

Meeting COUNCIL
Portfolio Area ALL
Date 22 JULY 2026



ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT FOR 2025-26

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To report on the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees during the 2025/26 Municipal Year and to outline the Work Programme for the three Committees for 2026/27.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the work undertaken by Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees during 2025/26 and the Work Programmes for 2026/27 be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny's role is to operate as an independent function of the Council's decision-making process, by having overview of the Council's decision making, holding the Executive to account, having the power to "call in" decisions for reconsideration and undertake internal and external scrutiny reviews.
- 3.2 The Council's Constitution requires that there be an annual report to Council on the scrutiny activity over the past Municipal Year (see Article 6.3 of the Constitution).
- 3.3 This report is largely a retrospective look at the scrutiny review work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the two Select Committees during the 2025-26 Municipal Year.

- 3.4 In accordance with the Constitution the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also charged with scrutinising the Cabinet's proposals on Budget & Policy Framework items that go before Council for decision. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an interest in resources, including human resources, communications, contract compliance and financial risk. In addition, the Committees considered updates on Scrutiny studies that had been undertaken previously, examining the progress of recommendations and where appropriate following up on matters raised.
- 3.5 The Committees have also worked with their relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders on a number of separate policy development meetings developing policies and considering reports before their submission to the Cabinet.

4 SUMMARY OF SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEWS

- 4.1 Each Select Committee review made formal recommendations to the relevant Executive Member, Officers and external partners. The following is a summary of the outcomes of each scrutiny review.

4.2 COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

The Community Select Committee held 6 meetings during the 2025-26 Municipal Year. These meetings focused on the following substantive items:

3 July 2025 – (i) CSC Work Programme for 2025-26 (ii) Consideration of the Committee's Action Tracker.

16 September 2025 – (i) Update on Damp and Mould (ii) Tenant Enforcement.

11 November 2025 – (i) Interim report and recommendations of the review of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (ii) Update on the CSC Work Programme for 2025-26.

11 December 2025 – Work programme item focusing on Older People.

4 February 2026 – Work programme item focusing on Public Health.

26 March 2026 – (i) Crime & Disorder Committee (ii) Cabinet response to Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion (iii) Progress report on delivery of the 2025-26 Work Programme and possible work programme ideas for 2026-27.

4.2.1 Scrutiny of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

The Community Select Committee completed the work that the Committee had started in 2024-25. Members received the report and recommendations at its meeting on 11 November 2025. Details of the original review work can be found in [last year's annual report](#). Members commented on the recommendations and made a number of amendments as detailed in the following link [Community Select Committee - 11 November 2025 - Minute - Equalities Diversity & Inclusion](#).

- 4.2.2 The review made recommendations on the following 9 areas:

Recommendation 1- working with the local community to encourage a more diverse range of people involved in leadership roles:

- 4.2.3 That the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Equalities and Officers be recommended to (i) work with community leaders and the diverse local community to ensure a more diverse range of people can be involved in leadership roles, such as school governors, magistrates, and other public offices, working with initiatives like the citizenship programme with Operation Black Votes and (ii) Members and officers look at ways to provide support for the Equalities Commission Legacy Group to succession plan and help identify the next generation of community leaders to support this voluntary role
- 4.2.4 **Recommendation 2 – Increased collaboration between Members and the Equalities Commission Legacy Group:**
- 4.2.5 That the Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhoods be recommended to work with Members to encourage their involvement in an annual or bi-annual event with the Equalities Commission legacy group and the wider community to strengthen and sustain the Commission's initiatives.
- 4.2.6 **Recommendation 3 – The voices and lived experience of the trans community are heard in discussions and at events to help combat misconceptions and hatred:**
- 4.2.7 That officers and Members ensure that the voices of the trans community are invited into discussions and events, hearing people's lived experience to help address misconceptions and combat hatred.
- 4.2.8 **Recommendation 4 – carry out an audit of the provision of benches and seating in the town centre:**
- 4.2.9 That the Assistant Director Planning and Regulation carry out an audit of the provision of benches and seating in the town centre and at the neighbourhood shopping areas to ensure there is enough seating for older people and those with mobility issues.
- 4.2.10 **Recommendation 5 – Address concerns around digital exclusion for older people be addressed:**
- 4.2.11 That the Assistant Director Business Change be invited to acknowledge the concerns raised by input from Age Concern regarding the digital exclusion of some of the local community's older people and describe ways the Council has put mitigations in place
- 4.2.12 **Recommendation 6 – Address concerns raised by Age Concern around the lack of provision of mobility scooter hire service from the bus interchange:**
- 4.2.13 Age Concern reminded Members that there were originally plans to locate a mobility scooter hire service from the bus interchange. This had not been possible. Members requested that subject to funding being available to support such a project, officers should take forward Age Concern's offer to investigate what would be required to create a mobility buggy storage and hire options from the bus interchange.

4.2.14 **Recommendation 7 – Address the needs of young people by supporting extracurricular activities in schools and in the community via sports, interests and social clubs:**

4.2.15 Members recommended that the Council, and specifically Members via their Local Community Budgets, support young people in relation to combating mental health needs with greater access to extracurricular activities, particularly sports clubs, mentoring to encourage social interaction and personal development.

4.2.16 **Recommendation 8 – To address support for neurodiversity encourage better collaboration between the Council and external mental health experts:**

4.2.17 Members are recommending greater collaboration between the Council and external mental health experts would improve service delivery and noted this as an area for development.

4.2.18 **Recommendation 9 – Address the needs of the sight loss community:**

4.2.19 Members recommend (i) supporting the sight loss community with high-visibility markings on bollards to enhance safety for visually impaired residents. In addition, the accessibility of council leaflets should be addressed with the use high-contrast text and background to help the visually impaired and (ii) officers investigate a project to enhance the screens adjusting their height and screen resolution to make them accessible to the visually impaired and possible audio bus announcement system at the bus interchange and identify sources of funding to support such enhancements

4.3 **Update on SBC Social Housing Damp and Mould**

4.3.1 Members revisited the issue of damp and mould in Council social housing. Members received an update from officers regarding the number of cases that were carried out. [Presentation to CSC on Damp & Mould - 16 09 25 - Minutes - CSC Damp & Mould 16 09 25](#). Members raised some challenge around the following issues:

- Members suggested that clearer photographic examples of emergency cases of damp and mould would be useful.
- Members queried the communication between the Council and tenants in damp and mould cases and stressed the importance of contractor accountability where works were incomplete. Members noted that under the new contract, contractors would be measured against KPIs, which will be monitored and reported monthly as part of contract management arrangements, which Members could look at a future meeting to monitor progress.
- Members questioned whether tenants received a written report with advice following inspections which the tenants were required to sign to acknowledge receipt and understanding. Members also noted that surveyors' qualifications formed part of the recruitment process to ensure staff competence.
- Regarding whether the retrofitting of properties had reduced cases of damp and mould, Members were advised that it was too early to

determine the impact and that further work was needed to improve data collection on the Council's housing stock. A clearer numerical understanding of reported cases would enable more targeted and effective action to address the issue.

4.4 Tenancy Enforcement & Tenancy Audits

4.4.1 Members received an officer presentation providing information on the formation of a procedure for staff and a policy for tenants to help all parties understand what behaviour is expected of tenants [Community Select Committee 16 September 2025 - Tenant Enforcement & Tenancy Audits](#) - [Minutes - 16 September 2025 - Tenancy item](#) Members commented on the following issues:

- Members noted that the Social Regulation Act 2023 had granted stronger powers to inspect and enforce standards with tenants.
- Members noted that a target of 160 tenancy audits per month had been set. Between January and August 2025, 15% of audits were unable to be completed due to access not being granted. Members were also advised of the enforcement process that followed where access was not given after multiple attempts.
- Members were informed of trends identified through tenancy audits, such as unauthorised works undertaken by tenants and household details not being kept up to date. The cost to rectify unauthorised works were recharged to the tenant.
- Members commented on the standard of properties once they had been taken over due to the property being void.
- Members noted that consideration was being given to the introduction of an automated text messaging system to provide residents with notification of the timeframes for Housing Officer visits.

