

DECISION RECORD ¹

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Part 4 of the Council's Constitution [Part 4e - Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules](#))

Subject: 2026 Flexible Voting Pilot – Procurement of Election Software	
Staff Contact: Luke Fattorusso (Head of Democratic Services) Tel: 01438 242174	Cabinet Member: Richard Henry Portfolio: Leader of the Council - Transforming Stevenage and Local Government Reorganisation

1. Decision

To approve the procurement of election software to support the Government's Electoral Modernisation and Flexible Voting Pilots in 2026 and 2027.

2. Reasons for the decision

Following the Government's publication of its Electoral Modernisation and Flexible Voting Programme, Stevenage Borough Council, at its Council meeting on 17 December 2025, agreed to submit a proposal to participate in a range of options, which included early advance voting and the use of a centralised voting hub. As part of this programme, electoral management software providers needed to develop enhancements to their software to facilitate these initiatives. As detailed in the Council report, funding for the costs relating to the pilots would be provided by MHCLG but procured by the Local Authorities compliantly adhering to the Procurement Act 2023.

Following a letter sent by the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness on 18 December 2025 to those Councils impacted by Local Government Reorganisation and inviting those Councils to set out their views on the postponement of their local elections in May, the Cabinet, at its meeting on 14 January 2026, recommended that a response be submitted with comments on the capacity to manage the transition to new unitary authorities by April 2028 and a request that the local elections scheduled for May 2026 be postponed by one year. On 22 January 2026, the Secretary of State for Local Government confirmed he had approved delays for some local elections scheduled for 7 May 2026, of which Stevenage Borough Council was included. Following this announcement, MHCLG confirmed that they would no longer be taking forward a flexible voting pilot in Stevenage.

On 16 February, the Leaders of those respective Councils were notified by the Secretary of the State that he would be withdrawing his decision to postpone local government elections on 7 May. Whilst elections to Stevenage Borough Council would be going ahead, this would not be as part of the flexible voting pilot programme. MHCLG had however requested that the Council continue to support the electoral modernisation programme working with the software provider to continue with its

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arrangements to develop and procure the product, which, as referenced earlier, is fully funded by MHCLG. On that basis a contract has been developed for this purpose.

3. **Alternative options considered and rejected** ²

N/A

4. **Consultation**

(a) Comments of Cabinet Member ^{3 4}

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder, Cllr Richard Henry, has been consulted and supports the contract award.

(b) Comments of other consultees ⁵

N/A

5. **Following consultation with, and the concurrence of the Cabinet Member, I am proceeding with the proposed decision.**

Signed: RICHARD PROTHERO

Title: Strategic Director Date: 10th March 2026

6. **PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED/SIGNED FORM TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES FOR PUBLICATION**

¹ for guidance see Borough Solicitor's note "Taking Decisions"

² details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer at the time the decision was made

³ record any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member consulted. If a Cabinet Member declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from the Borough Solicitor

⁴ If the matter has general significance for the Council and/or is, or is likely to be, controversial, then the officer shall consult the appropriate Cabinet Member before proceeding. In some cases it will be necessary to consult more than one Cabinet Member, and in some cases the Leader of the Council will need to be consulted

⁵ If the matter has local significance, but no general significance for the Council and no controversial aspects, the officer shall consult or inform the local member in writing (or by e mail) and proceed. It is essential that all officers responsible for delivering services ensure that local members are kept well briefed on issues affecting their areas.