NOTICE OF DECISIONS TAKEN (PART 1 – FOR PUBLICATION)

MEETING: Cabinet
DATE: Thursday, 10 September 2026
PLACE: Council Chamber
MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Coleen DeFreitas, Tom Plater, Loraine Rossati and Nazmin Chowdhury

THE DEADLINE FOR CALL-IN OF ANY OF THE DECISIONS BELOW IS 18 SEPTEMBER 2026.
SUBJECT TO THERE BEING NO CALL-IN THE ATTACHED DECISIONS MAY BE IMPLEMENTED WITH EFFECT FROM 21 SEPTEMBER 2026.

1.	**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**	
There were no apologies for absence. There were no declarations of interest.		
2.	**MINUTES - CABINET 15 JULY 2026**	
It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 July 2026 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.		
3.	**MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES**	
Cabinet received a summary of the issues covered at the most recent meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committees including: Community Select Committee – Support for Young People Review, consideration of the Housing Allocations Policy, damp and mould		

following the implementation of Awaab's Law Phase 1 and the Annual Crime and Disorder Committee;

Environment and Economy Select Committee – review of fly-tipping, impact of the cost of living crisis;

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – challenges of void turnaround times and the Draft Tenancy Strategy.

Members expressed thanks to the cross-party committees, recognising their role in scrutinising the detail of the Council's ambitions and supporting informed strategic decision-making.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Community Select and Environment and Economy Select Committee meetings be noted.

4.	GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2026/27 - 2030/31)	

Cabinet received a report updating the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2026/27 to 2030/31, setting out the Council's projected expenditure and income, including inflation assumptions, known budget pressures, savings requirements and growth allowances.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance advised that the report had been prepared prior to the Government's announcement that local government reorganisation would be postponed and should therefore be considered in that context.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Strategic Director and Chief Financial Officer and her team for their prudent financial management which had enabled investment in key community projects, while maintaining adequate reserves and preparing for future financial risks. He then reported on a programme of public realm improvements funded from the 2025/26 underspend, including restoration of the War Memorial, enhancements to an Old Town underpass, town centre cleaning and greening initiatives, and improvements to public spaces across the borough.

In addition, Members noted that £550,000 of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding would support a range of projects, including new multi-use games areas, cycleway and trim trail improvements, play equipment, youth facilities, environmental enhancements, and renewable energy initiatives.

In response to a number of questions, the Strategic Director and Chief Financial Officer advised that in relation to the delay in Local Government Reorganisation, provision would continue to be made until the outcome of the Government's review was known. She also responded to a question regarding the ongoing pressures relating to homelessness and rough sleeping and advised that the costs associated with temporary accommodation would continued to be closely monitored through performance and budget reporting, with current projections remaining manageable but carrying a risk of increased future pressure. Members were also advised that accommodation demand, including the use of bed and breakfast provision, was being tracked regularly to ensure any emerging financial risks could be identified and addressed.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the MTFS principles, as outlined in paragraph 3.6 of the report be approved.

2. That, for modelling purposes, Council tax increases be set at the threshold assumed by the Government in the Fair Funding three-year settlement in order to support the resilience of the Council’s finances as set out in paragraph 4.7.6 of the report.

3. That the updated inflation assumptions used in the MTFS as set out in section 4.1 of the report be approved.

4. That the budget pressures and reductions as set out in section 4.2 of the report be approved.

5. That the revised use of Business Rates reserve (NNDR reserve) to fund the set aside and minimum revenue provision (MRP) for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP now Herts Futures) loans as set out in paragraph 4.3.7 of the report be approved.

6. That the approach to the ‘Balancing the Budget’ options as set out in section 4.10 be approved.

7. That the Balancing the Budget options identified of £76,880 be noted.

8. That the Balancing the Budget target of £1.2Mllion, be approved for the period 2027/28- 2030/31, as set out in section 4.10 of the report, (subject to decisions made after 2027/28 by the new Unitary Authority).

9. That the additional allowance for Local Government Reorganisation be approved as set out in paragraph 4.12.1 of £500K in 2026/27.

10. That the inclusion of £200K in 2026/27 and 2027/28 to help fund works arising from the stock condition survey on the Council's assets as set out in paragraph 4.12.2 of the report be approved.

11. That the additional funding to be set aside in an earmarked reserve for the Council's Queensway LLP of a further £40K per year, (paragraph 4.12.3) be approved.

12. That it be noted that the 2026/27 General Fund budget and MTFS reflect the latest financial position for the Swingate JV.

13. That the General Fund growth allowance of £75K be noted and approved for the use of the Council's MSEB priorities.

14. That the Council tax support scheme as set out in section 4.8 for 2027/28 be approved.

15. That a minimum level of balances for the General Fund of £3.92million be approved for 2026/27 as set out in paragraph 4.13.7 of the report.