4.5 Older People

4.5.1 The Community Select Committee held a focused meeting on Older People [CSC 11 December 2025 - Older People](#), with an officer presentation and input from the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Older People, Cllr Myla Arceno. The portfolio holder expanded on the dementia friendly Stevenage motion that was agreed at Council in October 2025 - [“establishing a lasting and sustainable commitment to Age Friendly Communities and Dementia-Friendly action in Stevenage”](#) Members received policy documents regarding older people:

- Independent Living Scheme
- Making Stevenage a dementia friendly community
- Home adaptations
- Housing for Older People Strategy

4.5.2 The Committee noted that significant work had been undertaken in relation to a Dementia Friendly status.

4.5.3 Regarding key demographic and health data and increases in dementia diagnosis, Members were informed that falls amongst those aged 80 years and over were highlighted as a major cause of hospital admissions. It was

noted that dementia diagnosis rates in Stevenage were higher than both Hertfordshire and national averages. These factors underlined the need for strengthened prevention, support and inclusive design.

- 4.5.4 The Committee was informed that Stevenage achieved Age-Friendly Community status in 2024 and had since supported the Hertfordshire Age-Friendly application alongside Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK.
- 4.5.5 Members received an overview of sport and leisure provision for older people including strength and balance classes, the health walks programme and community-based activities delivered through the Council's leisure contract. These were highlighted as supporting mobility, independence and social connection.
- 4.5.6 The Committee received a presentation on housing related support services for older and vulnerable residents. Members were informed about the CareConnect 24/7 community alarm service, which supported all vulnerable residents. This provided monitoring or a full emergency response. The service currently supported 317 customers and responded to 594 emergency calls between April and September 2025.
- 4.5.7 An update was provided on the Council's 14 independent living schemes, including two extra care schemes. In total, 863 properties were managed across the town, all fitted with emergency alarm systems and supported by staff presence.
- 4.5.8 Members highlighted the importance of dementia-friendly design, including the use of appropriate colour contrast in street furniture and benches.
- 4.5.9 Members raised issues relating to digital inclusion, particularly for residents who may struggle with online only processes. Officers outlined ongoing work through the Council's digital strategy, alternative communication methods, and practical assistance for residents who cannot access digital services.
- 4.5.10 The Committee raised a question regarding pavement design and accessibility, particularly uneven surfaces and poor visual contrast. It was noted that these issues would be recorded and referred to relevant officers for further consideration.
- 4.5.11 Members welcomed recent additional funding secured by Hertfordshire County Council and Age UK to support Age-Friendly Hertfordshire, which would help strengthen partnership working and advocacy on issues such as transport.

4.6 Focus on Public Health

- 4.6.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Director and Deputy Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council and from SBC Health and Wellbeing Manager. [4 February 2026 - Focus on Public Health](#)
- 4.6.2 Members were advised of the statutory responsibilities of Public Health and its role in commissioning and supporting a range of preventative services. This included working in partnership with the NHS, district and borough councils and the voluntary sector to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

- 4.6.3 The presentation outlined the main challenges for Stevenage, including issues affecting children and young people, mental wellbeing and the needs of an ageing population. It was noted that levels of health inequality were higher in more deprived areas and that a place-based approach was important in addressing these challenges.
- 4.6.4 Discussion took place regarding childhood obesity and the wider factors linked to health inequalities, including mental health or family circumstances, and it was noted that these issues should not be attributed solely to deprivation.
- 4.6.5 Questions were raised as to whether current healthy eating and prevention initiatives could be extended further into secondary schools. Officers explained that a new healthy food and nutrition programme (Nourish) was being introduced in schools. It was noted that the initial phase would focus on primary schools, with plans for the programme to be extended to secondary schools at a later stage.
- 4.6.6 Members were advised that proposals for neighbourhood health and wellbeing hubs were at an early stage and were being developed with NHS partners. The intention was to bring a range of services closer to communities through either new or existing local facilities.
- 4.6.7 The Committee then received a presentation on the Council's Healthy Stevenage Strategy and the range of partnership activity underway to improve the health and wellbeing of the town.
- 4.6.8 Officers explained that the strategy would focus on reducing health inequalities through a preventative, place-based and partnership approach, aligned with NHS and local integrated neighbourhood models.
- 4.6.9 Members were advised that evidence from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment showed persistent health inequalities linked to deprivation in specific neighbourhoods, alongside an ageing population and continued challenges relating to mental health, physical activity and dementia.
- 4.6.10 The Committee noted ongoing delivery activity, including the Healthy Stevenage Partnership, the Healthy Hub, active travel programmes, dementia-friendly and age-friendly initiatives and suicide prevention work. This included targeted action at Stevenage railway station and the continued operation of the Nightlight Crisis Café.
- 4.6.11 Members highlighted the importance of education being included within the Strategy and noted the accessibility issues to residents who were working, had caring responsibilities or families. It was noted that education on healthy living and food choices should form a stronger and more visible part of the Strategy.

Community Select Members **RESOLVED** that:

1. Further local health data be circulated to Members, including cancer statistics, Stevenage JSNA focused report and vaccination uptake data.
2. A link to the Herts Sports and Physical Activity page to find local activities in areas to be shared with the Committee.

3. Education and prevention activity to be strengthened within the Healthy Stevenage Strategy, particularly in relation to healthy living and healthy food choices, and awareness of mental and physical wellbeing.
4. A more joined-up and family-based approach to children and young people's health be developed, recognising the links between mental health, family circumstances, and physical health.
5. Accessibility of services and activities be improved, particularly for residents who are in work, have caring responsibilities, or have families, and to consider the timing and location of activities.
6. To identify ways to encourage residents who don't associate themselves with being healthy or physically active to access healthy habits connected to food and exercise.
7. The visibility and outreach provision be improved, including the mobile Healthy Hub unit, and Hertfordshire County Council's Better Health Bus. through increased presence at community venues and locations.
8. Partnership working to continue to be strengthened and expanded, including with education providers, voluntary organisations and private and commercial partners, and by encouraging additional organisations to join the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.
9. Further information on the costs and funding arrangements for the development and delivery of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy be provided to the Committee.
10. Partnership with the Everyone Active Healthy Hub Bus for a Type 2 Diabetes Awareness Campaign.

4.7 Community Select Committee sitting as the Council Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee

- 4.7.1 At the Committee's Crime and Disorder focused meeting on [25 March 2026](#), Members received a presentation from SBC, head of Community Advice & Support and the Police regarding pertinent community safety issues. Members were presented with a review of the ASB service, which identified key challenges around compliance, triage, and case management. Actions to improve the service included introducing a neighbourhood management policy, strengthening early intervention, improving data systems and enhancing partnership working.
- 4.7.2 Members were advised that the priorities for 2025–2028 included strengthening community engagement, encouraging reporting of ASB and working collaboratively with residents and partners. Supporting objectives included raising awareness of risks linked to drugs and crime, supporting victims of domestic abuse, addressing cuckooing, preventing involvement in ASB, and tackling issues such as county lines and online fraud.
- 4.7.3 Data on service demand through the Council was also presented, highlighting significant numbers of referrals across community safety, domestic abuse, homelessness, and ASB services.

4.7.4 The Police provided an update on operational activity, highlighting strong partnership working with the Council. Over the past year, a number of targeted operations had been undertaken to address organised crime, retail crime, and ASB. Additional patrols in hotspot areas had contributed to the reductions in ASB and the recovery of weapons.

4.7.5 Other issues that Members considered included:

- Discussions took place regarding public perceptions of safety
- Members discussed the suicide prevention work at the train station
- A range of community safety initiatives, including domestic abuse awareness campaigns, the development of a Safer Routes project to improve safety in the town centre, and the opening of a Community Hub providing support for homeless individuals
- An educational film addressing county lines exploitation
- How progress from previous years was being measured
- Concerns around the rise in scams and fraud
- e-scooter enforcement
- Discussions took place regarding the community initiatives, including the summer holiday programme for young people. It was noted that this was a free scheme delivered in partnership with local organisations, providing activities in parks and community venues

4.7.6 Community Select Members **RESOLVED** that:

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

4.7.7 For further details of the Police and Officer presentation and the Committee discussion follow the link to the meeting of the [CSC Crime & Disorder Committee - 25 March 2026](#)

4.8 **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE**

4.8.1 Environment & Economy Select Committee: The Environment & Economy Select Committee held 8 meetings during the 2025-26 Municipal Year. [Environment & Economy Select Committee - SBC Website](#) These meetings focused on the following substantive items:

11 June 2025 – (i) Cabinet & External Partners response to Skills Review (ii) CSC Work Programme for 2025-26 (iii) Recycling in Flat Blocks Scoping Document (iv) Consideration of the Committee's Action Tracker

1 September 2025 – (i) Recycling from Council Residential Flat Blocks (ii) Notes from site visit to SBC Residential Flat Blocks.

