading space for local businesses. The move ensures the market's long term future while maintaining its important and historic role at the heart of Stevenage.

- Unveiled a new permanent public artwork at the Stevenage Bus Interchange and launched the Stevenage Heart Trails across the town. Created in collaboration with local artist Donna Reeves and Junction 7 Creatives, the Stacked Stories mosaic sculpture celebrates Stevenage's people and heritage. Funded through the Government's Towns Fund via the Stevenage Development Board, the artwork is the first commissioned piece within the Stevenage Heart Trails that connects over 27 miles of public art, cultural landmarks and green spaces.



- Signed a Development Agreement with Muse for the delivery of Stevenage Station Gateway, with support from ECF (the partnership between Homes England, L&G and Muse). This agreement will see the creation of up to 1,000 new homes, up to 60,000 sqm of commercial spaces, and roughly 1,500 new jobs to transform the area around the Railway Station. This will also see the addition of new green space, public areas and improved connections between the station and town centre.



- Marked significant progress on Claxton House, the first phase of the SG1 masterplan. This milestone highlights strong progress in the delivery of 261 new homes and two ground floor commercial units on the former Swingate House site, bringing new housing into the heart of the town centre and supporting the creation of a more vibrant, mixed use neighbourhood.

- Started works to repurpose the former Indoor Market building into a new Engineering and Construction Campus for North Hertfordshire College. Funded through the Government's Towns Fund, the new Town Centre Campus will provide modern training facilities for students, apprentices and adult learners in key construction and engineering sectors while increasing daytime activity and footfall in the town centre.



- Commenced main construction works on the new Stevenage Sports & Leisure Centre on St George's Way. Following extensive design development and public engagement, the new structure combines the sports facilities currently located at both the Arts & Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre. The new state of the art building will have a 25-metre, 10-lane swimming pool, a teaching pool, splash pad, soft-play, a six-court sports hall, fitness suite, multi-purpose studios and a café that can be accessed from the Town Centre Gardens. It will offer a wide range of innovative and exciting services and activities, promoting healthy living and wellbeing for residents.

- Welcomed the opening of Frequency Coffee in Stevenage Town Square. Located in the previously vacant 21 Town Square unit, Frequency Coffee transformed this space into a modern, design-led sit-in café. The arrival of this independent operator has strengthened the food and drink offer in the town centre, and added a destination that supports daytime, evening and weekend footfall. The new café forms part of the wider regeneration of the town centre, part-funded through Towns Fund via the Stevenage Development Board and supported by the Council.



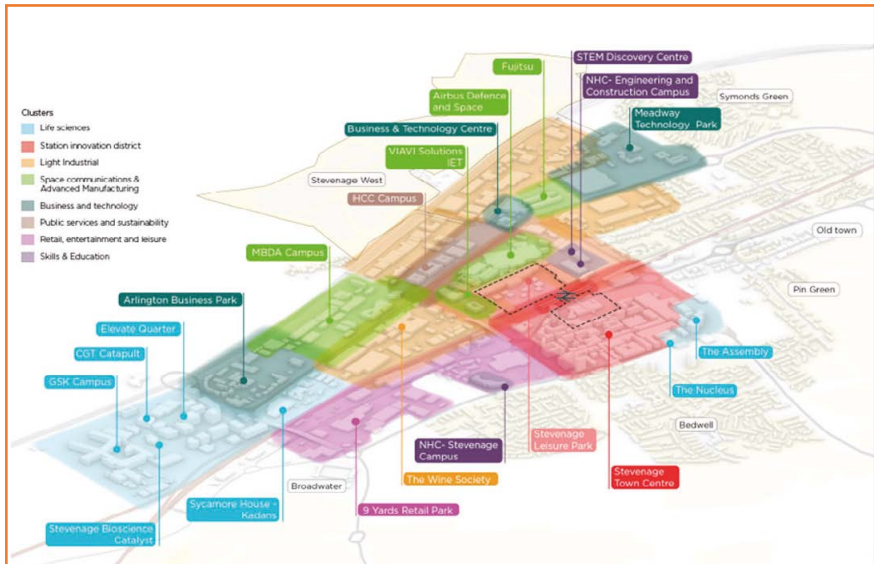
Transforming Our Town continued...

In 2026/27, we will:



- Complete the delivery of Claxton House, with the first of the 261 new homes offer expected to become available to residents in the heart of the town centre at the end of 2026.
- Deliver improvement works at the Westgate Centre to enhance safety, accessibility and the arrival experience into Stevenage's retail core. Working in partnership with Glass Properties and supported by Towns Fund investment, improvements will transform the main car park entrance and create a modern, safe and welcoming gateway into the shopping centre.

- Support the opening of the new Engineering & Construction Campus for North Hertfordshire College within the former indoor market building. The first intake of students are expected from September 2026.
- Deliver new public artworks across the town as part of the Stevenage Heart Trails. Four new artworks are currently planned for locations such as Fairlands Valley Park, the Millennium Path and King George V Playground, to celebrate Stevenage's culture, heritage and natural environment while enhancing public spaces.



- Continue to support the growth of Stevenage's life sciences cluster through the development of infrastructure linked to the GSK and Elevate Quarter site. Following the granting of planning consent, the proposed expansion will support research, data and AI-enabled innovation alongside new infrastructure works, reinforcing Stevenage's role as a nationally important centre for science, technology and high value employment.

ENTERPRISE & SKILLS

Opening up access to outstanding skills, training and educational opportunities in growing local sectors such as life science, space and defence, and construction has been a key priority for the council for a number of years. Our community benefits from economic growth, skills and improved job prospects so we want to support this growth as much as we can.

As a result, this year we have:

- Secured a further £1.1m in funding over the next five years to continue and expand our Pioneering Young Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Futures partnership with Mission 44, a charitable foundation founded by Sir Lewis Hamilton to improve opportunities for disadvantaged young people. The programme supports young people in Stevenage to access high-quality STEM opportunities, in partnership with North Hertfordshire College, the University of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Futures, and Airbus Defence & Space. This year, four Phase Two projects have been carried out with over 1,200 young people from primary schools and secondary schools, and with individuals not in mainstream school. These projects offer young people first-hand STEM experiences, broadening their awareness of STEM opportunities including local academic and employment pathways.



- Showcased how the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme targets young people with STEM opportunities to Pat McFadden, Secretary of State for the Department of Work & Pensions.

- Delivered a £327,000 extension to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme for 2025/26, continuing investment into local people, businesses and communities. Working with partners including Hertfordshire Futures, Wenta and Step2Skills, has strengthened local support for enterprise, employment and skills, helped businesses to access advice, entrepreneurs to develop new ideas, residents to move closer to work and training, and attract further investment for key local growth sectors. Funding was also allocated through the Council's Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme to support locally targeted interventions.



- Held a series of careers sessions with four secondary schools, in partnership with Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, to target and match KS5 STEM students with a STEM professional for tailored advice that supported their post-18 pathways. This included CV and cover letter advice, and support for those applying for university or apprenticeships.

Transforming Our Town continued...

- Delivered a programme of public STEM and Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) engagement activities to inspire residents, and raise awareness of local opportunities in accessible and creative ways. This included:



- Hosting the Wonder of STEM event, in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, that welcomed 200 residents to explore local academic pathways, employment opportunities and hands-on STEM activities.



- Delivery of the free Mad Science pantomime (The Reindeer Rebellion) that encouraged 77 residents and families to engage with STEM through an accessible and enjoyable event.



- Holding the Council's first STEAM event; the Stevenage Moon Palace Experience, in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire and Junction 7 Creatives. It enticed over 500 residents to explore a mobile observatory and planetarium, whilst also taking part in creative activities.



- Piloting a STEM village at Stevenage Day, enabling local STEM organisations and partners to showcase their work and engage residents through hands-on activities.



- Collaborated with the Education Support Centre & Stevenage Football Club Foundation to launch a pilot project with three primary schools to specifically support Year 6 students as they prepare to transition to secondary school.
- Helped host the Generation Stevenage careers fair that enabled local young people to meet local employers from across a broad range of sectors and discover future employment opportunities.

- Supported the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor to gather the views of young people at community events, act as ambassadors for Stevenage's young people, and help the Council understand how to better meet the needs of its younger residents. They have also represented the Council at meetings at over 44 events between them, including Goodwood's Festival of Speed, Discover the Wonder of STEM, and at Schools' Parliament.



- Set up a Council Youth team to act as an overarching structure for the Council's key youth engagement activity, bringing together the Youth Mayor, Deputy Youth Mayor, Youth Advisory Board and Schools' Parliament. This has helped strengthen the Council's approach to youth voice and provided a clearer structure for engaging young people in local decision-making.

- Supported 46 new businesses and created 70 new jobs with our partner Wenta through our Business Technology Centre.



In 2026/27, we will:

- Continue our Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme, ensuring our reach includes both young people in mainstream education and young people outside of mainstream education benefit from the projects.
- Launch the Airbus project 'We WILL Build it Better' in numerous primary schools in Stevenage, in conjunction with the Primary Science Quality Mark. Funding is in place to spread this across various primary schools over the next few years.



- Continue offering free STEM and STEAM opportunities for residents to remove barriers, raise aspirations and inspire the next generation of innovators and problem solvers.
- Explore opportunities to create additional academic opportunities for young adults and adults keen to change career, with a focus on entry-level pathways and expanding industries such as health & social care, and ensure residents can easily access career pathway information.

- Collaborate with local organisations to encourage apprenticeship levy to be utilised, and expand opportunities available to residents.
- Establish our Youth Action Group to work alongside the Youth Advisory Board, offering more Stevenage young people the chance to shape what the Council does.

More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes

BUILDING NEW & SUSTAINABLE HOMES

The demand for local homes has never been higher, so through the provision of More Social, Affordable, and Good Quality Homes as part our MSEB Corporate Plan, we have strived to build a range of new and sustainable homes.

Since 2014 the Council has provided 627 new homes, and has now set itself the ambitious target of delivering 1,000 new homes by 2030. We're well on our way to achieving this goal, with 289 new homes currently on site and under construction, and a further 250 going through design development.

