

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 7 July 2026

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Jim Brown (Chair), Rob Henry (Vice-Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Lynda Guy, Dermot Kehoe, Peter Clark, Matthew Hurst CC, Jaysica Marvell, Liam Morrell Phillips, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 18:00
Time: End Time: 19:20

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jackie Hollywell

Councillor Peter Clark was present as a substitute for Councillor Jackie Hollywell.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Community Select Meeting on 25 March 2026 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be noted.

4 COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2026-27

The Committee received and considered the Community Select Committee Work Programme. Members noted the inclusion of forthcoming pre-decision scrutiny items on the Tenancy Strategy and Housing Strategy, providing an opportunity to comment on and help shape policy before Cabinet consideration. The Committee also considered the proposed scope for the review of support for young people and noted the programme of future meetings, including updates on the Housing Allocations Policy, damp and mould following the implementation of Awaab's Law, preparations for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the annual Crime and Disorder Committee meeting, and a focused session on public health.

At this juncture the Chair clarified that the duty on crime and disorder to cooperate was a shared responsibility across partner organisations, including councils, health services, the police, fire and probation services, with each organisation contributing its respective role to achieve coordinated and effective outcomes.

It was also noted that the Action Tracker would be presented at the next meeting to

enable Members to monitor the progress of previous scrutiny reviews and recommendations.

During discussion, Members acknowledged the importance of reviewing previous scrutiny topics to ensure recommendations continued to deliver outcomes. The Committee recognised the close relationship between housing, public health and community wellbeing, and the value of maintaining engagement with health partners. Members also noted the balance between reactive scrutiny of Cabinet decisions and proactive policy development through committee-led reviews. It was acknowledged that the work programme may need to remain flexible to accommodate possible LGR developments during the municipal year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Community Select Committee Work Programme, as presented, be approved, subject to amendments as required during the year to reflect emerging priorities.

5 **PRE-SCRUTINY POLICY DEVELOPMENT ITEM ON THE TENANCY STRATEGY**

The Director of Housing & Neighbourhoods presented the proposed Tenancy Strategy, which had been brought forward for consideration prior to its submission to Cabinet.

Members were advised that the strategy was a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 and replaced the Council's previous strategy, last reviewed in 2013. The updated strategy reflected legislative changes, including the Renters' Rights Act and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, and set out the Council's expectations of registered providers in relation to tenancy types, rent setting, tenancy sustainment, partnership working and the effective use of social housing stock.

Officers explained how the strategy complemented the Council's wider housing policies, including the Allocations Policy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with an emphasis on preventing tenancy failure, supporting vulnerable tenants, encouraging downsizing where appropriate, promoting mutual exchange and strengthening collaboration with registered providers.

Members noted the significant demand for social housing, with over 1,500 households on the housing register, and acknowledged that demand continued to exceed supply despite the Council's ongoing housebuilding programme.

During discussion, Members raised questions regarding public consultation, succession of tenancies, tenant engagement, void property management, older persons' housing, downsizing incentives, registered providers' responsibilities, housing standards and future housing supply.

Officers confirmed that consultation with registered providers had been undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements and that public consultation had attracted limited responses, although the feedback broadly supported the strategy and highlighted the need for additional affordable housing and enhanced tenancy support.

Members suggested strengthening references to tenant engagement within the strategy and sought reassurance regarding support for tenants, improvements to the management of void properties and measures to encourage downsizing. Officers confirmed that tenancy audits, revised downsizing incentives and continued partnership working with registered providers formed part of the Council's approach. The Committee also discussed the challenges of balancing investment in existing housing stock with the need to deliver new affordable homes and recognised the continuing pressures on the social housing system.

It was **RESOLVED** That the Committee noted the proposed Tenancy Strategy, requested that consideration be given to strengthen tenant engagement and the feedback provided by Members during the discussion be included at Cabinet in July.

6 **DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT FOR REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Committee considered the draft scoping document for the proposed review into support for young people and discussed the need to refine its scope and key lines of enquiry.

Members agreed that a clear definition of "young people" was required to ensure the review remained focused, with discussion centring on an age range broadly between 14 and 25 years to include secondary education, further and higher education, training, employment and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Members also suggested examining services previously provided by the Council that were no longer available, like the play bus and play centres, assessing their impact, and considering the effectiveness of current engagement mechanisms such as the Youth Council.

Additional areas identified for inclusion included support for looked after children and care leavers, particularly the transition into adulthood, and the involvement of Hertfordshire County Council and other relevant agencies to provide evidence on transition arrangements and responsibilities.

Members further agreed that the review should adopt a partnership approach by engaging schools, health services and other key organisations. It was noted that previous scrutiny work on skills had been comprehensive and should not be duplicated. Instead, Members proposed a stronger emphasis on young people's mental health, access to services including CAMHS, support for families, neurodiversity, and the impact these issues had on education and wellbeing.

Members also highlighted the importance of considering educational inequalities, including the underachievement of some demographic groups, to ensure the review reflected equality and inclusion objectives. The Chair concluded that the discussion had provided a strong foundation from which officers could refine the scope and develop more detailed lines of enquiry.

It was **RESOLVED** That the draft scoping document be amended to reflect Members' comments, including a clearer definition of the target age range, revised lines of enquiry, and additional evidence sources.

7 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

8 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR