Part I – Release to Press

Stevenage BOROUGH COUNCIL

Agenda item: ##

Meeting	Cabinet
Portfolio Area	Economy, Skills & Young People
Date	10/09/26

FUTURE OF THE GSK SITE: IMPACT, RESPONSE AND OPTIONS

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 GSK intends to relocate its Stevenage research and development operations to Cambridge by 2029, affecting approximately 1,800 roles in Stevenage. Initial analysis indicates the direct and locally retained economic impact could be around £80 million in lost Gross Value Added (GVA) each year, before wider supply-chain and employee-spending effects are included.

1.2 The announcement represents potentially, one of the most significant economic shocks to the area in a generation, given the importance of the life sciences sector to the local economy and to those who work in the facility and supply chain. This will require a proactive response from a range of partners, to help mitigate this impact and create opportunities and jobs into the future. The local economy is broad and diverse, which provides a good foundation to respond to this challenge. Stevenage's employee jobs base has grown by around a quarter since 2015, and the life science and innovation base has also diversified significantly in the last decade.

1.3 This report sets out the Council's intention to convene a partnership response with Government, Hertfordshire partners and businesses. The Council is forming a joint working group with Hertfordshire Futures (part of Hertfordshire County Council) and will work through a close partnership with Stevenage Development Board and many local organisations. The Council has started engagement with key stakeholders and called on Government's support to set up a Taskforce, to support the development of an implementation plan to help secure the best possible outcomes for the town and local community. The Council will also continue to work closely with our partner Councils, who will form the new Central Hertfordshire unitary Council in April 2028.

1.4 The Council wishes to build on GSKs commitment to engage with local stakeholders. The early phases of work will focus the Taskforce on deepening its insights on how to best respond to the impact of the move on:

- local people, supply chain and economy during the transition to 2029; and
- maximising the potential of the future use of the site to create good quality local jobs and opportunities.

1.5 Stevenage offers unique strengths such its global reputation for innovation in Cell and Gene therapy with growing local businesses like Autolus and other innovation in the life sciences at the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, as well the potential for growth and innovation within the defence sector with MBDA and Airbus as important anchors.

1.6 GSK owns its site and will have its own commercial considerations when exploring future options. A commitment from government and partnership is critical to explore how Stevenage's economic strengths might shape the future of the site, and how the Council with government and other partners might best use its levers such as planning or other potential interventions to benefit the wider economy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet

2.1 Notes GSK's announcement to relocate its research and development operations from Stevenage to Cambridge by 2029 and the potential economic implications for Stevenage and the wider Hertfordshire economy.

2.2 Notes the action taken by the Council following the announcement, including engagement with GSK, Government, Hertfordshire partners, businesses and other stakeholders to understand the implications and maintain confidence in Stevenage's economy.

2.3 Grants delegated authority to the Strategic Director, having consulted with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Young People, to establish a partnership Taskforce, to oversee the response to GSK's announcement.

2.4 Endorses continued engagement with Government to highlight the national and regional significance of the economic impact and to explore the investment, infrastructure, policy and other interventions that could support the future of the site and the wider Stevenage economy.

2.5 Approves an allocation of up to £440,000 from the General Fund, comprising £350,000 in 2026/27 and £90,000 in 2027/28. This is to enable the Council to work with partners to respond swiftly and effectively given the importance of this issue. Specifically, to provide dedicated project capacity, specialist advice, evidence and market analysis and the development of the Implementation Plan, appropriate planning levers and seeking any further external funding opportunities.

2.6 Notes the work with other public sector partners including Hertfordshire Futures and government to support the task group and help prepare an implementation plan, and to consider options to seek external contributions from other partners as appropriate.

2.7 Agrees, owing to the scale and strategic significance of the potential economic impact arising from GSK's proposed withdrawal from Stevenage, that the associated risks be added to the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

2.8 Requests that a further report be brought to Cabinet by June 2027 to seek approval of an Implementation Plan and identify any further approvals or funding required.