This year, to help reach this goal we have:



- Delivered new homes at eight sites in the town, with 50 new Council-let homes expected this year at Cartref, Burwell Road and Shephall View.

- Completed the scheme at Saxon Court – Dunn Close for 27 homes for supported accommodation.



- Begun work on the neighbourhood regeneration at The Oval, with the first phase delivering 91 new independent living homes, as well as a new Community Centre and Church.



In 2026/27 we will:

- Provide 67 new homes across a range of tenures to contribute towards our goal of delivering 1000 new homes by 2030.



- Continue to build on the Council's success in securing additional grant funding for new housing schemes in the town.

- Secured an additional £17m in funding from Homes England for the delivery of new genuinely affordable homes within the town.



- Started taking completions on new homes with enhanced accessibility requirements, with a number of new sites in the town identified to continue this delivery route.



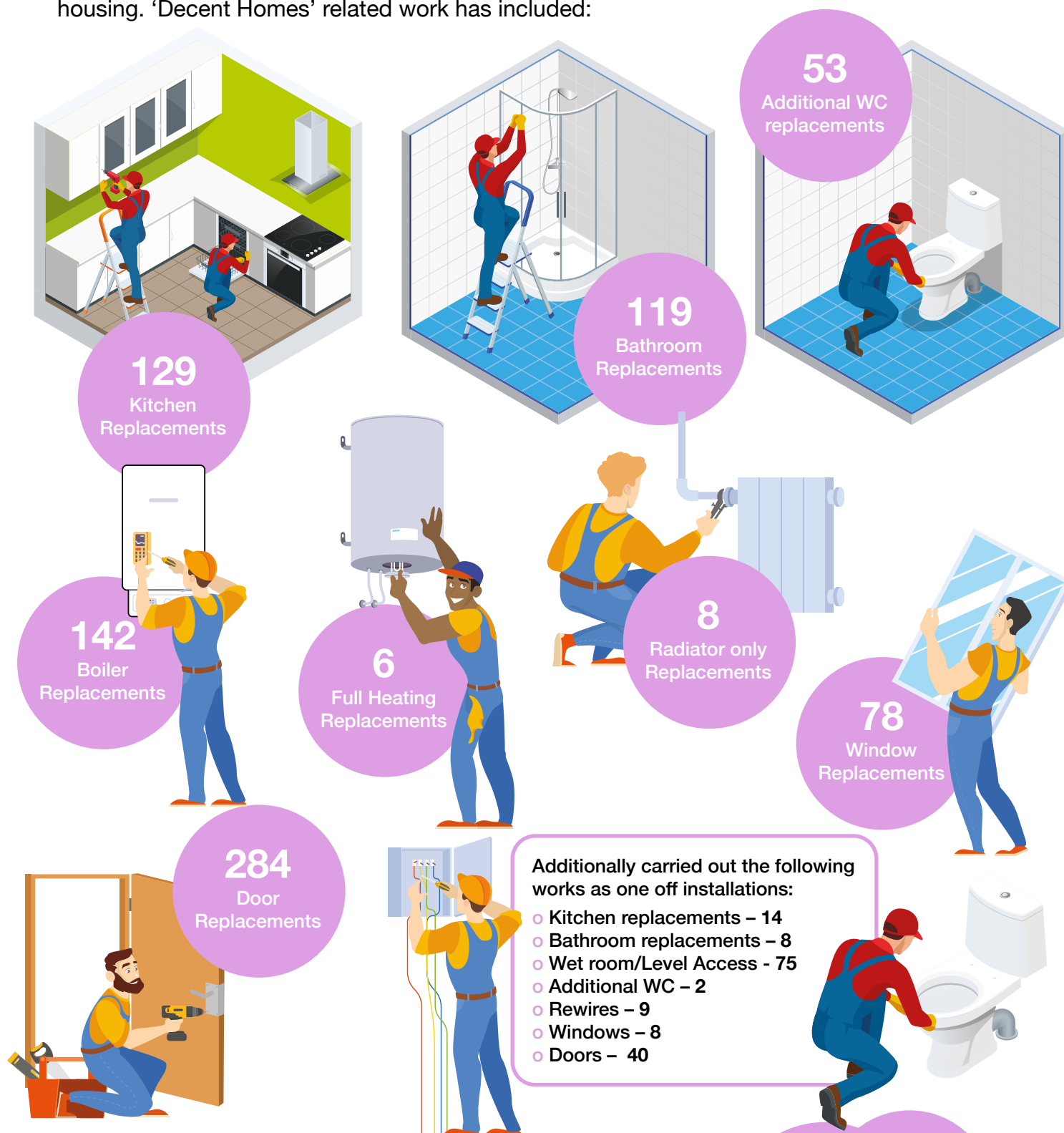
- Continue design development on a further 250 homes at various sites across the town to continue to meet the varied housing need in Stevenage.

MAINTAINING GOOD QUALITY HOMES

Providing a good quality tenancy, housing maintenance and repairs service to residents has been a key, long-standing focus for the Council.

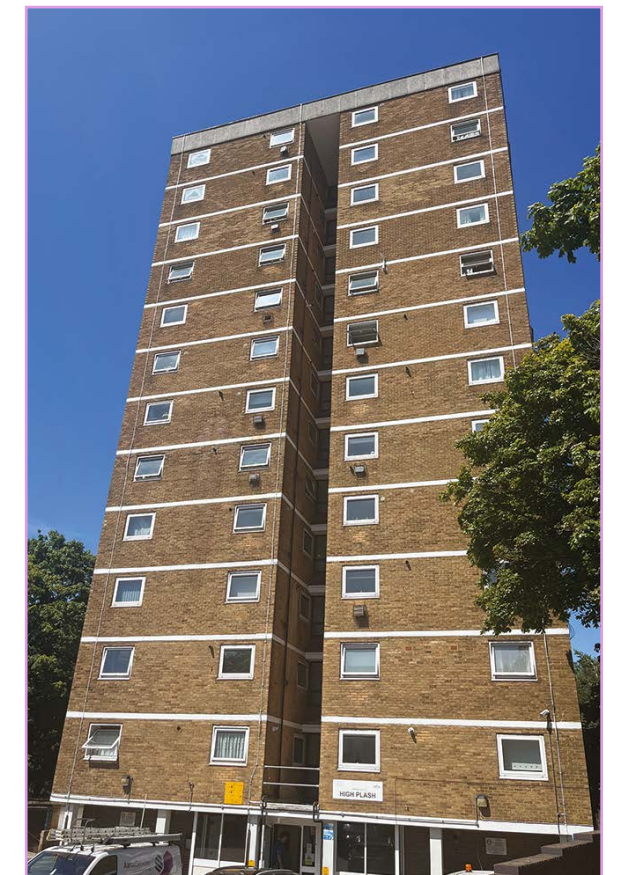
This year we have:

- Carried out improvements at a selection of our properties in order to meet the 'Decent Homes Standard (DHS)'. 98.86% of our properties are now deemed 'decent' as an outcome of the Council's improvement programme. All properties will be maintained to the Decent Homes standard through our major works programme and continued investment in the councils housing. 'Decent Homes' related work has included:



- Surveyed 2040 properties within the past year as part of our Stock Condition Survey Programme, reaching coverage of 98.93% of our overall stock. As a result of these surveys, The Council have raised various Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) cases that are logged and managed by various teams to ensure that any Category 1 or Category 2 Hazards are actioned within the recommended timescales.

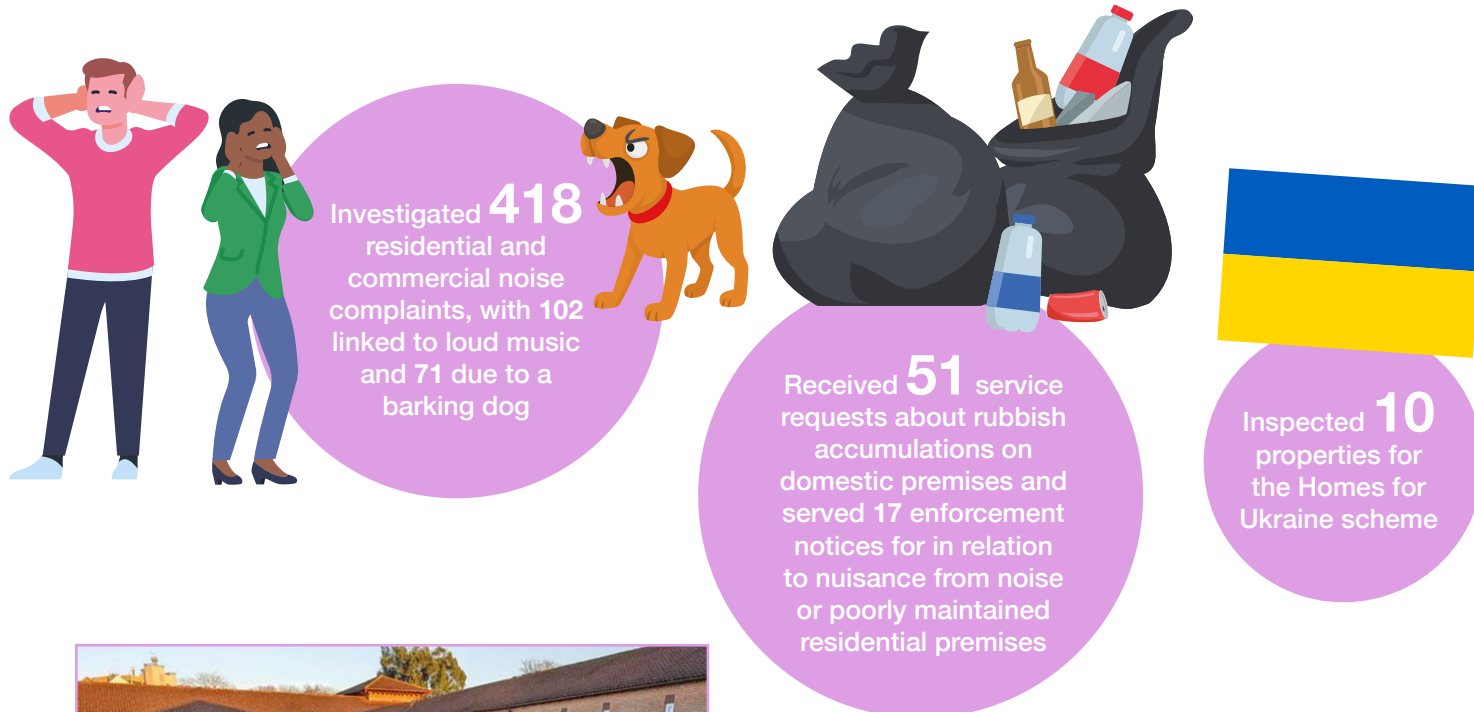
- Achieved an EPC rating of Band C or above in 66% of our Council homes.
- Invested £1m to deliver 521 home adaptations at over 488 properties, ranging from minor works such as grab rails and ramps to more complex installations like through floor lifts and level access showers.
- Completed 20,368 repair jobs across our properties, including:
 - 18,353 Non-Emergency jobs (90.10% of the total), and 95.43% were completed on time.
 - 1,990 Emergency jobs (9.89% of the total), and 98.76% were completed on time
 - 93.60% of repairs being fixed first time and 95.76% of all jobs being completed on time.
- Mobilised multiple specialist and back up repairs contracts, including Glazing, Roofing, Out of Hours, Drainage, General Building, Disrepair and Damp & Mould to support the in-house Repairs service.