7 October 2025 – (i) Recycling in flat blocks interviews (SBC Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment & Planning Policy & evidence from Dacorum Borough Council) (ii) Update on site visit to ride along in a Recycling Freighter and to Cavendish Road Depot.

3 November 2025 - Climate Change Update.

24 November 2025 – Draft Report and Recommendations of the Recycling in Flat Blocks.

28 January 2026 – (i) Focus on Cycling Strategy (ii) Final Report and Recommendations of the Recycling in Flat Blocks

24 February 2026 – Input from Cycling User Groups

19 March 2026 – (i) Climate Change Adaptations and (ii) Cabinet Portfolio Holders response to Recycling in Flat Blocks review.

4.8.2 Cabinet Portfolio Holder and External Partners response to the Skills Agenda review. The response document was considered by Members at their meeting on 11 June 2025.

- Members welcomed the proposed expansion of Stevenage Works under Recommendation 1, particularly with respect to green construction and technologies such as solar and air source heat pumps.
- A Member commented on Recommendation 3, acknowledging the importance of training individuals in childcare but highlighted a lack of local nurseries in which such individuals could work.
- The Chair commented regarding Recommendation 5, which referenced work experience placements through Generation Stevenage involving four local schools.
- A query was raised by a Member regarding Recommendation 10, which mentioned future employment opportunities linked to increased defence sector funding. A Member questioned whether jobs could legally be ringfenced for Stevenage residents, the Chair acknowledged that this issue had been raised during the review and noted the challenges in ensuring local recruitment, particularly where recruitment is managed by external agencies.
- The Chair shared formal feedback from the Portfolio Holder, who expressed his appreciation to Committee Members and particularly to the Council's Corporate Policy and Performance Manager for their work on the Skills Agenda. The Portfolio Holder welcomed Cabinet's positive endorsement of the review's findings and emphasised the importance of addressing the local skills gap, especially in relation to green jobs. They hoped that Stevenage Works could be expanded to address the issues identified.

4.8.3 For further details of the final report and background to the recommendations follow the link to the [E&E Select Committee - Final Skills Agenda Report - 14 January 2025](#) & Minutes of this meeting which provide further commentary on

the review - [Minutes - Skills Agenda Review 14 January 2025](#) and the Cabinet Member and External Partner response to the review is detailed in the link - [Cabinet Member & External Partner Response to Skills Agenda Review - 11 June 2025](#)

4.9. Recycling in Flat Blocks

4.9.1 Commencing this review, the Environment & Economy Select Committee met on 5 occasions during the municipal year to undertake the review, this included on 11 June 2025 to consider the review scoping document; 1 September to receive an officer presentation; 7 October 2025 to interview witnesses, 24 November 2025 to consider the draft report and recommendations of the review; [28 January 2026 to consider the final report of the review](#) and then on 19 March 2026 to receive the Cabinet Portfolio Holders response to the final review of recycling in flat blocks and were supported by the following officers Director of Environment & Leisure, Steve Dupoy, Kris White, Head of Environmental Operations, Colin Littlechild, Assistant Operations Manager, Claire Nicholls, Project Manager Waste and Claire Murrell, Environmental Development Officer.

4.9.2 Summary of the key findings of the review relating to recycling in flat blocks:

- There is not a 'one size fits all approach' that can be adopted – each flat block and location requires a bespoke approach, making it complicated to deliver
- A campaign to engage with residents to take up recycling is required including identifying recycling champions and targeting young people via campaigns in schools
- The introduction of food waste recycling would provide opportunities to improve the recycling rates in Stevenage and reduce the amount of residual waste going for incineration
- The funding that the Council will receive from central government from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding should provide the necessary capital funding to deliver recycling facilities across the Council's flat block housing stock

4.9.3 The review made recommendations on the following 8 areas:

Recommendation 1 – (i) Recycling Champions - It is recommended that regarding recycling champions officers would be asked to consider encouraging recycling with awards and recognition for the areas with the most recycling, promote with young residents, consider smiley stickers on bins etc.