3 BACKGROUND

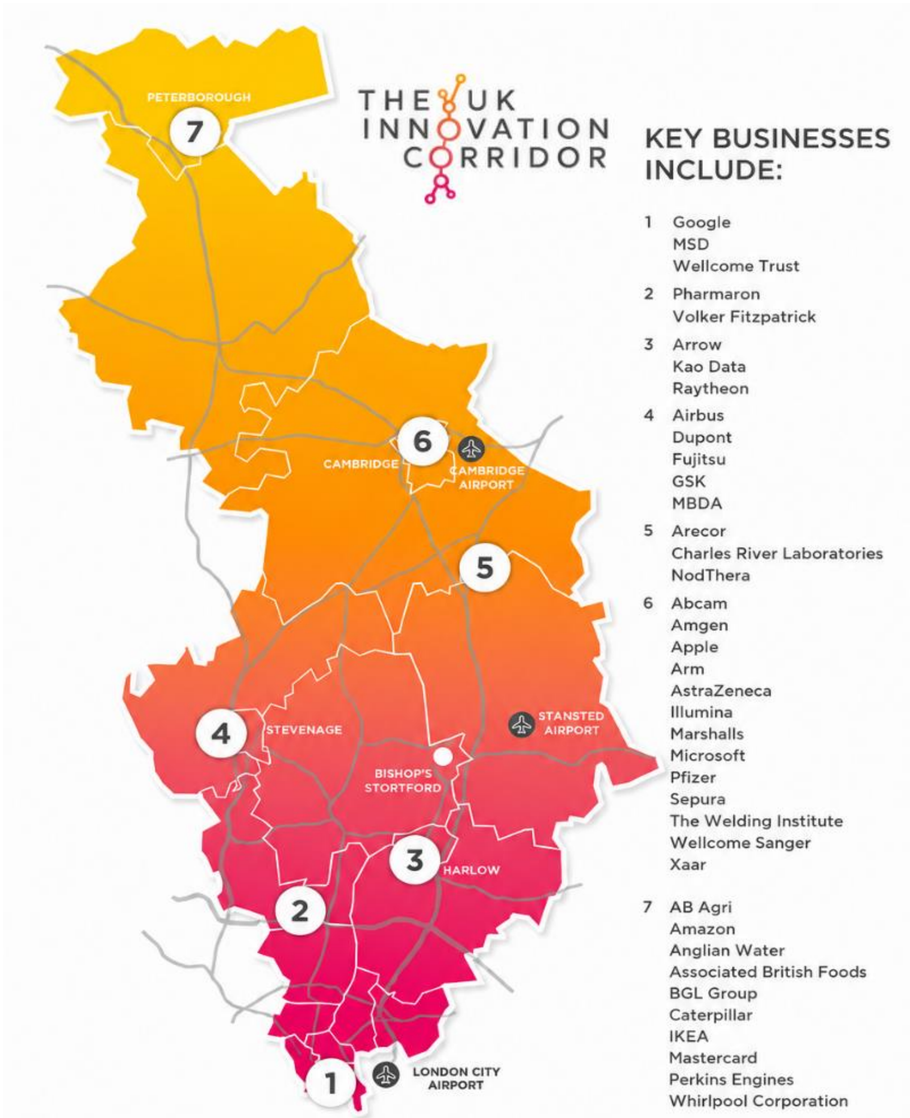
Stevenage Economy, Growth and STEM Strengths

3.1 Stevenage is a significant employment centre within Hertfordshire and has developed a strong, diverse economic base. The town is home to major employers across life sciences, defence, aerospace, space, engineering and technology, alongside a wider network of smaller businesses and supply chains.

3.2 Latest labour market data records approximately 54,000 employee jobs in Stevenage in 2024. Approximately 51% of these jobs are within industries associated with science, technology, engineering and related activity, demonstrating the importance of STEM-based businesses and organisations to the town's employment base.

3.3 Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities account for around 4,500 employee jobs across Stevenage, while Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst separately estimates that more than 4,000 people are employed across the life sciences campus. The figures are drawn from different sources and are not directly comparable.

3.4 Stevenage is located on the London-Cambridge axis of the UK Innovation Corridor and within the wider London-Oxford-Cambridge life sciences geography commonly described as the Golden Triangle, connecting the town to major concentrations of research, investment, life sciences and technology.



3.5 Stevenage also has nationally important strengths in defence, aerospace and space. Airbus Defence and Space and MBDA have maintained a major presence in the town for more than six decades.

3.6 The Government's Defence Industrial Strategy identifies defence as an engine for economic growth and supports stronger regional clusters of businesses, research and specialist capability. This provides a further opportunity for Stevenage and the wider Hertfordshire economy. The Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026-2036 highlights the importance of defence, life science, and technology in driving innovation and growth.

3.7 Stevenage's growth has also been supported by a substantial programme of public and private investment. Town Centre Regeneration has delivered new homes, commercial space, public realm and community infrastructure, alongside the £37.5 million Towns Fund programme and wider private sector investment.

3.8 The development of the Station Gateway regeneration proposals represents a major component of the next phase of the town's regeneration programme. A development agreement has been signed to progress a mixed-use scheme including at new homes, improved station facilities and significant commercial, public and community space, the potential for higher education space, strengthening connections with the town centre and Stevenage's key employment area on Gunnelswood Road, the GSK site and wider life science campus.

3.9 The Council has consistently sought to connect economic growth with opportunities for local residents. Stevenage Works brings together employers, the Council, education providers and employment partners to improve employment and skills pathways and a pipeline of future talent. North Hertfordshire College's Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre has expanded technical education provision linked to local growth sectors, while the Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme with Mission44 is seeking to strengthen routes for young people into STEM careers.

Life Sciences and Innovation

3.10 More than 4,000 people are currently estimated to be employed across the Stevenage life sciences campus. The campus includes GSK, Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, LifeArc and Cytiva, alongside more than 45 therapeutics companies. Companies based at Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst have raised more than £4 billion since its establishment in 2012.

3.11 The campus figure does not capture the wider life sciences footprint across Stevenage, including:

Autolus Therapeutics: Autolus grew through the Stevenage life sciences cluster before establishing its Nucleus advanced manufacturing facility and European headquarters within Stevenage town centre. The £65 million investment supports around 350 - 400 jobs. Economic analysis estimates that every £1 generated through this activity creates approximately £3.20 of value in the local economy.

Sycamore House: Sycamore House provides flexible laboratory and office accommodation for life sciences businesses, including start-ups, scale-ups and larger companies.

3.12 Prior to GSK's announcement, economic modelling identified significant further growth potential for the Stevenage life sciences cluster, including the potential to create around 4,500 additional jobs and increase annual gross GVA to the UK economy to £417 million by 2040. GSK's decision changes the assumptions on which those projections were based, updated economic and market analysis will now be needed.

3.13 Despite GSK's proposed relocation, Stevenage will retain a substantial life sciences sector – and more broadly, sectors enabling new innovation and technology - supported by specialist infrastructure, established businesses and continued investment. Maintaining confidence in the cluster and the conditions for businesses to grow and invest will be central to the response.

3.14 The national policy context reinforces the importance of this work. The Government's Life Sciences Sector Plan identifies life sciences as a national growth priority, with a focus on world-class research and development, attracting investment and the growth of strong regional clusters. Government has also identified a role for Mayoral Strategic Authorities and other regional partners in developing investible propositions that can support future cluster growth. The Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026-2036 provides an important policy basis to underpin a partnership response.

GSK and the Adjoining Area

3.15 GSK's operations sit within a wider life sciences and innovation campus that has developed around the original research site. The wider campus includes:

Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst: Established in 2012, the Catalyst provides specialist laboratory and office space for a significant concentration of life sciences start-up and scale-up businesses. Its facilities are held under separate lease arrangements from GSK.

Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult: The Catapult operates specialist development and manufacturing facilities supporting the commercialisation and scale-up of cell and gene therapies. Its facilities are also held under separate lease arrangements from GSK.

Wider campus organisations: The campus includes more than 45 therapeutics companies, providing a substantial base of scientific, research and commercial activity independent of GSK.

Elevate Quarter: The adjoining Elevate Quarter retains planning permission for around 118,500 square metres of life sciences and R&D space alongside two data centres. The revised scheme, approved in March 2026, is expected to support around 4,400–4,500 jobs.