- Reviewed the end-to-end customer journey through a series of internal workshops that specifically targeted improving the first point of contact. A number of actions have been identified, implemented and included in the service improvement plan.
- Introduced Awaab's Law compliance monitoring through an updated Damp and Mould policy, the establishment of new procedures, and key performance indicators.
- Responded to 100% of major planning applications within 13 weeks, 93.5% of minor applications within 8 weeks, and 81.5% of other applications within 8 weeks.
- Received 512 planning applications; an average of 3.67 per day, and of those 500 had a decision issued.

More Social, Affordable and Good Quality Homes continued...

- Completed 145 house in multiple occupation licensed and non-licensed inspections, an increase from 95 last year.
- Received 49 private sector housing condition complaints, with four being served enforcement notices due to housing conditions.
- Issued no civil penalties to landlords for housing-related offences in 2025/26.



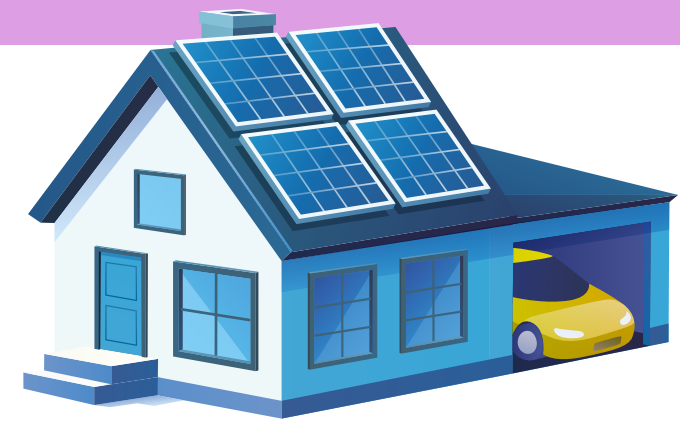
- Let 95 specialist accommodation properties between April 2025 and March 2026.
- Responded to 1,129 Care Connect 24/7 customer calls.
- Responded to 4,221 independent living residents calls.

- Completed 23,399 visits across the Council's 14 Independent Living scheme sites. The team also made 33,801 telephone calls and calls through the alarm system to independent living residents.
- Completed 1,743 calls and 1,005 visits to community support customers.
- Supported 40 residents to declutter their properties.



In 2026/27, we will:

- Continue the Warm Homes programme to include air source heat pumps, insulation works, solar panels and window and door replacements.
- Review and improve Aids & Adaptations processes, including referral handling, feasibility assessments, and communication pathways to improve efficiency, reduce tenant wait time, and the overall customer experience.
- Begin a multi-year Cyclical Maintenance Programme to look after all the blocks that had works carried out as part of MRC which will include floor covering replacements, decorations and minimal works to ensure the Council continues to provide good quality homes.



- Progress plans for the refurbishment of five high rise blocks in consultation with residents.
- Procure and mobilise a new materials supplier contract for repairs.
- Undertake a pilot to complete in-house delivery of works on void properties.

- Set up a 'Meet The Contractors' event with residents.
- Progress delivery of plans to improve the repairs and voids service.
- Prepare for the extension of Awaab's Law to other HHSRS related hazards.



Thriving Neighbourhoods



Improving the quality of life for Stevenage residents and enhancing the experience of visitors has always been Stevenage Borough Council's ambition. We achieve this through our approach to ensuring clean neighbourhoods & green spaces, our focus on community safety, and our vision for culture and leisure. Close partnership working has enabled our activities in these areas to thrive and ensured that we remain a dynamic town for residents and visitors alike.

Our neighbourhood-based teams also work co-operatively with residents, Councillors and local businesses to shape the services in their area. Through this work we seek to make services more responsive to the strengths, needs and aspirations of communities and localities.

CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS & GREEN SPACES

We aim to ensure residents can be proud of the area they live in, as a result it is a key priority for us to ensure your neighbourhoods and green spaces are well-maintained and kept clean.

This year we have:

- Introduced a new food waste kerbside side collection service to all our residents, following Simpler Recycling legislation change and Central Government grants. The service is available to 38,000 properties on a weekly basis and involved the rollout of 77,000 new caddies to residents.



- Promoted the new food waste service through a competition for school children in Stevenage to design and name recycling superheroes that would appear on our new collection vehicles. Just under 100 entries were received and the winning characters (Sir Sort-a-lot, Charlie Core, Letty Lettuce & Captain Carrot) were selected by a panel including the Mayor and Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Holder Cllr Rob Broom.

- Promoted the importance of recycling to circa 3,000 children through 11 school assemblies.



- Continued recycling facilities improvements to 42 flat blocks, including the invention of a new three-wheeled bin that's designed to be used on stairs easier.



- Collected 17,375.91 tonnes of household waste from kerbside collections and 6,104 tonnes of recycling. This is the equivalent to 2.5 Elizabeth Towers that holds Big Ben (the bell)!
- Reported a 38.01% household recycling rate.
- Collected an average of 99% of waste bins throughout the year.
- Emptied 71,188 bins street litter bins.



- Upgraded eight neighbourhood recycling bring-bank sites to support waste diversion beyond kerbside collections. This involved installing new signage, bins, and improved infrastructure to make recycling more accessible for residents. The upgrades were funded through a combined approach.



- Helped residents plant 2,329 tree saplings as part of the Hertfordshire County Council's "Your Tree Our Future" tree giveaway scheme.
- Enhanced the borough's green canopy by planting 121 new street trees.

Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...



- Created a further 3 micro woods through a total of 3,000 whips planted at Miyawaki woods at Peartree Park, Chells Park and at Stebbings Farm in Symonds Green.



- Supported 309 volunteers across 26 litter picking sessions.
- Continued improving the landscape in the St. Nicholas ward through the removal of tired and bare shrub beds and targeting litter or fly tipping hot spots. These areas have been seeded and will be maintained as grass going forward. 6,500sqm of shrub beds have been converted to grass in the area, which is equal to nine tennis courts!
- Managed 1,278 abandoned vehicle reports, with an average of 25 inspections carried out per week.
- Carried out 372 inspections of 31 defibrillators across the town.

- Managed the maintenance of 30,103 trees, 18 woodlands, 399 ha of grass, and 24 ha shrub beds across the town.



- Improved our open spaces through our Green Space Volunteers giving over 1,700 hours. Activities included woodland coppicing, pond improvements, tree planting, and butterfly surveys.



- Responded to 155 reports through our Neighbourhood Liaison Officers covering tasks such as letter delivery for works, addressing overgrown hedgerows with landowners, and investigating parking issues in garage blocks.



- Delivered 65 projects through our Community Development Team, with 35 fully complete and 40 in progress. Projects have included the makeover of the outside patio area at Highfield Court Independent Living Scheme; the installation of two new water butts to harvest rainwater in the south of the town; and the continuation of the Covid Cobra project, with officers specifically installing the final two pillars and cementing the project as a key part of the town's social history.



- Received 108 applications through Members' Local Community Budget that totals £60,500. Funded projects have included outdoor area improvements at The Leys Primary & Nursery School's Early Years; supporting St Mary's Church's St Mary's Fete; free summer holiday activities including outdoor table tennis and multisport sessions at Bedwell Park; Stevenage World Forum's British Sign Language class; and Hertfordshire Constabulary's Supplies for Vulnerable Residents project that offered a programme of talks and community groups delivered at sheltered housing schemes.



- Carried out a Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme of locally focused practical improvements, resident engagement, and coordinated delivery across council teams and partners throughout the town. Ward dashboards were developed for all 13 wards to provide consistent information on priorities, funding, and project delivery. Ward audits or walkabouts remained a central part of the programme, enabling Councillors, officers, and partners to identify and respond to local issues directly. Key highlights include:
 - 78% attendance from Members and officers
 - 49 issues reported in real time
 - 43 permissions requests raised with council teams
 - 23 Community Payback Service (CPS) tasks scheduled
 - 21 UKSPF projects developed from walkabouts
 - 13 walkabouts delivered during each of the three rounds
 - 11 additional service requests escalated

Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

- Walkabouts identified a wide range of recurring local issues across wards, and resulted in significant number of actions were progressed across the year, such as environmental and maintenance works, repairs to fencing and paved areas, and support for community-led initiatives.



- Delivered 21 projects through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), focusing on improving local spaces and everyday facilities across Stevenage. Projects have included new and refurbished benches; art sculptures and statues; wildflower, bulb and tree planting; fencing works; development of a woodland trail; new signage at Hampson Park; and the installation and relocation of noticeboards.

- Decorated 22 cabinets across the town as part of the Only Connect project, with Junction 7 Creatives due to complete the remaining Councillor-funded cabinets in Spring 2026.



