

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COUNCIL
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday 9 December 2015

Time: 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Mayor (Councillor H Burrell) and Councillors D Bainbridge, L Bell, P Bibby, L Briscoe, R Broom, J Brown, L Chester, E Connolly, M Downing, J Fraser, J Gardner, M Gardner, R Henry CC, C Latif, G Lawrence, Mrs J Lloyd, J Lloyd CC, A McGuinness, M McKay, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, M Notley, R Parker CC, S Speller, G Snell, P Stuart, S Taylor OBE CC, J Thomas, V Warwick and A Webb.

Also present: Yvan Tiako (Youth Mayor) and T Harrison (Youth Council)

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 10.35 p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Batson MBE DL CC, D Cullen, L Harrington, S Hearn, M Hurst, R Raynor, S Mead and C Saunders.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – COUNCIL MEETING - WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 7 October 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

The Mayor informed the meeting of the sad death of Freeman and former Councillor Hilda Lawrence on Friday 23 October 2015.

Members then paid tribute to former Councillor Lawrence and the meeting stood for a minute's silence in her memory.

The Mayor congratulated Lewis Hamilton on winning the Formula 1 World Championship for the third time, wishing him all the best for next season

The Mayor informed Council that following the letters of sympathy sent to both the Mayors of Paris and Autun he had received a reply from the Mayor of Autun which he read to the Council. The response expressed the gratitude of the citizens of Paris to the British people who had stood in solidarity following the atrocities in Paris.

The Mayor informed Members that a book entitled 'Aden to Afghanistan' had been presented to the Council by Major Peter Williamson of the Royal Anglian Regiment and that it would be placed in the Members' library.

Finally the Mayor expressed the Council's thanks to the outgoing Chair of the Stevenage Youth Council, Alex Thurley for his contributions and participation at Council meetings and congratulated the new Chair of Stevenage Youth Council, Tamara Harrison who was duly elected on 19 November 2015.

4. MAIN DEBATE – 'HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL?' PROTECTING POLICE FUNDING IN STEVENAGE

The Mayor introduced David Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Hertfordshire.

David Lloyd informed Council that as a Police leader he recognised that keeping Hertfordshire safe was not solely the responsibility of the Constabulary but required involvement of partners from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and from the public themselves playing its own part.

He welcomed the recent decision by Central Government not to implement further funding cuts to the Police budget and that in his capacity as a crime reduction Police leader he recognised that solving crimes did not necessarily require spending more money but was dependent largely on how funds were allocated.

He noted the significant changes in the nature and types of crimes being recorded especially in the areas of child safeguarding, e-crime, abuse and exploitation, much of which remained hidden and unreported. He reiterated the need to build confidence and trust among the public to report crime in communities and acknowledged that resources were now directed at particular type of crimes that had been identified as compared to general policing.

David Lloyd reminded the meeting that despite cuts to police funding over the last few years, Hertfordshire County still had one of the lowest

incidence of crimes in the country.

On the issue of neighbourhood policing, PCC David Lloyd welcomed the present model in Hertfordshire, as it ensured a police force truly embedded in and supported by a community working together to cut crime rather than a Police force that remained distant and isolated, only responding when called up during emergencies. The PCC reaffirmed his commitment to keeping all 228 PCSOs, with plans to expand the service in 2016 especially as it provided a visible uniformed presence which helped to build a good relationship with the public.

On the issue of Domestic Abuse, David Lloyd acknowledged the various initiatives that were in place to address this issue, noting that although it was important to have in place early intervention and prevention programmes for victims of domestic abuse, support should be made available for when things go wrong. He also noted that he had plans to roll out Operation Acorn throughout the County due to its success.

Finally the PCC thanked SBC, the Constabulary and other agencies for working in partnership with his office.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor S Taylor CC, expressed thanks to the PCC for his financial assistance and support over the years especially with regards to addressing the priorities within the Community Safety Action Plan.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the Government's decision not to implement further cuts to the Police funding but highlighted the impact of financial cuts from previous Comprehensive Spending Review's on the district's ability to undertake its various services. However, she noted that in spite of budget constraints, SBC has continued supporting a number of services such as CCTV, tackling anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse initiatives.

Councillor Taylor expressed thanks to organisations such as Stefanou Foundation working in conjunction with victims of domestic abuse on programmes directed at breaking generations of domestic abuse in families and reiterated SBC's gratitude to its various partners.

Councillor J Gardner, in seconding the motion, acknowledged the success of the partnership and commended the support of the PCC over the years.