16. The MTFS be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect any material financial pressures, so forecasts are updated and re-presented to the Cabinet for approval.

17. That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the MTFS and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

5.	**HRA MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY REVIEW**	

Cabinet received a report updating them on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31 and providing an assessment of the long-term sustainability of the Council's housing finances. The strategy reflected updated assumptions on inflation, capital investment, borrowing, housing growth and rent policy, including the Government's proposed rent convergence arrangements from April 2027. Members noted that while the HRA remained financially viable, the report highlighted continuing pressures from inflation, regulatory compliance, building safety requirements and the need to invest in both existing homes and new council housing.

Members discussed the need to balance investment in existing housing stock, compliance with safety and regulatory requirements, with the continued delivery of new Council homes. The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised of the challenges associated with the Council's five high-rise blocks and that arrangements were being put in place to ensure compliance with Awaab's Law, including the implementation of dedicated teams, systems and training to support the timely reporting and resolution of damp and mould issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the revised MTFS forecast for the period 2026/27-2029/30 and the projected 2027/28 position be noted.

2. That the inflationary assumptions in section 4.2 be approved for MTFS forecasting purposes.

3. That the pressures set out in section 4.3 be approved.

4. That the savings set out in section 4.4, identified as part of the MTFS review be approved.

5. That the additional LGR costs of £50K in 2026/27 be approved.

6. That the rent convergence programme set out in section 4.5 be agreed in principle. This follows the Government commencing rent convergence from April 2027 with a £1 cap, moving to a £2 cap from April 2028.

7. That the minimum level of balances, set out in section 4.8, be approved.

8. The MTFS be regularly reviewed and revised to reflect any material financial pressures, so forecasts are updated and re-

presented to the Cabinet for approval.

9. That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the MTFS and more specifically when drawing up any proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

6.	1ST QUARTER REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2026/27 – GENERAL FUND AND HRA	

Cabinet received a report updating Members on the projected General Fund (GF), Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital 2026/27 net expenditure and seeking approval to amend the General Fund, HRA and Capital budgets as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring review.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance reported on the positive first quarter financial position and emphasised the importance of maintaining a disciplined approach to budget management throughout the year. He further highlighted the commitment to identifying underspends where appropriate and reinvesting resources into initiatives that would deliver meaningful benefits for the community.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

General Fund

1. That the 2026/27 first quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £1,070,480 be approved.

2. That the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.3.1 of the report be approved.

3. That the introduction of the Building Safety Levy be noted and the allocation of Stevenage Borough Council's grant funding to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd to meet the costs of establishing and administering the Building Safety Levy on behalf of the

Council as detailed in paragraph 4.1.4a of the report be approved.

4. To authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance to finalise and enter into the necessary funding arrangements with Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd as detailed in paragraph 4.1.4a of the report.

5. That the public realm schemes funded from the 2025/26 underspend and as set out in paragraph 4.1.4b be approved.

Housing Revenue Account

6. That the 2026/27 first quarter net decrease in HRA expenditure of £1,123,900 be approved.

Capital Programme

7. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £3.4 Million from 2026/27 to future years be approved.

8. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £20.1 Million from 2026/27 to future years be approved.

9. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget reduction of £11 Million over the period 2026/27 to 2030/31 be approved, including £5.5 Million from 2026/27 to 2028/29.

10. That £699K of new growth, funded by £149K grant (paragraph 4.11a) and £550K community infrastructure levy (CIL) (paragraph 4.11b) be approved and as set out in Appendix D.

11. That General Fund virement of £142K in paragraph 4.12 be approved.

12. That the proposed changes to the funding of the General Fund and HRA capital budgets in section 4.13 be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

7.	**ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2025/26 AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS**	

Cabinet received the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2025/26 including the actual 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance advised that the Treasury Management outturn was sound, having maintained compliance, liquidity and effective risk control while generating strong returns on balances held for approved future use. He advised that, subject to comments from Cabinet and the Audit Committee, the review would then be referred to Council for approval.

It was **RESOLVED** that subject to any comments made by the Audit Committee, the 2025/26 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

8.	**CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 1 2026/27**	

Cabinet received a report providing an overview of the Council's performance during Quarter One of 2026/27, and which brought together corporate performance information and strategic project updates to support Cabinet's oversight of delivery against the Council's priorities. The report included progress against the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme and performance results across the Council's services.

Members received a presentation from the Chief Executive providing further detail on the Council's performance during Quarter 1.

Members welcomed the report and presentation including:

- the opportunities being created to support adult retraining and STEM education within the borough and the opening of the new North Herts College town centre campus in September 2026;

- the progress being made on the new build and Sustainable Homes Programme;
- progress on major projects across the borough, including the Oval Redevelopment Programme, Stevenage Sports and Leisure Centre, Ridlins Athletics Track and the Play Zone;
- arrangements to celebrate the Council's 80th anniversary, including an afternoon tea event on 30 October for residents celebrating their 80th birthday during the year;
- the continued work in delivering the Council's Climate Strategy and the proactive approach to reducing carbon emissions.

Members also discussed the improvement in the length of time taken to prepare and let void properties, a focus on damp and mould cases, and tackling graffiti in the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the service performance against 43 corporate performance measures and delivery of 67 key project milestones in Quarter One 2026/27 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.

2. That the strategic risk updates (section 4.7) be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

9.	**HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT, ANNUAL COMPLAINTS SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2025/26**	

Cabinet received a report presenting two documents for consideration and review:-

- Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2025/26, and
- Annual Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

Members noted that, while the report was a statutory requirement for the Council as a social landlord, its primary value lay in providing insight into tenants' experiences, identifying areas of good performance, areas requiring improvement, and the actions being taken in response. Members further noted that the Council had worked closely with the Housing Ombudsman to implement recommendations for improving complaints handling and that Ombudsman decisions were reviewed to support ongoing service improvement.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing expressed her thanks to all officers involved in the preparation of the work and, in particular, those who had contributed to the redesign of the complaints process, noting that the changes had improved clarity and made it easier for residents to access and submit complaints alongside a desire to make it both easy to raise concerns and have them resolved.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That the Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2025/26 (Appendix A) and the Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (Appendix B) be noted and approved.

2. That the Ombudsman determinations captured within the Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2024/25 (Appendix A) be noted.

3. That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director (RP), after consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, to finalise and submit the Housing Complaints and Service Improvement Report 2025/26 and the Self-Assessment, in accordance with the Council's obligations under the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, taking into account any comments made by the Cabinet.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

10.	**GSK RELOCATION UPDATE: IMPACT, RESPONSE AND OPTIONS**	

Cabinet received a report outlining the decision of GSK intending to relocate its Stevenage research and development operations to Cambridge by 2029, affecting approximately 1,800 roles in Stevenage. It was reported that initial analysis indicated 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 were included.

The Leader of the Council advised that the announcement by GSK represented a significant development for Stevenage, giving rise to understandable concerns for employees, their families, local businesses and the wider community. He recognised GSK's longstanding presence in the town and its contribution to science, innovation and high-skilled employment, and acknowledged the challenges of the relocation. The Leader of the Council also commented on the need for a positive, proactive response to help create jobs and opportunities for the local community.

Following discussion, the importance of a coordinated response to the proposed changes was emphasised, noting that the proposed task force would bring together Government, regional partners, businesses, education providers and other stakeholders to ensure Stevenage's interests were effectively represented. Members further highlighted the need to support affected employees, families and businesses, and stressed that access to appropriate support, skills development, employment opportunities and retraining pathways should be central to the response.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That 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 be noted.

2. That 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 be noted.

3. That delegated authority be granted 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.

4. That 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 be endorsed.

5. That an allocation of up to £440,000 from the General Fund, comprising £350,000 in 2026/27 and £90,000 in 2027/28 be approved. 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.

6. That the work with other public sector partners including Hertfordshire Futures and government to support the task group and help prepare an implementation plan be noted, and that options to seek external contributions from other partners as appropriate be considered.

7. That 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.

8. 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.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

11.	**URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**	

The Leader of the Council advised Cabinet that the Government had paused Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals scheduled for implementation in 2028, including those affecting Hertfordshire, pending a review of the programme.

Local Authorities had been asked to pause implementation work, although general preparatory activity could continue. The review would consider both the LGR process and its alignment with the Government's priorities. While no timetable had been provided, the Leader expressed hope that clarity would be provided quickly.

Cabinet was informed that the Council had been advised by Government, that it is expected local elections would proceed on existing boundaries in May 2027, and that preparations for Stevenage Borough Council elections would commence accordingly.

The Leader emphasised that LGR had not been abandoned but delayed, creating further uncertainty around implementation timescales. However, the Government remained committed to devolution and the establishment of Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

The Council would continue to work with partners, seek clarity from Government, maintain service delivery, support staff, and prepare for future developments. Further updates would be provided as information became available.

12. 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

Reason for Decision:
Other Options Considered:

13. PART II MINUTES - CABINET 15 JULY 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 July 2026 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

14. **WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES UPDATE REPORT**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of the Council’s Wholly Owned Companies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report

15. **COUNCIL TAX AND HOUSING RENT AND RECHARGEABLE DEBT WRITE OFFS GREATER THAN £10,000**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of Council Tax and Housing Rent Rechargeable Debt Write Offs Greater than £10,000.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report
Other Options Considered: As contained in the report