- Unveiled a new play area at the Town Centre Gardens, that was designed to encourage active outdoor play, with a focus on accessibility and long-term durability. Positive feedback has been received from the community and high usage rates seen during school holidays and warmer weather.

- Collaborated with Driift Skate Company and local skaters to design and deliver a new skate park at Peartree Park. This partnership ensured the facility reflected genuine user needs, supported a wide range of abilities, and created a high-quality space that strengthens youth engagement and active recreation opportunities.



- Carried out a series of bulb planting initiatives across the town, including Hampson Park, Edmunds Drive and Trent Close to enhance seasonal colour, visual appeal, and community pride in local green spaces.



- Established two new wildflower meadow areas at Fairlands Valley Lakes and St Nicholas Park to support biodiversity, improve habitat connectivity, and promote pollinator populations, including bees and butterflies. 1 acre of wildflower meadow can feed 96,000 honeybees!



- Let out 1,016 allotments, with 400 new applicants and 184 tenancies in 2025.
- Began a five-year contract with "TCL" to manage repairs and maintenance across the garage stock. This will enable the Council to deliver better value for money, improve the rate of first-time repair completions wherever possible, enhance the quality and efficiency of repair services, and improve communication and customer engagement throughout the repairs process.

- Cleared up a total of 2,781 reported fly tipping cases.



- Undertook 219 food safety interventions / inspections; with six served with Hygiene Improvement Notices, one with a Voluntary Closure, one with a Prohibition Notice and one with a prosecution that resulted in a total fine of £29,126.84 (including fines, costs and victim surcharge).

Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

● Carried out:



In 2026/27, we will:

- Plant over 100 more trees.
- Continue to improve recycling facilities to flat blocks.
- Continue landscape improvements, with a projected focus of Bragbury End next year.
- Introduce a kerbside recycling service for collection of flexible plastics to all households by 31 March 2027 as part of continued legislation changes.



- Promote recycling initiatives through communications, legislative changes, and resident and school engagement.
- Implement further opportunities for rainwater harvesting at allotment sites like Greydells.
- Continue to work with Councillors and residents on community projects such as the finalisation of the Covid Cobra Project.



- Continue to offer residents and community groups the opportunity to deliver funded projects through the Local Community Budgets, in partnership with their local Councillors.
- Plant new trees to increase tree canopy coverage through tree replacement policies, Miyawaki micro-woods, the 'Your Tree, Our Future' scheme, and other local projects.



- Adopt the first phase of the new Forster Country Park at North Stevenage and add approximately 35 additional hectares of meadow grassland to our portfolio, along with woodland, hedges, wetland habitats, and pathways available for wildlife and enjoyment by residents and visitors.
- Carry out further bulb planting initiatives supporting pollinators and providing a flush of spring colour.
- Develop meadow improvement works funded by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- Carry out improvements to Fishers Green Common pond, funded by developer contributions.



- Continue work to bring 148 garages affected by asbestos-related issues back into management and make them available for renting. In addition, work will commence on replacing the remaining garage assets that still have asbestos roofs. This programme will help improve the condition of the garage portfolio and ensure compliance with current health and safety requirements.

Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

COMMUNITY SAFETY

It is essential that residents live in safe communities where crime and anti-social behaviour are reduced through effective partnership working.

To accomplish this, we have:

- Worked closely with our partners to respond to:
 - 185 HCC Children Services Information requests
 - 88 Prevent checks for police intelligence sharing
- Completed:
 - 92 Adult Safeguarding/Care & Support referrals made to HCC
 - 89 Child safeguarding referrals made to HCC

To note, this was the first year that the number of adult referrals made by SBC staff was higher than the number made in regard to children due to legislative changes regarding parental consent now being needed to refer for children’s safeguarding, as well as the ever-increasing complex needs of the adult residents staff are working with.



- Continued to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse through regular Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) drop-in sessions. Additional funding was received to continue the SADA Stevenage and North Herts Drop Ins. The drop ins run fortnightly and provide a safe space for survivors to come together and feel supported in a sensitive and client-led approach.
- Received 967 SADA referrals and completed 62 placements into SADA Safe Accommodation.

- Hosted a Christmas party for families residing in SADA Safe Spaces with staff dressing up, an array of games, music, food, and presents on offer, and Santa’s appearance making the night unforgettable for children who may not have always had positive experiences of the festive season in the past.



- Hosted a 16 Days of Action SADA networking event, bringing together a wide range of partner services. The event provided a valuable opportunity to reconnect with existing partners, showcase the breadth of work delivered across SADA, and create space for services to meet, share knowledge, and strengthen professional relationships. The event also involved the screening of the journey of individuals accessing SADA Safe Space provision from the client’s perspective, which offered a compelling insight into the depth and impact of SADA’s work.



- Been approached by 1,477 customers for Housing Options advice. The team prevented 386 households from becoming homeless, with 134 of those being assisted into privately rented accommodation by our Next Step Lets service.
- Received 943 Referrals into the Welfare Debt and Benefit Advice Service. The team also specifically supported disabled tenants with benefit reviews during home visits, guiding tenants through formal debt processes, referrals for PIP and Attendance allowance.
- Received 75 referrals into the Family Intervention Project (FIP) service, providing invaluable support to customers and their families by assisting with sustaining their accommodation, family support, free school meals, new passports, and PIP claims.



- Developed 63 soon-to-be-available one and two-bed properties at Eagle House that will be directly filled from the Council’s housing register, in partnership with Sovereign HA.

- Collaborated with partners to create the film “The Orphan” that highlighted key issues surrounding County Lines, including exploitation and grooming, and offering insights into the challenges faced by vulnerable young people. To complement the resource, the Council hosted a range of engagement events including at Parliament, that involved the inclusion of individuals with lived experience, which brought the complex realities of exploitation to life and provided opportunities for discussion, feedback, and awareness-raising.



- Placed 157 households in temporary accommodation, as of 31st March 2026. This year, the team have set up and continue to run a county-wide Temporary Accommodation Managers Forum that meets regularly to share best practice and discuss common challenges such as B&B usage and supply issues. Further, the service has continued to perform well in Customer Service Centre satisfaction results for the support given to shared accommodation residents.
- Developed a new purpose-built TA scheme at Dunn Close which is nearing completion. It includes six self-contained flats, and 21 rooms (including 10 accessible ground floor units). This will significantly improve our ability to accommodate larger families and those requiring ground floor access and will help reduce reliance on B&B accommodation.

Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

- Allocated 15 new family homes at Fairlands Gate to provide more council rented housing for local residents. The homes are part of a wider development by Keepmoat Homes delivering 57 new homes.



- Supported the completion of Phase 2 of Forster Park, delivering new accommodation for local residents.

- Let 275 General Needs properties.



- Received 82 complex No More Service case referrals. The service continued to offer weekly drop ins where customers can attend for support, a hot meal, peer support and monthly karaoke. Further, over Christmas customers were invited for a Christmas dinner and a New Years breakfast made by the support workers.



- Found 16 individuals sleeping rough this year, with 14 of these either being housed or leaving the area. The Rough Sleeper Team have created the new Homelessness Community Hub in the town centre which now acts as a daily drop in for an average of 8-9 homeless or vulnerable customers each day. The hub provides hot meals, hot and cold drinks, clothing, advice, a safe space to watch TV and relax, and other activities like board games.

- Housed a number of entrenched, long-term rough sleepers during 2025-26 who were homeless for a number of years as a result of the determination and hard work of the Rough Sleeper Team building rapport with clients over long periods until they trust services enough to engage and allow the Council to help.

In 2026/27, we will:

- Increase awareness and accessibility of the Council as a Hate Crime Third Party Reporting Centre by delivering a targeted engagement and communications plan.



- Continue to embed the priorities of the Community Safety Strategy by raising awareness of key risks, whilst continuing to strengthen partnership working, supporting victims, and promoting early intervention and prevention across the community.
- Build on the ongoing work to raise awareness of exploitation by collaborating with partners to develop impactful resources that expose the hidden realities of county lines and child criminal exploitation across the UK, with a strengthened focus on how girls are disproportionately overlooked as victims, highlighting the links between criminal exploitation, grooming, and Violence Against Women and Girls.

- Collaborate with Hertfordshire Constabulary to deliver the Stevenage Safer Route project that aims to improve the safety and perception of key pedestrian routes across the town.



- Further develop and embed a strong partnership approach with key agencies to proactively safeguard vulnerable individuals at risk of cuckooing and home takeover.

CULTURE & LEISURE

Over 61,000 people attended Stevenage Borough Council's programme of civic and community events during 2025/26, reflecting continued strong engagement across the town and reinforcing the role of events in bringing communities together.

Across the year, the Council delivered eight major events and supported dozens of community-led activities, working in partnership with local groups and organisations to enhance neighbourhood provision.

This year we have:

- Welcomed approximately 30,000 attendees to Stevenage Day; remaining one of the largest free events in Hertfordshire. The event evolved further in 2025 with the introduction of a STEM Village, bringing skills, education and local employers into the heart of the event. A larger Pride area was also provided; strengthening the event's inclusive offer.



Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

- Attracted around 25,000 attendees to the annual Stevenage Fireworks Display, thus continuing to provide a high-quality, safe and accessible large-scale community event for residents.



- Hosted a Remembrance Sunday service for approximately 3,000 attendees, delivering a poignant and well-supported civic service, alongside a further 500 attendees at Armistice Day.



- Held a range of other seasonal and civic events including the Old Town Christmas Lights Switch-On, Teddy Bears Picnic at Hampson Park, VE Day commemorations, Stevenage Together Awards and Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Hosted Peartree Park Community Event with over 200 attendees and 8 stall holders in 2025 celebrating the installation of the new skate park.



- Welcomed 734,827 visits to our Everyone Active leisure centres, an increase of 37,491 on the previous year.
- Encouraged a total of 91,003 children to use Everyone Active facilities, a 8.26% improvement from 83,133 children last year.

- Delivered a vibrant programme of inclusive, accessible activities during This Girl Can Week 2025 to over 200 women and girls. This event is designed to inspire women and girls to get active in a way that suited them, with a wide range of sessions to choose from including fitness classes, walking netball, rugby, football, swimming and more. The week was delivered through strong partnership working, bringing together organisations such as Everyone Active, Stevenage Football Club Foundation, Datchworth Rugby Club and Azonto Fitness.



