BALANCING THE BUDGET (BTB) 2027/28 APPENDIX C

Overall Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) of General Fund Growth & Savings Proposals

1. Equality at Stevenage Borough Council

1.1 Stevenage Borough Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across its services, workforce and local community. To demonstrate its commitment to the identification and mitigation of discrimination and inequality, the Council will complete and publish Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) when there is a new or revised policy, procedure, function, or where there is a withdrawal of service. For more information about the Council's commitment to advancing equalities please refer to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (2022-26).

1.2 We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.

1.3 Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the Equality Impact Assessment considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

1.4 Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty and Care Experience. Council's elected members and officers are required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who are less fortunate because of their social/economic background.

1.5 EqIAs also help the Council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

2. Balancing the Budget Proposals 2027/28

2.1 Prior to their consideration at Cabinet in November 2026, all savings and growth proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Some of these have no direct public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqIA.

2.2 Where a new change in policy, procedure, function, service or withdrawal of service is proposed, Assistant Directors and other appropriate managers have drafted EqIAs.

2.3 This year there are three new proposals for General Fund Savings that may potentially have a positive, negative or disproportionate impact. These are:

1) Remove the BCIS (Building Cost Information Service) subscription following a review of software and licence usage, ensuring costs are aligned to current service needs and eliminating unnecessary expenditure.
2) Cease the use of the recorded messaging and IVR support service (PremierCX), reducing costs by making greater use of in-house expertise, existing technology and AI-enabled solutions.
3) Achieve savings through the procurement of a lower-cost printing arrangement for the Chronicle residents' magazine, maintaining the current publication format and distribution while reducing production costs.

2.4 Further, there are also eight General Fund Growth Proposals that may potentially have a positive, negative or disproportionate impact. These are:

4) To provide additional emergency planning and resilience capacity to support organisational preparedness and business continuity. Shared between the GF and HRA.
5) To expand the use of DocuSign across key Council services, supporting secure digital document signing. Shared between the GF and HRA.
6) To introduce DocuSign Sealing for eligible services, supporting the secure use of digital seals. Shared between the GF and HRA.
7) To provide additional resources to support the delivery of tree and woodland inspections across the Council's estate. Shared between the GF and HRA.
8) To provide permanent additional senior capacity across Planning Services to support development management, enforcement and planning policy functions
9) To provide additional funding for priority woodland maintenance works identified through woodland inspections.
10) To provide additional digital support capacity to manage and develop Environmental Operations systems and digital services.
11) To provide additional environmental enforcement capacity and funding to tackle fly-tipping and environmental crime.

2.5 The potential impact of these proposals is summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Cabinet on 24th February 2027. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on people with particular protected characteristics is identified where appropriate.

2.6 It should be noted that EqIA's are working documents and new equality impacts may be identified throughout the planning and implementation stages of the revised policy, procedure, function, service. To ensure that these changes are captured, EqIAs will be updated, and appropriate mitigations considered accordingly.

2.7 The following activity in relation to the 2027/28 Budget has or will occur as follows:

- 8th October 2026 - Fees & charges reviewed at Cabinet, alongside a series of dedicated EqIAs.
- 24th February 2027 - Consideration of this document at Cabinet meeting, alongside the budget proposals.
- Ongoing review and update of EQIA's and impact as proposals are further developed and implemented throughout 2026/27, including consultation and engagement as appropriate.

3. Summary of Potential Impacts Identified as a Result of Budget Proposals

#	*Element*	*Responsible Officer*
	GENERAL FUND SAVINGS PROPOSALS	
1	Remove the BCIS (Building Cost Information Service) subscription following a review of software and licence usage, ensuring costs are aligned to current service needs and eliminating unnecessary expenditure.	Director - Estates (MC)
2	Cease the use of the recorded messaging and IVR support service (PremierCX), reducing costs by making greater use of in-house expertise, existing technology and AI-enabled solutions.	Director – Business Change & Digital (NC)
3	Achieve savings through the procurement of a lower-cost printing arrangement for the Chronicle residents' magazine, maintaining the current publication format and distribution while reducing production costs.	Head of Communications (SE)
	GENERAL FUND GROWTH PROPOSALS	
4	To provide additional emergency planning and resilience capacity to support organisational preparedness and business continuity. Shared between the GF and HRA.	Head of HR & OD (KF & CD)
5	To expand the use of DocuSign across key Council services, supporting secure digital document signing. Shared between the GF and HRA.	Director – Business Change & Digital (NC)
6	To introduce DocuSign Sealing for eligible services, supporting the secure use of digital seals. Shared between the GF and HRA.	Director – Business Change & Digital (NC)
7	To provide additional resources to support the delivery of tree and woodland inspections across the Council's estate. Shared between the GF and HRA.	Director – Environment & Leisure (SD)
8	To provide permanent additional senior capacity across Planning Services to support development management, enforcement and planning policy functions	Director – Planning & Regulation (AR)
9	To provide additional funding for priority woodland maintenance works identified through woodland inspections.	Director – Environment & Leisure (SD)
10	To provide additional digital support capacity to manage and develop Environmental Operations systems and digital services.	Director – Environment & Leisure (SD)
11	To provide additional environmental enforcement capacity and funding to tackle fly-tipping and environmental crime.	Director – Environment & Leisure (SD)