3.16 The existing GSK site is predominantly used for research and development and remains identified through the Local Plan for high-value employment uses. Article 4 Directions also remove certain permitted development rights for conversion to residential use, giving the Council greater planning levers in relation to proposals that would significantly change land use on the site.

3.17 GSK remains the landowner and decisions relating to its disposal and future ownership will be commercial matters for the company. The Council wishes to explore how it can best use its planning, economic development and convening roles in partnership with other stakeholders and government to help maximise future employment and economic value.

3.18 The combined campus area is one of Stevenage's most important employment locations, and its future will have a significant bearing on the town's ability to retain and grow STEM related employment beyond 2029.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

3.19 The GSK announcement has been made at the same time as significant changes to local governance in Hertfordshire. Government has confirmed its preferred approach, with Stevenage expected to form part of a new Central Hertfordshire unitary authority alongside North Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield from 1 April 2028. As GSK's transition extends through to 2029, the programme will span the current and successor arrangements.

3.20 The future of the GSK site and Stevenage's life-sciences cluster has significance for Stevenage, the future Central Hertfordshire authority, the wider Hertfordshire economy and beyond.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 GSK's announcement represents a major economic impact for Stevenage and Hertfordshire. The scale of the impact requires a response involving local, regional and national partners.

4.2 Initial high-level economic analysis has been undertaken (Table 1) to provide an early indication of the potential impact if the economic activity associated with GSK's Stevenage operation is not replaced with similar value employment on their site.

4.3 A robust response is also required to maintain confidence with the remaining life science businesses, wider investment in jobs to and skills, and innovation ecosystem in Stevenage.

4.4 This is at a time when significant government reform is taking place with an ambition for devolution, where the Government's policy intention is to devolve powers to Mayoral Strategic Authorities, with the potential to devolve funding that can help unlock growth, jobs and opportunity in the UK. Stevenage presents a unique opportunity which needs to partnership and government commitment to unlock. The GSK site alongside the adjacent Elevate quarter (owned by UBS), set in the context of wider Gunnelswood Road and with

Stevenage's plans for regeneration offers the potential to accelerate growth across a number of the Government's priority growth sectors including defence, technology as well as life sciences.

Table 1: Initial estimate of the economic impact of GSK's relocation

Impact	Initial Estimate
GVA associated directly with GSK's Stevenage employment	c.£70m per year
Additional GVA associated with wider supply-chain and employee spending impacts	c.£40m per year
Initial estimated local GVA impact	c.£110m per year
Indicative impact over ten years if activity is not replaced	c.£1.1bn

These figures are initial high-level estimates and should not be treated as a full economic impact assessment. They will be refined through the further economic analysis proposed as part of the response.

4.5 Following the announcement, the Council opened dialogue with GSK, businesses and strategic partners, and began work to understand the site, planning framework and potential market interest. This early work has focused on maintaining confidence and identifying where the Council and its partners can influence future outcomes.

4.6 Early discussions indicate a strong willingness among partners to work together. Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and the Cell, Gene Therapy Catapult Airbus, MBDA and Autolus have emphasised the importance of maintaining confidence in Stevenage. Local public sector partners also wish to work together in partnership to respond to the challenge, with support also being offered by the MP for Stevenage.

4.7 The Council wishes to maintain its dialogue with GSK through to 2029, covering workforce and skills, the future ownership and use of the site and opportunities to support a positive long-term legacy, whilst respecting GSK's commercial position.

4.8 There are two key areas to focus on:

- local people, supply chain and economy during the transition to 2029; and
- maximising the potential of the future use of the site.

Learning From Elsewhere

4.9 Experience elsewhere can inform our approach, the following three are relevant because of their proximity, scale or the nature of the transition involved.

Vauxhall, Luton

Stellantis announced in November 2024 that it intended to close Vauxhall's long-established Luton manufacturing plant, directly affecting just under

1,200 employees and creating wider impacts through supply chains and spending. Luton Council established a locally led Taskforce with central Government support to coordinate the economic and social response. Its workstreams cover economic growth and regeneration, skills, and heritage and legacy, with a remit that includes securing support for employees, assessing supply-chain impacts, developing a proposition for the future of the site and preparing business cases to support Government funding decisions.