- Ran another year of Aqua parcs at Fairlands Valley Park to provide lake activities catering for all ages and abilities through a large inflatable obstacle course on the main lake. Additional activities including pedaloes, paddleboards and kayaks were also available. Activities ran from June to September and had a large impact on the footfall to the park.
- Continued to run a thriving and vibrant Cultural Forum with members of the community who are interested in arts, heritage and culture around the town, with the group meeting three times a year to network and share events.

- Put on 96 performances of the award-winning pantomime of Dick Whittington, with the Gordon Craig Theatre celebrating its 50th year in 2025. Did you know the first ever panto in 1976 was Dick Wittington, oh yes it was! A total of 43,884 seats were sold, with a 92.76% occupancy rate.
- Collaborated with the Football Foundation to develop a new PlayZone Development at King George V Playing fields. The PlayZone will be a 3G small-sided pitch floodlit pitch with seating and storage available. Investment and planning permission have been secured for this development with building works due to take place in Autumn 2026.



Thriving Neighbourhoods continued...

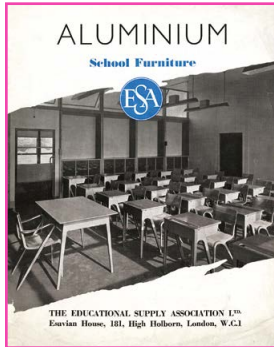


- The Stevenage Museum welcomed nearly 13,000 visitors, including academics from Harvard, Cambridge, Slovakia, Greece and the University of Hertfordshire who were interested in new towns. Over 1,600 students were also welcomed through visits or workshops held at schools across the town. A total of 2,253.5 hours volunteer hours were amassed and numerous exhibitions were put on throughout the year, including:

- Junction 7 Creatives takeover of the museum's temporary gallery showcasing local talent from artists including Trevor Herbert and Sandy Williams.

- Preacher, Punisher and Dredd: the work of British comic book legend Steve Dillon.

- 'The HERDS' international arts project, funded by the Arts Fund to celebrate life-size puppet animals travelling a 20,000km route from the Congo Basin to the Arctic Circle between April and August 2025. The project was embodied in Stevenage through three primary schools (over 500 children aged 7-11), two visual artists, a dance artist and a drone photographer creating puppets to create a stunning murmuration of starlings to symbolise their flight from climate disaster.

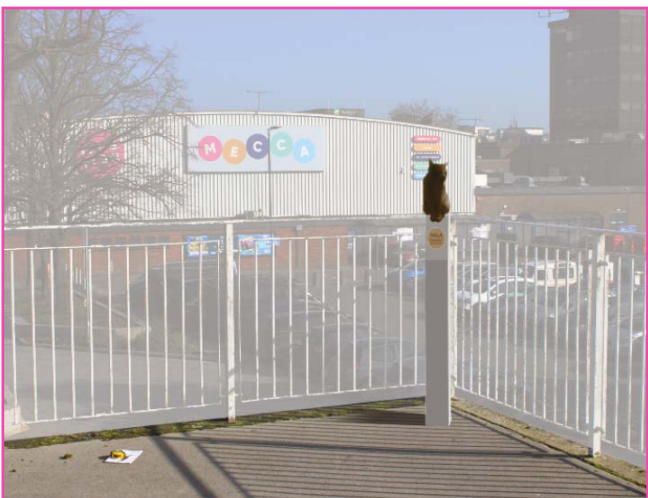


- James Leonard, Industrial Artist's story of a furniture design that emerged after the Second World War. James Leoanrd designed a range of modern, clean-lined school furniture fit for the future, using skills learnt in the manufacture of Mosquito aircraft wings. His designs went on to win international recognition, with examples held at the V&A, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Pompidou Centre in Paris, and now Stevenage Museum!

- Six Hills Secrets by Philip Buckingham. Artworks celebrated the people and places of Stevenage through combined traditional pen & ink illustrations of Stevenage's post-war architecture with comic portraits of local myths and legends.
- Attending a conference in Birmingham to mark the end of the New Jerusalem's project, leading a session on the use of oral histories in academic study.

In 2026/27, we will:

- Continue delivery of the events programme, with specific focus on Stevenage's 80th celebrations. This will involve expanding the scale and reach of events, further embedding community participation, and continuing to develop a diverse and inclusive offer across the town.



- Install a memorial statue of the Station Cat, Nala, with the planning application due to be submitted in April 2026 with the hopes it will be installed over the summertime. The sculpture will be made of bronze and depict Nala sat atop a ticket barrier and has already garnered a lot of support from the community.



- Deliver improvements to the Shephalbury Park Tennis Programme, including enabling all year round play on three of the courts.
- Continue to increase engagement with children and young people (under 16s) through expanded outreach and participation programmes delivered in partnership with Everyone Active.
- Host this year's pantomime of the popular Snow White at Gordon Craig Theatre - tickets on sale now!



Tackling Climate Change

Progress towards the reduction of carbon emissions to be net zero by 2030 has been a significant priority for the council for a number of years, as well as providing support to residents and business to do the same.



This year we have:

- Maintained and updated our Climate Action Plan online tracker, providing residents with up-to-date information on 8 strategic climate themes and over 54 climate actions.
- Initiated the development of a new internal Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reporting framework to standardise the collecting and reporting of our greenhouse gas emissions data.



- Achieved a significantly improved performance in the 2025 Council Climate Action Scorecards. The Council's total score increased to 35%, representing an 8% increase from 27% in 2023. Notable progress was seen in Governance & Finance (+23%) and Waste Reduction & Food (+19%), while Buildings & Heating (55%) and Collaboration & Engagement (52%) emerged as the highest-scoring categories.
- Successfully progressed the Local Plan Partial Update toward adoption in July 2026. The partial update aims to significantly strengthen planning policies regarding net-zero development, active travel, water conservation, and climate resilience.

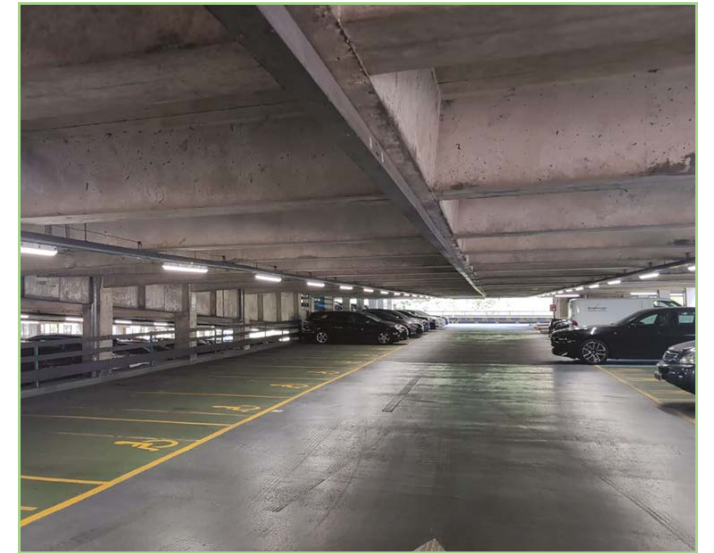
- Replaced the Town Centre Clocktower lighting with an LED system that aims to reduce energy consumption and maintenance costs while allowing the Clocktower to display a multitude of colours to mark days of national significance.



- Upgraded St George's and Westgate Multi-Storey Car Parks' fluorescent lighting to high-efficiency LED systems equipped with motion sensors to help reduce energy consumption.
- Completed Phase 1 of the Gordon Craig Theatre lighting project, installing the infrastructure for a new LED control system and replacing all auditorium house fittings from tungsten to high-efficiency LED units.
- Continued to provide financial support for community-led climate initiatives through our Climate Change Community Fund, allocating £7,500 per ward annually. Funded projects this year have included water butts, tree planting, energy efficiency upgrades, cycle hangars, and improved recycling facilities.



- Supported SMEs and charities awarded the Stevenage Green Business Grant by assisting them in implementing their approved energy-saving measures.



- Partnered with Wenta to offer 154 local businesses affordable net zero emissions services and support in reducing their carbon footprints.
- Launched a bespoke 1:1 Sustainability Support Programme in partnership with Sustainable X. This initiative provided tailored consultancy support to local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, improve resilience and enhance competitiveness in social value and sustainable supply chains.



- Adopted the new Stevenage Tree & Woodland Strategy that sets out 59 targeted actions to manage and enhance the borough's trees, woodlands, and ancient hedgerows across 10 key themes that seek to strengthen Stevenage's resilience to climate change.

Tackling Climate Change continued...



- Transitioned to a full Biodiversity Net Gain monitoring framework and integrated this framework into our development management procedures to ensure all qualifying planning applications meet the mandatory 10% net gain threshold.

- The Council helped develop and endorsed the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy, a collaborative framework co-designed through the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). The strategy aims to decarbonise the county's housing stock by standardising technical delivery, strengthening local green supply chains, and providing residents with a clear, trusted path to upgrading their homes.
- As of March 2025, 19 residents accepted solar and battery installations under the latest round of Solar Together. This totals 134 solar panels installed, 59 kW capacity, and £89,942 invested since the scheme began. Further, 11 installations included batteries, adding 90 kWh of storage.
- Managed our partnership with the National Energy Foundation to deliver the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) and the Great British Insulation Scheme. Throughout the year, 39 eligible homeowners and private tenants were assisted in accessing funding for energy efficiency measures to lower bills and carbon emissions.



- Progressed the "Wilder Stevenage" Biodiversity Action Plan (2024-2028) by implementing targeted conservation across five priority habitats.
- Successfully adopted the new Stevenage Green Spaces Strategy (2025-2035). This long-term policy framework outlines how the borough's parks, woodlands, and wildlife areas will be protected and enhanced to support biodiversity, climate resilience, and community well-being.



- Commenced the three-year delivery of retrofit works for private homes through the Warm Homes: Local Grant (WHLG), following the £1.5 million funding secured from Central Government to provide free energy performance upgrades and low carbon heating to privately owned or rented households with low incomes.