Recommendation 2 – Infographic stickers on the bins - It is recommended that SDS Officers consider using large infographic stickers on the bins to differentiate different recycling bins, this would be a cheaper and easier option than multiple-coloured bins.

Recommendation 3 – Mobile CCTV at Bring Bank Sites - (i) Regarding Bring Bank sites, Officers consider using mobile CCTV of sites with signage saying CCTV in operation and where fly tipping can be evidenced follow up with education and civil prosecution and (ii) Regarding any future plans to rationalise the Bring Bank Sites Members asked to see the plans for early

consideration ahead of any public consultation as there were concerns over reducing the capacity.

Recommendation 4 – Use of Signage in bin stores – That any signage used should not be overly descriptive, the primary focus should be on encouraging positive behaviour and educating the public, rather than enforcing rules or regulations.

Recommendation 5 – Use of easy to understand and easy to do recycling methods at flat blocks - Members recognise the challenges of implementing recycling provision across such a diverse range of flat blocks and that there is not one single solution that can be rolled out across the flat blocks. (i) It is recommended that whatever offer officers consult on they will need to be simple and accessible to residents to encourage them to take part in any new recycling schemes and (ii) ensure that the literature is available in different formats including other languages, on request (noting however that the literature is mostly pictorial) and in braille.

Recommendation 6 – A possible solutions to collection of recycling at Vardon Road Flats and similar flat blocks - It is recommended that in areas similar to the Vardon Road flats, where there are currently no recycling bins, an option could be to provide large plastic bins or large strong flexible sacks that residents would put their recycling into and then the refuse operatives could move up to the exit/ car park area to the freighters using light fabric sacks (the SDS refuse operatives currently manually lift general waste plastic sacks up a set of steps to the refuse freighters)

Recommendation 7 – Measures to counter fly tipping around bin stores by non-residents – It is recommended that Officers ensure that all new bin stores have locks of some sort and existing ones are also made secure to stop incidents of fly tipping from non-residents.

Recommendation 8 – Use of innovative 3 wheeled bin. Members commend Stevenage Direct Services Officers for the innovation of their own designed 3 wheeled bin. (i) Members recommend that a survey of flat block sites be carried out to see where this bin can be utilised in recycling collections around the town and (ii) That SDS work with the Assistant Director, Business Change and Digital regarding the business opportunity for protecting the design.

The Community Select Committee completed the work that the Committee had started in 2024-25. Members received the report and recommendations at its meeting on 11 November 2025. Details of the original review work can be found in [last year's annual report](#). Members commented on the recommendations and made a number of amendments as detailed in the following link [Community Select Committee - 11 November 2025 - Minute - Equalities Diversity & Inclusion](#).

4.10 **Climate Emergency update**

- 4.10.1 The Select Committee received an update in November 2025 and again in March 2026 from the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Rob Broom and the Head of Climate Action, Fabian Oyarzun and the AD Planning and Regulation, Alex Robinson. In November the Committee received an updated presentation updating Members regarding the actions taken and the progress

made on the strategic themes from the 2020 Climate Change Strategy which were broken down into 9 levels including international, national, regional and local level. Members discussed with officers the 8 strategic themes at the Stevenage Level which include:

(1)Businesses; (2)Homes; (3)Waste & Recycling; (4)People; (5) Construction & Regeneration; (6)Transport; (7)Energy & Water and (8)Biodiversity

[Notes of informal meeting of E&E Select Committee re Climate Change Update 3 November 2025](#)

On 19 March 2026 the Committee commented on a further update focused on actions the Council was taking regarding climate adaptations that the Council is taking to adjust its services to more extreme weather - [Climate Change Adaptations Plan - E&E Select Committee 19 March 2026](#)

4.10.2 In addition to the formal review work undertaken by Environment and Economy Select Committee Members, selected Members and Officers supported the work of the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment by contributing to the informal meetings of the Portfolio Holder's Climate Change Progress Group.