MSD and Pharmaron, Hoddesdon

MSD agreed in 2016 to sell its process-development and research facility at Hoddesdon to Pharmaron, with the acquisition completing in 2017. The agreement retained the site's specialist pharmaceutical research and development use, while MSD initially continued to occupy the main office buildings through a leaseback arrangement. Pharmaron has since developed the facility as part of its wider drug-discovery and manufacturing operations, supporting more than 200 people at the site.

Pfizer and Discovery Park, Sandwich:

Pfizer's decision in 2011 to substantially withdraw from its Sandwich research and development campus placed approximately 2,400 jobs at risk. Government asked local political and business leaders to establish a Taskforce to identify a new future for the site and support the wider East Kent economy. Working with Pfizer and private-sector partners, the Taskforce helped secure Enterprise Zone designation and a £35 million business investment, while supporting the attraction of new occupiers and investment. Within several years, more than 2,000 people were employed on the resulting Discovery Park site across more than 100 companies.

Risks and Mitigations

4.10 Based on our current insights we have evaluated potential risks and suggested mitigations (table 2) to shape our response; these will continue to be reviewed as we continue to build our insights.

Table 2: Key risks and proposed mitigations

Risk	Proposed mitigation
1. Further loss of life sciences, science and technology activity if GSK's relocation affects confidence or investment decisions by existing and prospective businesses.	• Maintain coordinated engagement with businesses and investors; promote the remaining cluster; develop a clear future proposition.
2. Slowdown in the global life sciences sector, with more selective investment and occupier demand.	• Undertake current market and sector analysis; engage directly with occupiers and investors; establish realistic demand and Stevenage's competitive strengths.

Risk	Proposed mitigation
3. Impact on planned life sciences investment, particularly the Forum within Town Centre Regeneration, if market conditions weaken confidence.	• Maintain close engagement with Forum partners; consider the Forum, GSK site, Elevate Quarter and wider cluster as a coherent proposition.
4. Prolonged uncertainty over the GSK site, resulting in delayed investment or lower levels of jobs and economic value.	• Structured engagement with GSK; develop site, infrastructure and market evidence; use available Council levers where appropriate.
5. Decisions affecting different parts of the campus being taken in isolation.	• Taskforce coordination and a shared understanding of infrastructure, dependencies and wider investment plans.

Levers available to the Council

4.11 Although decisions about GSK's business operations and the future of the privately owned site do not rest with the Council, SBC has a range of levers through which it can help influence future development. The Council's available levers span its planning and wider place-shaping functions, although the principal formal mechanisms likely to influence the site are planning-related.

4.12 Considering learning from elsewhere (Para 3.15) it is evident that responses which include levers from a number of partners, including government intervention help maximise outcomes achieved.

Table 3: Levers available to the Council

Lever	Potential application to the GSK site
Local Plan and Article 4 Directions	• The Local Plan can set planning policy for the site, including its future employment role and the uses considered appropriate. Where evidence identifies a risk from changes of use permitted without a planning application, the Council could consider an Article 4 Direction to bring specified changes under planning control.
Site-specific planning framework	• A planning brief or masterplan could establish expectations for the mix and location of uses, design, access, infrastructure and phasing. This would give GSK, future landowners, developers and investors clearer guidance while retaining flexibility over the site's eventual development.
Local Development Order	• An LDO could grant planning permission in advance for specified forms of development, reducing uncertainty and providing a faster route for suitable occupiers and investors. Its suitability and scope will be assessed through the Implementation Plan

Lever	Potential application to the GSK site
Development-management tools	• Pre-application engagement and a Planning Performance Agreement could provide a structured process and timetable for resolving planning, infrastructure and phasing matters. Planning conditions and Section 106 obligations could subsequently secure necessary infrastructure and mitigation linked to any future development.

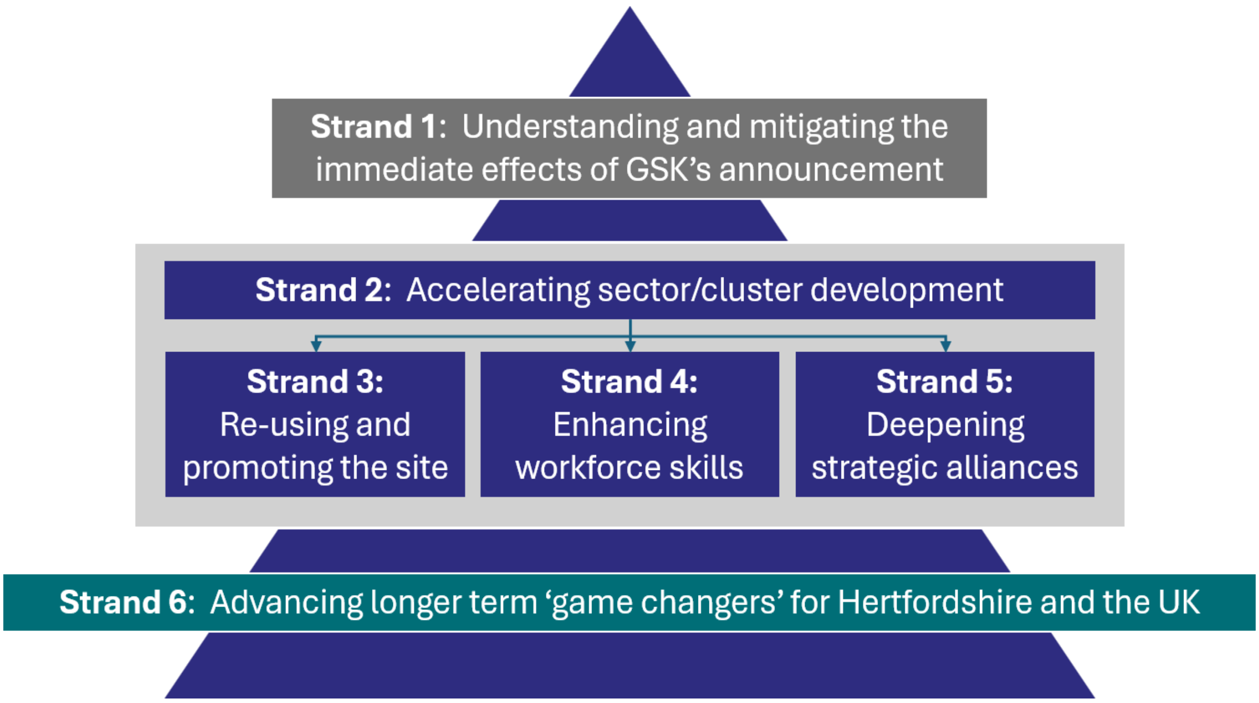
Proposed Approach

4.13 The Council has set up a working group with Hertfordshire Futures and will work closely with Stevenage Development Board, has started engagement with key stakeholders and called on Government's support to set up a Taskforce which will develop an implementation plan.

4.14 The Council wishes to build on GSKs commitment to engage and will focus the Taskforce on deepening its insights on how to best respond to the impact of the move on:

- local people, supply chain and economy during the transition to 2029; and
- maximising the potential of the future use of the site.

4.15 Supported by initial advice from SQW, have developed six connected strands to guide the Taskforce and preparation of the Implementation Plan. Together, they provide a framework for action and for identifying specific requests of Government and other partners.



Strand 1: Understanding and mitigating the immediate effects

4.16 This strand focuses on reducing the immediate employment and economic effects of GSK's announcement while maintaining confidence in Stevenage.

It includes more detailed assessment of employment, supply-chain and wider economic impacts, identifying those most exposed and establishing a baseline for monitoring the transition. As well as maintaining structured dialogue with GSK on its timetable, workforce and supply-chain support, site intentions, communications and potential legacy contributions.

Strand 2: Accelerating sector and cluster development

4.17 This focuses on protecting and growing Stevenage's life sciences cluster while using the town's wider strengths to increase resilience and attract investment. It recommends assessing how high-performance computing and digital infrastructure could support advanced manufacturing across life sciences, defence, aerospace and space, informing both the site and skills response. As well as testing the case for targeted finance and launchpad or accelerator provision that could help high-value businesses commercialise research, scale up and continue investing in Stevenage.