- Continued delivery of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (Wave 3) following the successful grant funding award of £3,856,822. Equans has now been appointed as the delivery partner to carry out the programme of works that will see an estimated 380 Council homes retrofitted, supporting progress towards homes achieving a minimum EPC rating of C.



- Enhanced Council resilience by updating our Climate Change Risk Assessment in alignment with DEFRA's Adaptation Reporting Power guidelines. This comprehensive review assessed climate impacts for Council services and assets across three different climate scenarios, ensuring a robust understanding of future vulnerabilities. The integration of the highest-scoring climate risks into our strategic and operational Council risk registers has begun, as well as development of a 5-Year Climate Adaptation Plan to provide a structured framework for medium-term preparedness.
- Updated our Social Value Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs) to include new sustainability metrics. These metrics ensure that the procurement process now subjects potential suppliers to enhanced rigorous environmental stewardship standards.
- Successfully adopted the new Cooperative Procurement Strategy (2025-2028) to support the goal of net-zero emissions by 2030 by establishing Sustainability as one of its five principal foundations.



- Completed the first year of operation using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) across our entire diesel fleet, including vehicles and machinery. As a result, direct (Scope 1) emissions for the entire fleet, including petrol use in machinery, decreased by 96.4% in comparison to 2023/24.



- Continued the transition of our Council fleet to electric by procuring and incorporating additional electric vehicles, bringing the total to seven.
- Donated 240 bikes to the Recycle your Cycle scheme for refurbishment and reuse.



- Successfully re-launched the Stevenage Cycle Hire scheme, following a temporary pause to address vandalism. The scheme resumed with a phased approach, and as of early 2026, 140 of the original fleet of 150 bikes have been repaired with all 45 Beryl parking bays now fully operational. An additional five bikes have been provided by GSK along with a new bay at their site. A regular monitoring group with Beryl Bikes has been established to oversee operations and identify future service improvements to support active travel.

Tackling Climate Change continued...

- Advanced the rollout of the Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) project following the appointment of Urban Fox as the Charge Point Operator (CPO) for Stevenage, with the project is now moving into the site selection phase.



- Expanded the provision of lockable bike shelters by installing five cycle hangars across the town, with further installations planned. These hangars provide a vital storage alternative for residents in flats or small houses with limited space.

- Successfully implemented a new two-tier discount structure for taxi and private hire licensing fees that will last until 2030, in line with our net-zero targets and national policy. This initiative promotes the adoption of cleaner vehicles by offering a 50% discount for zero-emission vehicles (e.g. fully electric) and a 25% discount for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs).
- Successfully completed the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2.1 project. This scheme delivered essential energy efficiency upgrades, including wall insulation, loft insulation, and improved ventilation to 237 homes across the town.
- Reached major milestones in the delivery of the new Stevenage Sports & Leisure Centre, a flagship fossil-fuel-free project. The state-of-the-art facility is designed to be all-electric, utilising Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV to eliminate reliance on gas. The project is also committed to a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and will serve as a sustainable transport hub with EV charging and extensive cycle parking.



In 2026/27, we will:

- Complete improvement works at flats across the borough to ensure all flats have access to recycling services, in line with Simper Recycling legislation.
- Implement the Tree & Woodland Strategy's targeted actions, focusing on increasing canopy cover and enhancing nature connectivity.
- Continue implementation of the practices and actions outlined in the Green Spaces Strategy (2025-2035).
- Advance the Biodiversity Action Plan through targeted conservation across priority habitats.
- Operationalise the new Greenhouse Gas reporting framework, aligned with national Protocol, to standardise climate tracking across the Council.

- Explore opportunities for further decarbonisation and green energy generation across Council assets and sites.
- Complete the Climate Adaptation Plan and continue embedding high-priority climate risks into the Council's risk registers.
- Collaborate with Hertfordshire local authorities through the HCCSP to align sustainability services within the context of Local Government Reorganisation.



- Continue delivery of the Warm Homes Social Housing programme in partnership with Equans to upgrade approximately 380 homes by April 2028.
- Deliver Year 2 of the Warm Homes: Local Grant, providing energy performance upgrades and low-carbon heating to eligible low-income private households.



- Continue the Climate Change Community Fund, providing £7,500 per ward, while introducing an enhanced governance and engagement model to empower resident-led climate projects.
- Adopt the Local Plan Partial Update in July 2026, including comprehensive new and updated climate and environmental policies. Also, progress work on a new Local Plan that delivers beyond 2031 that will include a review of climate change and environmental policies and progress, in accordance with Government legislation.

- Continue monitoring Biodiversity Net Gain in accordance with the Government's Biodiversity Duty.
- Transition to implementing a dedicated delivery vehicle for the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy, supported by the Council.
- Commence the review of the Private Rented Sector Exemptions register for Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and investigate exemptions, as necessary.
- Following the site selection phase, move toward the physical installation of public electric vehicle charging points, funded by LEVI in partnership with HCC.
- Assess future fleet requirements to build a roadmap for transitioning Council vehicles to electrification.



- Progress Phase 2 of the Gordon Craig Theatre lighting project; completing the purchase and installation of the LED stage lights, to finalise the transition to a high-efficiency system.
- Incorporate new sustainability objectives into the Pavement Licensing and Street Trading Policies by defining clear expectations for single-use plastic reduction and energy-efficient outdoor heating.

Balancing the Budget

Ensuring that sufficient resources are available to deliver the Council's priorities, while maintaining financial resilience in the face of continuing financial pressures, remains a core priority.

Since 2010/11, Stevenage Borough Council has experienced a significant reduction in Government funding, alongside sustained cost pressures driven by inflation, energy prices, and increased demand for services. These pressures continued to affect the Council in 2025/26, a year characterised by short term funding settlements and ongoing uncertainty in local government finance. However, this position will improve from 2026/27, when the Government confirmed the introduction of multi-year funding settlements, providing greater certainty and supporting more effective medium-term financial planning.

Despite this challenging context, the Council set a balanced budget for 2025/26, underpinned by prudent financial planning, effective use of reserves, and proactive management of budget pressures through its Medium Term Financial Strategy. This approach enabled the Council to protect key services, continue investment in regeneration and priority programmes, and maintain financial resilience while delivering for residents.

This year we have:



- Successfully been awarded Government grant funding of £15.7 million to build new housing.
- Paid out over £142k in Discretionary Housing Payments to provide financial support to help with rent or housing costs.
- Identified 2026/27 savings of £1.281 million to maintain the financial stability of the 2026/27 General Fund budget and delivered the majority of the 2025/26 savings identified for the year.
- Focused on service improvement by extending the town's parcel locker scheme; offering an expanded network, and increasing income to over £10,000 annually from a previous base line of £4,000.

- Provided £9.9 million in business rate relief.
- Administered £16.4 million in Housing Benefit to 1,738 residents.
- Awarded £6.8 million and supported 5,426 residents as part of our Council Tax Support scheme payments to help people struggling to pay their council tax.



- Yielded over £23,000 in income through our advertising contracts, which has helped to support essential services.



- Generated an annual income of £4,251,688.12 from the garage service, demonstrating the continued contribution of the garage stock to the Council's revenue objectives. Further, the garage stock achieved a void rate of 7.49%, reflecting strong occupancy levels across the portfolio.



- Taken a more consistent commercial approach across the Council, helping to support income levels while remaining aligned with our wider priorities.
- Administered and ran a £85,500 Household Support Fund that helped local organisations to support vulnerable households across Stevenage, with £38,200 specifically funding community cafes and £47,300 for food and energy support organisations. The fund helped to support 18 local community organisations and services, 6 food provision services delivering emergency and ongoing support, and 12 community cafés and local hubs that aim to address isolation and loneliness for residents as well as provide cost-of-living advice and support. In total, there were 34,792 visits to food provision services and community cafés.

In 2026/27, we will

- Increase income growth through the optimisation of existing concession contracts and traded services, alongside the development of new opportunities where appropriate.
- Undertake a review of services delivered by external suppliers or third-party providers on behalf of the Council, in line with the objectives set out in the Insourcing Roadmap 2023–26.
- Build organisational capability to support commercialisation and value for money by providing targeted training, practical tools, and clear communication to enable staff to identify and implement opportunities.
- Identify and deliver business change and digital efficiencies to support the Council's Balancing the Budget targets and strengthen medium-term financial sustainability.
- Pilot the parcel locker scheme into residential areas for our residents. This will drive further income to front line services with an estimate commercial uplift in total income to £34,000 by the end of 2026.
- Work with a supplier to develop a social value fund to the value of £50,000. This will be in support of local environmental improvements around the town and in support of small grants to be made available to local community and charity projects.



Cross-Cutting Themes

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The council continues to work with partners, staff, local businesses, and community groups to advance equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the workforce and community.

This year we have:

- Launched the EDI Action Plan for 2025/26 that holds 18 actions across six key objectives to ensure the rights of individuals across our workforce and local communities are continued to be championed.
- Hosted regular Officer Equality Group and Equality, Diversity Governance Group meetings where discussions covered the quarterly EDI action plan updates such as Stevenage Equalities Commission activities; the event calendar; the Council Motion to add Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic; Romani (Gypsy), Roma and Irish Traveller Community training; Windows 11 accessibility; the newly established Youth Action Group; the LGBTQ+ Network and more.



- Hosted an internal LGBTQ+ History Month bake off. The Officer Equality Group held a charity bake off event, where colleagues competed to bake the tastiest cakes and raised a total of £361 for Mermaids, a charity that supports trans+ young people and their loved ones. At the event, there was also a short talk by Barry Nixon from Airbus Stevenage, to provide an overview of Airbus' Pride network as a key founder.
- Teamed up with Unison and the Time of The Month charity to bring internal staff free sustainable period products at Council sites, with the help of our Community Development team.

- Celebrated Pride at Stevenage Day 2025 that featured a dedicated Pride area highlighting the LGBTQ+ community.



- Completed over 22 Equality Impact Assessments when reviewing and implementing a range of policies, strategies and procedures.
- Published our Equality & Diversity Annual Report for 2024/25 summarising the key demographics that make up our community and workforce, as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Published the Council's latest Gender Pay Gap Report that highlighted a mean gender pay gap of -1.09% and a median gender pay gap of 0% for 2025, outlining our continued commitment to gender equality.



