STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET
MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 8 October 2026
Time: 2.00pm
Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Myla Arceno, Rob Broom, Coleen De Freitas, Tom Plater and Loraine Rossati

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 2.55pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury.

There were no declarations of interest.

At this juncture, the Leader of the Council gave an update relating to the Government's intention to close the Novotel contingency asylum accommodation hotel by Christmas. The Leader advised that the Council had consistently opposed the use of both the Novotel and former Ibis hotels for asylum accommodation and had engaged extensively with the Home Office, Government officials, the local MP and partners regarding the impact of contingency hotel provision on local services, community cohesion and residents.

It was reiterated that responsibility for accommodating asylum seekers rested with the Home Office and that decisions regarding alternative accommodation arrangements following the closure of contingency hotels would be made by the Home Office and its providers, rather than the Council.

Whilst welcoming the announcement regarding the Novotel, it was confirmed that the Council would continue to seek clarification from the Home Office regarding the future use of the former Ibis hotel.

Cabinet recorded its thanks to officers, Members, the local MP, Hertfordshire Constabulary and partner organisations for their work on the matter, noting that the Council's focus had remained on representing the interests of residents, supporting community cohesion and securing greater certainty for the town.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the Council operated strict eligibility criteria for access to the housing register and allocation of council housing and that asylum seekers who had not been granted leave to remain would not be eligible for council housing. Members further noted that the Council had no influence over how or where individuals would be accommodated following the closure of the hotel. It was emphasised that any such arrangements would not impact upon Stevenage

residents currently on the Council's housing register.

2 **MINUTES - CABINET 10 SEPTEMBER 2026**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 September 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:

- Environment and Economy Select Committee - The Committee considered progress on its review of fly-tipping, including evidence from the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Communities and Neighbourhoods, together with the draft Fly-Tipping Action Plan. The Committee also discussed opportunities to enhance waste and recycling services, and emphasised the importance of clear accountability, consistent enforcement arrangements and robust performance monitoring.

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee - considered the Council's financial resilience and noted assurances regarding the robustness of the Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy, including the adequacy of reserves, prudent treasury management arrangements and measures in place to manage future borrowing commitments. The potential implications of GSK's proposed relocation from Stevenage to Cambridge were also discussed.

- Community Select Committee - the Committee continued its review of support for young people and received evidence from the Youth Advisory Board on the challenges and issues affecting young people in the town.

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 **REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES**

Cabinet received a report seeking approval for the proposed Fees and Charges for the 2027/28 financial year, covering services within both the General Fund (GF) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance reported on the proposed Fees and Charges for 2026/27. Cabinet noted that the proposals sought to balance affordability for residents and businesses with the need to recover costs and support sustainable service delivery. It was also noted that trade waste charges, on-street parking charges, selected short-stay parking tariffs and season tickets would remain unchanged, while Housing Revenue Account charges would be maintained below the rate of inflation to support tenants.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Fees and Charges 2027/28 for the General Fund (GF), as shown at Appendix A, be approved.

2. That Fees and Charges 2027/28 for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as shown at Appendix B, be approved.

5 CLIMATE CHANGE - ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2026

Cabinet received the annual update on delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and noted progress across all eight strategic themes including investment in home energy efficiency improvements, support for local businesses, transport initiatives, energy and water efficiency measures, recycling and waste reduction programmes, biodiversity projects, regeneration activity and the adoption of the Local Plan Partial Update.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment advised that the adoption of the framework represented an important step in ensuring progress towards the Council's 2030 net zero commitment is monitored transparently, consistently and in accordance with recognised national and international standards.

Members were pleased to note that the report provided assurance that there continued to be meaningful progress made in reducing emissions, improving environmental sustainability and delivering the objectives of the Climate Change Strategy. Members further noted the wider benefits arising from climate-related projects, including reducing the impact of the cost of living through improved energy efficiency and supporting health and wellbeing through enhanced access to green spaces, in line with the objectives of the Healthy Stevenage Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing spoke of the positive impact of the Council's ongoing climate change and housing improvement programmes. She highlighted that investment in improving the Council's housing stock increased sustainability, extending the lifespan of properties, and reducing energy costs for tenants and leaseholders which helped residents manage cost of living pressures by providing warmer, more energy-efficient homes.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2026 Climate Change Annual Update attached at Appendix 1 to the report, detailing 2025/26 delivery, be noted.

2. That the forward-looking actions for 2026/27 as set out in paragraph 3.22 of the report be approved.

6 HOUSING INCOME AND ARREARS RECOVERY POLICY 2026 - 2028

Cabinet received a report outlining the draft Housing Income and Arrears Recovery Policy 2026–2028 which set out Stevenage Borough Council's approach to

managing housing income, including current and former rent, service charges, recharges and other housing-related debt, and which established a consistent, fair, proportionate and effective framework for income collection and arrears recovery.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that she was aware that financial difficulties could arise through circumstances beyond an individual's control, including ill health, loss of employment, changes in income or issues relating to benefits. This policy placed a strong emphasis on early intervention, engagement and support to help tenants manage arrears and reach affordable repayment arrangements. She reiterated that the primary objective was to sustain tenancies and avoid eviction wherever possible although it was recognised that enforcement action might be required as a last resort in cases where tenants persistently failed to pay rent or engage with the Council.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content and the adoption of the draft Housing Income and Arrears Recovery Policy 2026–2028 as set out at Appendix A to the report be approved

2. That the Strategic Director (RP), after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make minor updates and changes to this policy in line with legislative changes and best practice guidance.

7 HEALTHY STEVENAGE STRATEGY 2026 - 2031

Cabinet received a report seeking approval for the refreshed Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2026-2031.

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Wellbeing advised that the strategy included evidence-led framework for improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities. Developed through needs assessments, public consultation and partner engagement, it focused on five priorities: active lifestyles, mental wellbeing, ageing well, healthy and connected communities, and prevention through partnership working.

Members agreed that the collaborative approach across the Council would strengthen accountability, maximise local expertise and support efforts to improve health outcomes and reduce inequalities across Stevenage over the next five years.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Skills and Young People emphasised that the Council adopted a whole-Council approach to service delivery and decision-making, with all portfolio areas working collaboratively to achieve shared objectives. She advised that the Strategy demonstrated the collaborative way in which the Council worked across portfolios with the needs and interests of Stevenage residents remaining at the forefront of decision-making.

Members expressed their thanks to officers for the significant work undertaken to the development of the refreshed strategy noting the collaborative approach taken in preparing the strategy.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2026-2031, attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

2. That the evidence of health inequalities in Stevenage and the strategy's focus on prevention, health promotion and targeted action in the communities experiencing the poorest outcomes be noted.

3. That the five strategic priorities be endorsed:
   - Healthy Weight and Active Lives
   - Good Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
   - Ageing Well, Frailty Prevention and Dementia Support
   - Creating Healthy, Safe and Connected Places
   - Strengthening Prevention through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.

4. That the Healthy Stevenage Partnership be supported as the main partnership forum for oversight and delivery, underpinned by the development of a focused action plan with named leads, timescales, resource implications and measurable outcomes.

5. That it be noted that any actions requiring additional Council expenditure or significant service changes will be subject to the Council's normal financial, legal, procurement and governance processes.

8 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

9 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.

10 PART II MINUTES - CABINET 10 SEPTEMBER 2026

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 September 2026 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

11 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR