

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: NEC Cloud migration	
Staff Contact: Matt Canterford Tel:	Cabinet Member: Councillor Tom Plater and Councillor Loraine Rossati Portfolio: Resources and Transformation and Housing

1. Decision

To approve an additional one-off budget allocation of £200,000 to fund the final external technical specialist support, system speed optimisations, government statutory reporting configuration, and dedicated launch coverage required to safely complete the transfer of the NEC Housing System into live service in the cloud.

To fund this cost entirely from existing earmarked council reserves, ensuring there is no impact on day-to-day service budgets:

- £115,000 allocated from the Business Change Reserve (Transformation & Digital Fund); and
- £85,000 (the remaining balance) allocated from the HRA general reserves.

2. Reasons for the decision

Stevenage Borough Council manages a retained social housing stock of over 8,000 tenancies, leasehold properties, and communal assets and delivers statutory services under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The core operating system supporting this work is the NEC Housing Management System (formerly Northgate Public Services). The platform has historically run on local, on-premise physical servers located within the Council's data suites.

The initial phase of this migration project was part-funded through the Future Councils Programme (supported by central government / DLUHC) to transition Stevenage's mission-critical housing platform into NEC's modern Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) sovereign cloud environment.

The housing management system does not operate in isolation. To carry out daily council business, it must continuously exchange data with multiple other council platforms—such as the corporate financial ledger (for processing payments and paying repair contractors),

DECISION RECORD

customer payment systems, direct debit banking networks, and electronic document archives.

Because the system was being moved to a modern cloud environment, all existing connections had to be re-engineered. In total, the system relies on 22 bespoke interfaces (custom software links connecting the housing platform to other internal and external council systems). Every single one of these 22 bespoke interfaces had to be rewritten, rebuilt, and systematically tested to ensure tenant data, repair requests, and financial transactions flow accurately and securely across council operations without error or disruption.

Testing the new cloud environment alongside housing officers revealed that the technical migration required significantly more in-depth, complex work than originally anticipated. Transitioning the system into the cloud necessitated far deeper technical intervention from specialist supplier engineers than planned—particularly to reconfigure background database settings and resolve system speed issues. Resolving these technical complexities thoroughly was essential before live launch to ensure day-to-day public services and statutory reporting remain completely reliable.

Completing the migration required balancing essential frontline council services and statutory deadlines with significantly more in-depth technical resolution work than originally planned:

- **Strict Operational Windows and System Freezes:** Because the housing system supports vital frontline services, testing and data transfers could not take place during normal business hours or sensitive statutory periods:
- **Annual Rent Setting (Winter Window):** Every winter, the Council is legally mandated to calculate annual rent changes and issue statutory notification letters to all 8,000+ tenants. Modifying or freezing the system during this critical window was strictly prohibited to protect rent collection and legal compliance.
- **Council Budget Setting and Financial Year-End (March–April):** Strict statutory accounting deadlines required operational freezes so the Council's financial accounts could close cleanly and be verified by external auditors.

Conducting user testing alongside frontline housing teams revealed that the cloud transition required considerably more in-depth technical resolution and specialised supplier intervention than originally estimated. Moving the platform's core architecture to a managed cloud environment necessitated extensive background database reconfiguration, complex system parameter adjustments, and dedicated technical work from senior NEC engineers to ensure the system is fully robust under full operational council workloads.

What the Additional Funding Will Deliver Significant progress has now been made: all 22 bespoke interfaces and system links have now been rewritten, tested, and verified as operational.

The project is now in its final delivery phase. The additional £200,000 will pay for the final supplier resources and technical safeguards needed for a secure launch:

1. **Senior Supplier Technical Specialists:** Completing the final performance validation and database fine-tuning so staff can handle resident enquiries seamlessly.
2. **Statutory Reporting Setup:** Finalising the RAPID reporting module to ensure all legal housing returns and local performance dashboards produce accurate figures.
3. **Intensive Launch Support ("Hypercare"):** Providing hands-on supplier technical cover throughout the live cutover weekend and for several weeks immediately following Go-Live, ensuring any post-launch issues are fixed instantly without affecting tenant services.

DECISION RECORD

In order to progress and finish the migration, a decision is needed immediately ahead of the next quarterly monitoring report and the November Cabinet meeting cycle.

Pausing technical delivery to await the formal November Cabinet cycle would result in the loss and demobilisation of dedicated vendor engineering specialists, jeopardising project momentum. Crucially, any further delay risks pushing the cutover window directly into the legally protected winter rent-setting window (during which all database changes are strictly frozen). Taking the decision via this Officer Key Decision route prevents costly delay and ensures the platform can transition safely to live operations.

This decision is taken in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holders and the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer). This expenditure is within the amounts delegated to Cabinet to approve under the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations.

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

Abandon the Cloud Move and Remain on Old Office Servers

Cancel the project and continue running the housing management system on existing internal office servers. Why Rejected: The existing physical servers are at the end of their operational lifespan and can no longer support upcoming mandatory software and regulatory updates from the vendor. Stopping the project now would abandon the benefits of the central government Future Councils grant, write off the substantial staff time and capital investment already committed, and leave the Council's housing service exposed to severe operational risks, including equipment breakdown, system failure, data loss, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Live housing operations and tenant services would be placed at unacceptable risk.

4. **Consultation**

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

Councillor Tom Plater and Councillor Loraine Rossati are content with the proposal and have no comments.

(b) **Comments of other consultees ⁵**

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

Signed: Clare Fletcher

Title: Strategic Director and CFO.....

Date: 14 October 2026.

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

DECISION RECORD

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.