- Published the Council's first ethnicity pay gap report whereby for 2024 it was announced that the mean ethnicity pay gap was -2.00% and the median ethnicity pay gap was -5.71%. This means that colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds are, on average, paid slightly more than those who identify as White British.
- Established an internal Neurodiversity Networking Group that aimed to champion reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent people, and those who struggle with their mental health or hidden disabilities. It has helped to raise awareness about neurodiversity, and establish the Council as a supportive environment for those with neurodiverse needs.



- Continued to support the work of the Stevenage Equalities Commission in moving recommendations into delivery, with specific focus on strengthening community engagement, developing action plans, and laying the foundations for long-term, community-led infrastructure this year. As part of this, significant progress was made towards the formalisation of the group into a formalised organisation to be known as Stevenage Race Equality Co-operative. This has involved engaging with over 40 organisations and individuals to shape the model, agree six clear thematic priority areas and the development of governance frameworks.

- Partnered with Operation Black Vote, through the Stevenage Equalities Commission, to design a Citizenship and Civic Engagement Programme. This responds directly to the Commission's findings regarding underrepresentation in civic and democratic life. Work this year has focused on agreeing the programme structure and delivery model, reviewing local data and Commission findings to shape the approach, and planning a 4-6 week programme to support civic participation.



- Maintained a visible presence at key local events through Stevenage Equalities Commission to help raise awareness, build trust, and gather feedback from residents at key events such as Stevenage Day, International Day and community outreach activity with over 200 residents.

Cross-Cutting Themes continued...

- Continued to play a central role in bringing organisations together across Stevenage to reduce inequality and improve residents' quality of life through the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP). Significant progress has been made towards formalising SIP into a more structured, sustainable and co-operative model. Further, a core focus for the partnership this year has been to support the voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise sector to facilitate co-ordination between services.

In 2026/27, we will:

- Publish a EDI Action Plan 2025/26 Progress Report and launch a revised action plan for 2026/27 to ensure the rights of individuals across our workforce and local communities are continued to be championed.



- Continue to host internal workshops on a range of key EDI topics throughout the year.
- Carry on monitoring our approach to Equality Impact Assessments through Service Plans, and utilise the information to inform decision making and the wider understanding of existing and future community needs.
- Finalise and launch the Stevenage Race Equality Co-operative, beginning full membership onboarding and working group delivery.

- Deliver the Civic Leadership Programme with Operation Black Vote and utilise programme findings to shape future civic participation and leadership pathways.
- Continue progressing the Social Inclusion Partnership into a formal incorporation as a Community Consortium Co-operative that seeks to expand joint delivery approaches.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

The council continues to work with partners to tackle health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

This year we have:

- Supported the delivery of the Summer Parks programme, alongside the Hertfordshire Sports & Physical Activity Partnership. This initiative aimed to fill the gap in provision for 12- to 16-year-olds over the summer holiday period. The 2025 programme took place in King George V Playing Fields, offering a range of sports, wellbeing, and arts activities, as well as providing young people with a voucher to redeem a nutritious meal from a local food provider in the Old Town. 258 attendees joined and 240 food vouchers were used.



- Continued to support our aging residents through our Age-Friendly Stevenage initiative. This year in particular, The Council has collaborated with Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK Herts to survey our older residents to find out what is important to them. A total of 214 responses were received for Stevenage that outlined resident's positivity towards their access to green spaces, indoor services such as libraries and community centres, and the perceived strong community infrastructure.



- Celebrated International Day of Older People event with over 250 attendees and 40 stalls.
- Been awarded Public Health funding through the Age UK and Herts Sports & Physical Activity Partnership to enhance the Age-Friendly and Live Longer Better work within local areas. This funding will provide a localities officer for Stevenage, North Herts and Welwyn & Hatfield to support our work to improve our town for older residents.
- Welcomed 3,675 attendees to 278 walks as part of the Stevenage Health Walks scheme. Four new walks were added this year, therefore totalling seven Health Walks in Stevenage, with new locations added at the Stevenage Library and Hampson Park.
- Continued to provide health and wellbeing support through the Stevenage Healthy Hub. This included hosting the HOPE Support Service run by MacMillan to provide support to those living with cancer, and a Bereavement Café.



- Held the second Stevenage Dementia Festival community event, attracting over 250 attendees. The event provided an important platform to showcase local services and support available for people living with dementia and their carers.

Cross-Cutting Themes continued...



- Supported the Stevenage Dementia Friends Event at Stevenage Football Club; a free community event aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of dementia. The event featured training sessions, guidance on achieving Dementia Friendly Accreditation, and a marketplace of local support services. 100 people attended and 23 new people were trained as Dementia Friends. Alongside this we have continued to provide Dementia Friends Training to partners and our frontline staff with 77 trained to date.

- Supported the launch of a new Dementia Friendly Communities accreditation scheme with Herts Memory Service and Alzheimer's Society.

- Carried out 394 community outreach sessions with 2,379 attendees as part of the Active Communities Programme, delivered in collaboration with Everyone Active. This programme enabled physical activity to be more accessible by delivering free or low-cost sessions directly within local communities. Since its launch in July 2023, 696 community outreach sessions have occurred with a total of 4,226 attendees. This Active Communities Leisure Management contract also made Stevenage Borough Council a finalist of the Best Procurement Delivery Award - Local Government and Health at the UK Go Awards in May 2025 that celebrates excellence in the public sector!



In 2026/27, we will:



- Create an inclusive and accessible 3G pitch within King George V Playing Fields as part of the PlayZone initiative, led by the Football Foundation.
- Support the delivery of Everyone Active's Community Outreach Programme.
- Continue to support older residents through our Age-Friendly Stevenage initiative, and create a linked Age-Friendly action plan to champion this.



- Continue to drive our Dementia Friends Stevenage programme working in partnership with our Licensing Team to rollout basic mandatory training to taxi drivers. Support local organisations to sign up to Dementia Friendly Accreditation and deliver our annual Dementia Festival in Fairlands Valley Park.
- Carry out more walks as part of the Stevenage Health Walks scheme, and bring new walks to the St Nicholas and Symonds Green wards.
- Recruit an additional Co-ordinator as part of the Stevenage Healthy Hub to offer in-house 'Stop Smoking' services, preventive support, and wellbeing checks within the Hub and community venues.
- Launch the Council's Healthy Stevenage Strategy, in collaboration with partners, to focus on reducing local health inequalities through prevention, early intervention, and strengthened cross-sector partnerships.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

The council has always embraced technology and innovation to enhance how we operate, and deliver system efficiencies that empower residents to use digital services too.

This year we have:



- Dealt with 106,810 enquiries since the relocation of the Customer Service Centre to the main reception at Daneshill House, including:

29,793
online forms
submitted via the
Council website

14,900
emails

78,420
calls

92.3%
customer
satisfaction rate

9,574
enquiries received
at Reception

1,808
post
enquiries

2,013
customers served
face to face

1.1 million
page views to the Council
website, averaging
over 100,000 visits
per month

25
social media
enquiries

Assisted
70
customers with
self-serve
services



- Supported residents through our Customer Services team in ensuring access to advice, support and statutory services.
- Won an industry award for transforming complaints handling and delivering better services to residents.
- Embedded a new digital system for managing parks, streets and environmental nuisance, focussed on online reporting to enable more efficient service operations.
- Developed additional digital functionality to support the expansion of the Council's commercial waste services.
- Enhanced online services for Revenues and Benefits customers; making them easier to use, enabling staff to focus on customer needs and delivering savings.



- Created new teams focused on community activities, delivering savings and enabling staff to provide more comprehensive events and community development services.
- Commenced scanning of microfiche records in conjunction with the Land Registry's national project to preserve archival material and enable digital access.

- Started using digital signature technology to speed up the process for legal agreements, providing housing options customers and new tenants with the ability to digitally sign documents and as a result, reduce the use of paper.
- Identified opportunities to improve translation and interpretation services, to improve service access and value for money.
- Launched the Digital Strategy 2026-28, committing to four priority themes of developing digital solutions, improving the website and intranet, adopting AI, and driving the use of digital services.



Cross-Cutting Themes continued...

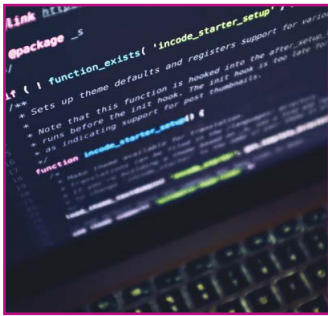
- Completed a comprehensive Data Centre Refresh by replacing ageing hardware with energy-efficient servers to provides a stable, modern platform for all digital services for the next decade.
- Modernised data storage systems to provide faster and more responsive digital services. This new high-performance solution significantly increases processing speeds, ensuring that resident-facing applications and online portals run smoothly without the delays associated with older technology.
- Migrated the internal pay system to the Cloud to improve service delivery and provide a seamless and modern experience for residents paying for council services online. It also integrates better with our other digital systems, making the entire financial journey more transparent and user-friendly.
- Rolled out a new Streets and Grounds Maintenance System to modernise local operations. This digital tool replaces older paper-based processes with a more efficient electronic workflow, enables teams to manage their daily tasks more effectively, and ensures resources are sent to the areas that need them most.
- Upgraded the Council’s Wi-Fi networks to provide faster and more stable internet connectivity for visitors accessing services. It also supports our “agile working” policy, allowing staff to serve residents more effectively from any council location.



In 2026/27, we will:



- Build on Digital Skills Survey findings by investing in training resources and optimising the M365 functionality available to staff and Members alike.
- Introduce a digitised system for Member Enquiries.
- Progress with the digitisation of data through a variety of essential projects in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation.
- Support the improvement of translation services.
- Pilot the use of AI to provide better access to Council online information and services.
- Expand the use of digital document signing to improve efficiency.
- Work collaboratively with the Housing Repairs service to provide customers with a smoother experience.