4. Equality Impact Assessment

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
All	Stevenage has seen its population grow by 3% from 89,500 in 2021 to 92,100 according to mid-2025 estimates.	1. No impact on residents, customers or service delivery is anticipated. The subscription was not in active use, and the proposal improves value for money through more efficient management of software licences and subscriptions. 2. No significant impact on customers or service delivery is anticipated. Recorded messages and telephone menu options will continue to be maintained through existing resources, while the proposal reduces ongoing costs and reflects the service's increased self-sufficiency. 3. No impact on resident communications or service delivery is anticipated. The Chronicle will continue to be produced and distributed as at present, with the savings achieved through improved procurement and contract management, delivering better value for money. 4. This proposal will strengthen emergency preparedness, business continuity and organisational resilience, while reducing pressure on existing resources and supporting partnership working. 5. This proposal will improve customer access, reduce administrative effort and support more efficient digital processes across the Council. 6. This proposal will modernise document sealing processes, improve efficiency and support the Council's wider digital transformation objectives. 7. This proposal will strengthen public safety, improve risk management and support the sustainable management of the Council's tree and woodland assets.	N/A

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
		8. This proposal will strengthen service resilience, support the timely delivery of planning services and enhance capacity to deliver regeneration, housing and strategic planning priorities, including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). 9. This proposal will improve public safety, reduce risk and support the sustainable management of the Council's woodland assets by addressing priority maintenance works and establishing a long-term woodland management programme. 10. This proposal will strengthen service resilience by supporting the digital systems used to manage key frontline services, including waste and recycling, grounds maintenance, fleet operations, cemeteries and allotments. It will improve system performance and data quality, reduce reliance on a single officer and support the efficient delivery of services to residents. 11. This proposal will strengthen enforcement activity, improve response times and support cleaner, safer neighbourhoods. It will help tackle fly-tipping and environmental crime, enhance visibility and deterrence, and support delivery of actions arising from the Select Committee review.	
Age	15.9% of Stevenage residents were over 65, compared to significantly higher rates in Hertfordshire (17.9%) and England (19.3%). Further, Stevenage's population of 92,081 usual residents was made up of 18,347 people aged 0 to 15 years (19.9%); 59,091 people aged 16 to 64 years (64.2%);	5., 6. & 10. The expanded use of DocuSign and other digital services across key Council services may impact elderly residents who are not as technologically proficient as younger generations.	5., 6. & 10. The Customer Service Centre offers support to all residents who need it, and regularly assists residents with accessing and utilising digital services the Council provide. This offer will only expand as more services become digitised.

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	The Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that those in their 40s receive the highest median full-time weekly pay and lowest for younger workers aged 16-17 and 18-21. Average earnings by age and region - House of Commons Library		
Disability	According to the 2021 Census, 17.3% of Stevenage residents had a disability covered under the Equality Act that limited their day-to-day activities, compared to 14.4% in Hertfordshire and 17.3% in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Gender reassignment	0.4% of residents have a different gender identity to the sex registered at birth, compared to 0.41% in Hertfordshire and 0.44% in England	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Marital status	The majority of Stevenage residents (43.9%) were married or in a registered civil partnership. In comparison, 48.4% of residents are married or in a registered civil partnership in Hertfordshire and 44.7% in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Pregnancy and maternity	The birth rate in Stevenage in 2024 sat at 12.2 live births per 1,000 people, which is higher than 10.9 in Hertfordshire and 10.5 in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Race	24.7% of Stevenage residents were from an ethnic minority (non-White British) in 2021, compared to 16.9% in the 2011 Census. In comparison,	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	28.2% of residents in Hertfordshire and 26.5% in England overall are from an ethnic minority group.		
Religion or belief	44.9% of Stevenage residents identify with no specified religion, which is significantly higher than Hertfordshire and England levels (36.6% and 33.7%).	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Sex	50.4% of Stevenage residents were female and 49.6% were male in mid-2025 ONS estimates. In April 2025, the UK's gender pay gap stood at 6.8%, down from 7.2% in April 2025.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Sexual Orientation	2.7% of residents identify with LGBTQ+ sexual orientations, which is higher than Hertfordshire's average of 2.3% but lower than the national average of 3.17% in England.	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	
Socio-economic	According to the 2025 English Index of Multiple Deprivation, Stevenage continues to be the most deprived authority in Hertfordshire. Of this, Bedwell is the most deprived ward in Town. In May 2026, 9,733 households were in receipt of Universal Credit in	No differential impacts directly related to people having this characteristic have been identified as a result of these proposals.	Fee increases and charges are reviewed annually by the Council to ensure that the cost of providing the service is met. To help mitigate the increase in Planning Fees, the Council does offer a free enquiry

Protected characteristic	Local/National Information	Summary potential impact(s)	Mitigating action(s)
	Stevenage, a 8.25% increase from 8,991 households in May 2025. In July 2026, there were 5,945 Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants in Stevenage, which is a 7.9% increase from 5,505 in July 2025. In July 2026, there were 3,445 Council Tax Support (CTS) recipients who were of working age. This represents a 4.9% increase on 2025.		service to ensure a person is provided the advice they need prior to making an application. To help mitigate any negative impacts on residents the Council is able to offer concessions to those who are eligible. Eligibility is dependent on the service but typically will include residents in receipt of a means tested benefit. Please see the Council's Concessionary Policy for further information on the Council's approach to setting concessions. To help mitigate any negative impacts on residents the Council will continue to offer financial assistance through multiple support schemes and activities, including both DHP and the Council tax hardship fund.