4.11 Focus on Cycling

4.11.1 The Committee considered the 2018 Cycling Strategy Action Plan to see what progress had been made against the strategy at its meeting on 28 January 2026. Member made a number of challenges and comments regarding the strategy and these are detailed in the revised Minutes which were agreed at the Committee's next meeting on [24 February 2026](#)

4.11.2 The Committee followed up with a second meeting on 24 February again focusing on the 2018 Cycling Strategy but this time it met with cycling users groups, who provided a critique of the strategy and their aspirations for cycling in the town and these points are detailed in the Minutes of the meeting – [Minutes 24 02 2026](#)

4.12 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.12.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 9 occasions to provide overview of the work of the Cabinet, specifically looking at all Key Decisions made by the Cabinet and all Budget and Policy Framework items. In addition to these meetings the Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out its own work programme items:

4.13 Informal Meeting regarding English Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – 6 November 2025

4.13.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the Local Government Reorganisation at its [informal meeting of Committee Members on 6 November 2025](#). The Chair stated that the meeting provided scrutiny Members with an opportunity to carry out some pre-scrutiny of the item and they received a presentation ahead of the Cabinet making its preference to the Secretary of State regarding the Council's submission on the number and boundaries of the possible new authorities covering Hertfordshire. Members

asked a number of detailed questions regarding the process and officers provided a comprehensive response.

4.14 Informal Meeting regarding Corporate Communications – 26 November 2025

4.14.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its [informal meeting on 26 November 2025](#), received, as an agreed work programme item, a presentation on the Corporate Communications Team. Members interviewed Head of Communications and Marketing, Sandy Eaton and the Interim Strategic Director, Kathryn Carr. Members were supportive of the small team who carried out this important communications function for the Council. Members made the following recommendations:

- Officers confirmed they would seek to provide the Committee with further examples of resources at comparable Councils.
- Members requested to have specific briefings on controversial matters.
- Members noted the strong need for closer working and possible reintegration of the Communication and Website team.
- Members commented that it would be helpful for information to be circulated to them prior to being published on social media, so they would be aware of upcoming events/ communications.
- Better coordination was needed between teams to understand the guidance for communications to residents.

4.15 Informal Meeting regarding Members Enquiries – 1 December 2025

4.15.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its [informal meeting on 1 December 2025](#), received, as an agreed work programme item, a presentation on the Members Enquiries System. Following a presentation from the Assistant Director Business Change and Digital, Nadia Capuano, and the Head of Customer and Digital Services, Greg Arends. Members asked a series of questions regarding the current service and potential improvements that could be made to the system. Members made the following recommendations:

- There should be regular updates from officers to members until a case is resolved and it should be made clear to members when a case has been resolved
- There should be a discussion with the Strategic Leadership Team regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each department regarding timescales for responses to members and to residents on an issue
- Improvements to automated case closures (e.g. street cleansing, hedge cutting) providing a narrative and detail of when the routine works will be carried out, not just a bland reference like “when the area is next cleaned on a routine visit, etc.”
- Fuller responses provided alongside automated ones when needed (E.g. signposting to the relevant other authority or company rather than “it’s not us” responses)

- An Information page for members to include:
- Third party contact information for key services like HCC, UK Power Network, Water company.
- Tree / street light ownership information
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Changes to processes / systems (e.g. housing allocation policy / Street cleansing schedule).

4.16 **Workforce Presentation – 20 January 2026**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its [meeting on 20 January 2026](#), received, as an agreed work programme item, a presentation on SBC Workforce provided an overview of current workforce demographics at Stevenage Borough Council, key challenges, and future priorities.

4.16.1 Key information that Members considered were:

- Local government workforce nationally had reduced by approximately 16% over the past decade.
- Stevenage Borough Council employed 702 staff (663 full time equivalent posts). It was noted that the Council also employed 29 agency staff.
- 51% of staff lived within SG1 or SG2 postcodes. Members noted that two thirds of staff used to live within Stevenage.
- Gender split of the workforce was 53% female and 47% male.
- The gender pay gap had improved to -0.98%.
- The Council confirmed its continued commitment to paying the Living Wage.
- Workforce diversity was increasing, with 18% of Stevenage Borough Council staff identifying as from an ethnic minority background.
- Disability data was reported as below the national average, with actions underway to improve reporting levels.
- Widespread recruitment challenges were noted across the sector.

4.16.2 Members sought clarification on workforce data, including the proportion of staff living in SG1 and SG2 at senior levels, disability reporting and sickness absence. Officers confirmed that further information on senior-level residency would be provided, explained that disability was under reported within the system, and that reasonable adjustments were supported through manager engagement and external occupational health advice. It was noted that sickness absence had improved to below target, with long term sickness defined as 21 days or more.

5.1 **2026/2027 Scrutiny Work Programmes**

5.1.1 The two Select Committees have agreed their Work Programmes for the year as follows:

5.2 Community Select Committee:

The Community Select Committee agreed to scrutinise the following issues:

- Main review - Support for Young People

- Pre-scrutiny Policy Development – Housing Strategy and Housing Tenancy Strategy
- Annual Summary of the Housing Allocations policy
- One-off update item on Housing Damp & Mould
- Preparation for Safe and Legal transition of Housing Services re Local Government Reorganisation
- Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee
- Standing item on Public Health – with a view to work with HCC Public Health lead and partners including the Council's Health Scrutiny rep

5.3 Environment and Economy Select Committee:

The Environment & Economy Select Committee agreed to scrutinise the following issues:

- Main review - Enforcement of fly-tipping
- Ongoing watching brief on the Climate Emergency – continue with 2 sessions during the year in Oct/Nov to coincide with the Annual Climate Change update to Council, with an emphasis on local matters rather than global or national and in March to drill down on specific local measures
- Update on Cycling, report back with a response to the 2 meetings in 2026
- Update on Skills, revisiting the previous work of the committee and receiving an update on current work in this area
- Update on Cost of Living, revisiting the previous work of the committee and receiving an update on current work in this area

The programmes above will be prioritised to ensure the key review activity takes place during the Municipal Year. As well as carrying out review work the Committee will also undertake any other pre-scrutiny Policy Development work as directed by the officer Strategic Leadership Team and the Council and Executive Forward Plan.

5.4 Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

5.4.1 In addition to undertaking all scrutiny of Budget & Policy Framework items and decisions of the Executive, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the capacity to undertake a "Select Committee" style meeting during the year if it so wishes. The Committee agreed to add the following items to its work programme:

- Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as and when required
- ICT Cyber Security, as a one-off update
- Social Value of Contracts (as a subset of financial oversight), as a one-off meeting

5.4.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and also consider all 'Call-in' requests in accordance with the Council's Constitution. The Committee also considers any Councillors Call for Action in relation to matters relating to Resource. The Committee also considers any Petition appeals, in accordance with the Councils Petition Scheme, specifically regarding matters relating to Resources or of a Corporate or Council wide nature.

5.5 Scoping reviews

- 5.5.1 A schedule of generic dates for meetings for the two Select Committees has been arranged for the 2026-27 Municipal Year, as and when any further meetings are scheduled electronic diary invites will be sent to Members on the Committee. These meetings will incorporate the scoping of the review where Members will identify the areas they wish to cover during the review, who to interview, what evidence/background information is required and which Members will lead the questioning on a specific area, as well as undertaking site visits, where appropriate. Meetings will also be arranged to revisit previous reviews to monitor actions.

5.6 Pre-Scrutiny Policy Development Meetings

- 5.6.1 Pre-scrutiny Policy Development meetings will continue to be undertaken as and when directed by the Strategic Directors/Assistant Strategic Directors. These meetings are chaired by the relevant Overview & Scrutiny or Select Committee Chairs and the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders are invited to attend.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 There are no financial implications for this report.

6.2 Legal Implications

- 6.2.1 There are no legal implications for this report.

6.3 Climate Change Implications

- 6.3.1 All Climate Change implications are addressed in paragraphs 4.3.19 to 4.3.21

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 None

8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 8.1 Local Government Act 2000, Public Involvement in Heath Act 2007, Localism Act 2011, Overview & Scrutiny Statutory Guidance for Councils April 2024 - [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK](#)