Strand 3: Reusing and promoting the GSK site

4.18 This focuses on developing a credible future proposition for the site that supports high-value employment and aligns with Stevenage's priorities and wider Hertfordshire ambitions. It recommends developing an evidence-based proposition covering the land, buildings, infrastructure, market demand, viable future uses and relationship with the wider campus and Elevate Quarter. As well as using the proposition to engage GSK, investors and Government and develop specific asks, including consideration of the Strategic Sites Accelerator, the future of Enterprise Zones or successor mechanisms, and support from relevant Government investment.

Strand 4: Enhancing workforce skills

4.19 This focuses on retaining technical expertise, responding to employer needs and developing Stevenage's local talent pipeline. It recommends mapping skills across GSK, the wider campus and relevant supply chains against emerging demand, identifying priority gaps and training requirements. As well as coordinating employment and skills support with GSK, employers, providers and DWP. Further develop the local STEM talent pathways by continuing or extending existing place-based interventions.

Strand 5: Deepening strategic alliances

4.20 This strand focuses on strengthening Stevenage's position within the UK Innovation Corridor and the wider Golden Triangle, to support investment and cluster growth. It recommends strengthen engagement with Government, investors and partners in Cambridge, London and the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor around investment, commercialisation and skills. As well as using joint promotion, investor engagement and sector networks to raise Stevenage's profile and influence future investment and policy.

Strand 6: Advancing longer-term strategic opportunities

4.21 This focuses on the longer-term conditions required for Stevenage to remain a connected, attractive and competitive place. It recommends linking the future of the GSK site with the Station Gateway, Town Centre Regeneration, housing growth and Stevenage's wider infrastructure, skills and place offer. Through Local Government Reorganisation and devolution, assess wider opportunities across Central Hertfordshire and the future Hertfordshire Strategic Authority.

Taskforce, Approach & Next Steps

4.22 The role of Taskforce would be to coordinate a partnership response and develop collective proposals for investment and support with GSK, Government and other partners. It would not make decisions on behalf of participating organisations or have authority over the privately owned site. Retaining flexibility will allow its structure to reflect partner participation and emerging priorities. The final governance arrangements therefore be determined under the delegation set out in Recommendation 2.3.

4.23 Comparable taskforces demonstrate the value of a locally led, Government-supported structure. The taskforce established following Pfizer's announcement at Sandwich helped secure Enterprise Zone status, including simplified planning and projected business-rate savings of £21.4 million. The site has since developed as Discovery Park, with more than 160 companies and 3,500 jobs. The Vauxhall Taskforce in Luton uses focused groups to coordinate workforce support, regeneration and investment and develop a comprehensive economic response package for Government.

4.24 Core membership of the Task Force will include the Council, Hertfordshire Futures, Government and delivery partners, with wider expertise drawn in as required. It will facilitate ongoing engagement and commitment with GSK.

4.25 The Stevenage Development Board will be a key partner. It already brings together stakeholders from the public and private sectors to support the town's growth and regeneration. Its broad membership and independent chair make the Board are well placed to provide advice and support.

4.26 The principal output from the Task Force will be an Implementation Plan setting out priority actions, interventions, responsibilities, partner contributions, dependencies, timescales and intended outcomes.

4.27 Further economic evidence will be commissioned to inform the implementation plan with a series of engagement to deepen insight. The engagement will be with key stakeholders, industry specialists and GSK, building on those which have already been undertaken since the GSK announcement.

4.28 The implementation plan will focus on:

- local people, supply chain and economy during the transition to 2029; and

- maximising the potential of the future use of the site.

It will be presented to Cabinet by June 2027 with the proposed timeline set out below:

Other Options Considered

4.29 Continuing with business-as-usual arrangements without a dedicated Taskforce is not recommended. The scale of the potential economic impact, the number of organisations involved and the links between the GSK site, wider life sciences cluster, other STEM related sectors, skills, regeneration and Government policy require a coordinated response.

4.30 Waiting for GSK's disposal process or the market to determine the future of the site before taking further action is not recommended. Early engagement provides the strongest opportunity to understand the site, influence future propositions, maintain investor confidence and identify where intervention may be required.