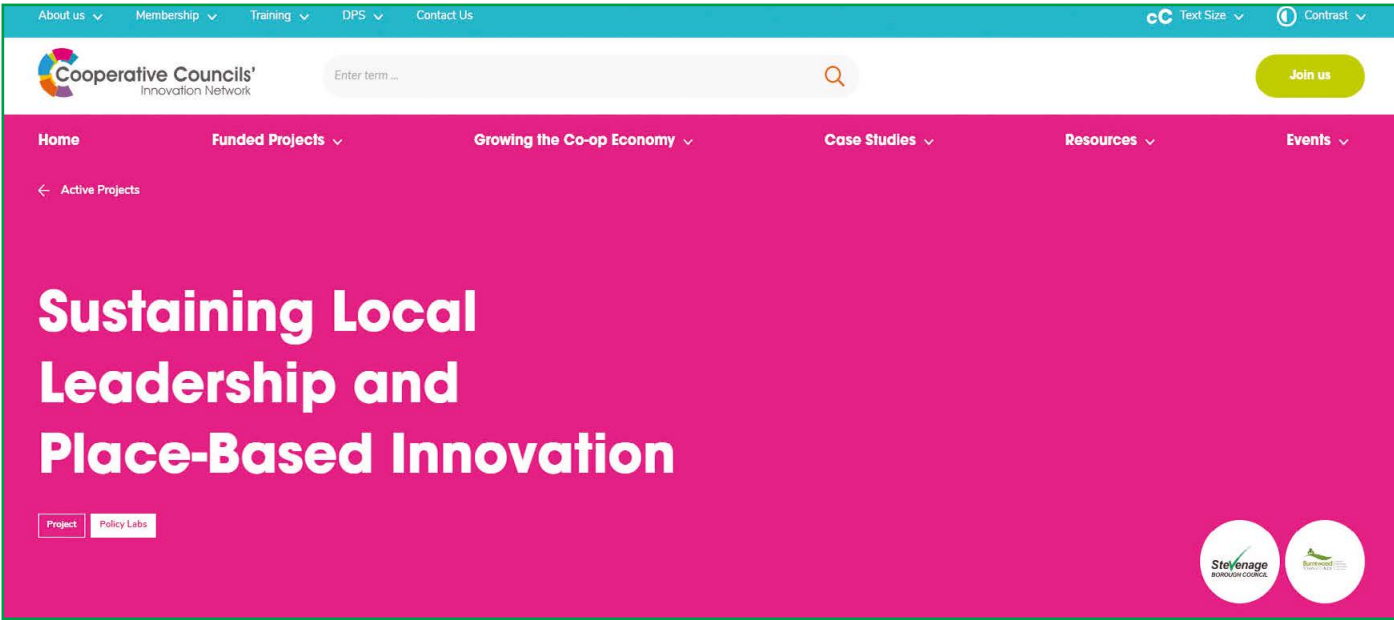
A Cooperative Council

As a Cooperative Council, we are passionate about our communities and enabling them to co-produce projects and service related policies. Central to this approach is the principle of community wealth building, which focuses on how much money is held and reinvested in an area for the benefit of local communities. As one of the largest procurers of goods and services locally, we are committed to ensuring that not only do we champion this approach to other partners and businesses, but through our actions too.

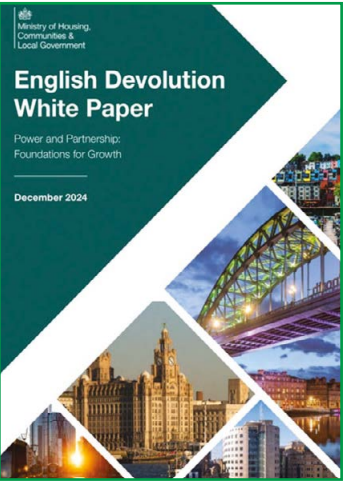
This year in particular, we have worked closely with partners across the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network to support the following policy lab project:



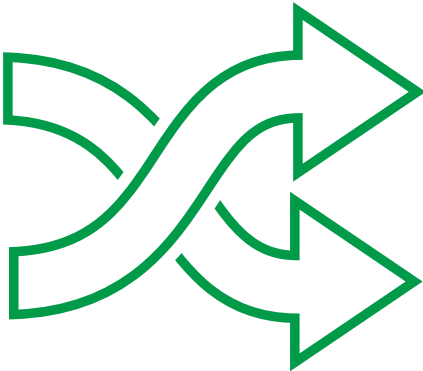
- Sustaining Local Leadership and Place-Based Innovation Policy Lab**
This two-year project focuses on strengthening community leadership and developing new ways of working with residents to tackle local challenges. Comprised of five key phases, the first two were delivered in 2025-26 and involved engaging with 25+ voluntary and community organisations across all areas and established local stakeholder groups, then designing and producing a Succession Planning Toolkit across three cross-council workshops. The policy lab is led by Stevenage Borough Council and Brent Council, working in partnership with Tamworth Borough Council; South Swindon Parish Council; Swindon Borough Council and Burntwood Town Council.



Local Government Reorganisation



During 2025/26, Local Government Reorganisation and devolution became a major area of focus for councils across Hertfordshire. The Government’s English Devolution White Paper set out an ambition to simplify local government structures in two-tier areas and strengthen devolution across England. In Hertfordshire, this means replacing the existing county, district and borough council arrangements with new unitary councils, alongside the longer-term opportunity to secure greater devolved powers for the county. This is therefore the largest change for local government in a generation.

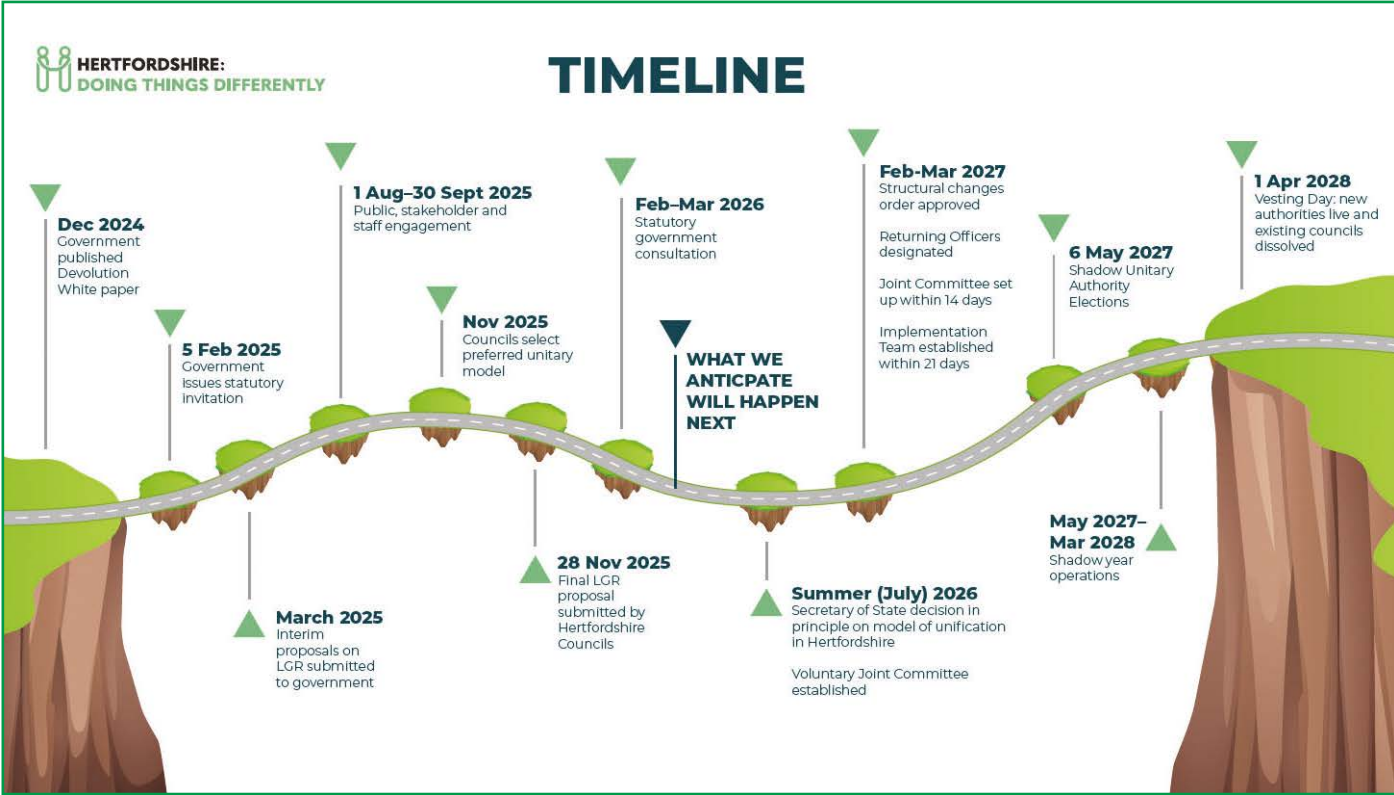


In November 2025, proposals for two, three and four unitary council models were submitted to Government for consideration. At a Special Cabinet meeting, Stevenage Borough Council indicated its support for the four unitary council proposal as its preferred approach. It was recognised that different proposals had different strengths, and the Cabinet expressed support for the four unitary proposal. The four unitary proposal was considered to offer the strongest basis for protecting local identity, maintaining democratic accountability, reflecting established economic and community relationships, and supporting growth, housing delivery, skills, regeneration and public service reform.



Alongside the development of formal proposals, the Council has begun to consider the implications of Local Government Reorganisation for service planning, governance, finance, workforce capacity and partnership working. This includes ensuring that the Council continues to deliver its existing priorities through the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan, while also preparing for the potential transition to new unitary arrangements.

As we await the Government’s decision on how many unitarities should exist within Hertfordshire, the Council will continue to work constructively with Government, Hertfordshire County Council, district and borough councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and wider partners as the process develops (see timeline below). Throughout this period, Stevenage Borough Council’s focus will remain on maintaining high-quality services, protecting residents’ interests, and ensuring that the opportunities created through reform and devolution support the long-term success of Stevenage and Hertfordshire.





Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Report

(2025-2026)

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