4.31 Deferring the response until Local Government Reorganisation and devolution arrangements are in place is not recommended. The period to 2029 requires action under the current arrangements, with the programme subsequently capable of transferring into the new Central Hertfordshire authority and future Mayoral Strategic Authority structures.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1 Stevenage Borough Council does not have an ownership or direct financial interest in the GSK site, but its future has implications for the town's economy, business rates base, investment proposition and wider regeneration. The Council also has an important role in coordinating the response with GSK, Government and other partners.

5.2 As set out in Recommendation 2.6, Cabinet is asked to approve up to £440,000 drawn from General Fund balances: £350,000 in 2026/27 and £90,000 in 2027/28. This is to enable the Council to respond swiftly in an informed way when preparing a response with partners. Partners have responded positively and offered support; we will work to confirm relevant contributions from public sector partners towards the funding budget of £440,000. Table 4 sets out the proposed use of this funding.

Table 4: Proposed funding requirements

Funding requirement	Use of funding	Cost
Dedicated project lead	• Salary and associated costs for a project lead over two years to lead delivery of the programme, coordinate the Taskforce, lead partner and Government engagement, oversee specialist work, prepare the Implementation Plan and maintain continuity through Local Government Reorganisation.	**£90,000** (2026/27) **£90,000** (2027/28)
Evidence and market insight	• Economic, market and site analysis to assess impacts, occupier demand, infrastructure requirements, viable uses and sector opportunities. This will inform the site proposition, Council levers, Government requests and Implementation Plan.	**£80,000**
Additional specialist advice	• Legal, economic or technical advice above and beyond the other costed elements, where specific expertise is required on commissioning, funding, commercial arrangements or delivery.	**£30,000**
Preparation of planning policy response	• Preparation of technical evidence and policy basis e.g. Local Development Order as required	**£150,000**
	Total	**£440,000**

5.3 Hertfordshire Futures has funded SQW's initial work to frame the transition opportunities and inform the emerging response. The evidence and market insights will build on, rather than duplicate, this work by providing the more detailed site, market and viability analysis required to develop the Implementation Plan.

5.4 The Council has sought support from Government and has encouraged GSK to consider future legacy commitments such as investment in local skills.

Legal Implications

5.5 The Council's response will draw on its economic development and place leadership functions alongside its statutory role as Local Planning Authority. An appropriate distinction will be maintained between partnership activity and the exercise of statutory planning functions, with any planning proposals considered through the appropriate process on their individual merits.

5.6 Legal advice will be sought as required on procurement and commissioning, commercial confidentiality and information sharing, funding arrangements, agreements with partners, governance and subsidy control.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Implications

5.7 As the response will extend beyond the establishment of the new Central Hertfordshire authority on 1 April 2028, it will need to form part of transition planning. Evidence, governance arrangements, staffing, commissioned work, funding and commitments extending beyond vesting day will need to transfer effectively so that delivery is not disrupted.

5.8 The future of the GSK site and the wider Stevenage economy will also be relevant to the emerging Hertfordshire Strategic Authority. The programme should therefore be capable of aligning with future strategic economic, transport, infrastructure, skills and investment powers, while ensuring that Stevenage's immediate interests and the wider contribution it makes to Hertfordshire's economy remain clearly represented.

Risk Implications

5.9 The principal economic and delivery risks arising from GSK's decision are set out in Section 4. These include uncertainty over the future of the site, the risk that future uses do not deliver the level or type of employment and economic value sought, impacts on employees and local supply chains, changing conditions within the life sciences market and the potential effect on wider investment in Stevenage.

5.10 In line with Recommendation 2.6, owing to the scale and strategic significance of the potential economic impact, the associated risks will be added to the Council's Strategic Risk Register and monitored through the Council's existing corporate risk arrangements, including quarterly reporting to Audit Committee.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.11 GSK's proposed relocation may affect employees differently according to factors including disability, caring responsibilities, transport access, age and individual roles. The Council will work with GSK and employment and skills partners to help ensure appropriate opportunities and support are accessible to employees wishing to remain within the local economy.

5.12 The longer-term response should support inclusive growth by maximising the number and quality of employment opportunities available to Stevenage residents. Equalities implications will remain under review as the implementation plan and any specific Council interventions develop.