A full debate ensued with both Councillors and members of the public taking part. Points raised included:

- Cuts in funding to Hertfordshire County impacted on most services provided by district councils especially PCSO's

- An increase in complaints by the public contacting the Neighbourhood Police Office.
- The visibility of PSCO's would improve public confidence and reassure members of the public about safety
- A suggestion to increase the profile of the Neighbourhood Watch Team by using the services of retired Police Officer with experience was noted
- Concerns still existed regarding the operation of the non emergency 101 service provided by the Police
- Data to be shared amongst partners so that Police resources could be easily diverted to areas of needs
- A suggestion on how to improve Police interaction with young people was noted.

At the conclusion of the debate it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** :

1. That this Council endorses the key strategic aims outlined within the Police & Crime Plan (Everybody's Business) and welcomes the Police & Crime Commissioner's ongoing support and commitment to community policing and to working in conjunction with the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership.
2. That this Council notes that in spite of welcome recent announcements of no further cuts to police funding through the comprehensive spending review, there are still pressures on police funding from previous budget announcements which will impact at local level.
3. That the Council recognises the high priority Stevenage people place on tackling crime and disorder and commends the work of the SoSafe partnership in helping more people to feel safe in the town as highlighted by improved performance in the recent town-wide Resident Survey.
4. That this Council notes the recent increase in crime in some crime types and will continue to work with partners to tackle key local issues to reduce crime, domestic abuse and ASB within Stevenage. In spite of severe government funding reductions over the last five years, this Council has protected funding for Police Community Support Officers in the town centre and continues to provide front line community safety services whilst working with partners to help our residents feel safe".

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition enquired on how the Council assessed its future home building programme especially in light of the draft local plan which was out for consultation.

In response the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that a number of factors were considered such as information provided by the National Statistics Office on population growth, the relationship with neighbouring authorities, the local plan and government guidelines such as the National Planning Policy Framework.

Council then received updates on the following:

- Refugees
- 'Prevent'
- Small Business Saturday
- MIPIM (Le Marché International des Professionnels de l'Immobilier) & Regeneration
- Homelessness

In reply to questions on the accommodation being offered to Syrian refugees, the Leader of the Council confirmed that as previously stated refugees would be accommodated in the private rented sector and not in the Council's housing stock.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Mayor informed Council that Motion A concerning Houses of Multiple Occupancy detailed on the agenda and that Motion B concerning the Trade Union Bill was on the supplementary agenda.

A. Councillor A McGuinness in moving the motion informed the meeting that Stevenage had in recent years witnessed a notable increase in the conversion of dwellings to houses of multiple occupancy type, and concerns by residents had resulted in an online petition with over 338 residents signing up.

Councillor R Parker seconded the motion, reserving his right to speak later on during the debate.

At this juncture, the Mayor informed Council that an amendment to the motion had been received.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor J Gardner informed the Council that this was simply a technical amendment considering timescale for evidence gathering on this issue would be over a year.

Councillor A Webb in seconding the amendment acknowledged the concerns raised by residents over the increase of HMO's in Stevenage.

A vote was taken on the amendment and it was **RESOLVED** that the amendment be carried.

Council then debated the substantive Motion.

In inviting the public to participate in the debate, the Mayor welcomed Mr McGrow, the lead petitioner to raise his points alongside those raised by Councillors

Points raised included:

- Changes in the demographics had resulted in the growth of HMO's in Stevenage
- HMO's are suitable for an increasing student population and low income earners
- Planning regulation had a vital role to play to ensure that HMO's did not impact upon the character and appearance of the area.
- Evidence gathering should be extensive and not focus only on environmental issues.

The substantive Motion was put to vote and it was **RESOLVED** that this Council is concerned about the increase in the number of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Stevenage and recommends that appropriate evidence gathering and consultation are carried out to enable the Council to fully consider if one or more Article 4 Directions for parts of Stevenage should be imposed.”

B. In proposing the motion, Councillor Mrs J Lloyd informed Council that the proposed bill would affect the relationship that presently existed between the trade unions at the local levels and SBC, especially as it addressed issues such as facility time which has always been voluntarily agreed between both parties.

Councillor S Taylor in seconding the motion was concerned that the

proposed bill would undermine the good work undertaken by the local unions in Stevenage such as being champions of apprentices and agents of progressive change. Councillor Taylor noted that imposing regulation on local unions was contrary to central government promotion of the localism act. She also noted that changes to collection of union dues would only create more bureaucracy and be costly to the unions.

A full debate ensued with both Councillors and members of the public taking part. Points raised included:

- Proposed changes with regards to collection of union dues would result in more transparency.
- Facility time by union representative focused on casework which in most instances was resolved quickly.
- A vast number of union representative work was voluntarily undertaken.

It was then moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** :

1. That this Council recognises the positive contribution that trade unions and trade union members make in our workplaces. This Council values the constructive relationship that we have with our trade unions and we recognise their work commitment, and the commitment of all our staff, to the delivery of good quality public services.
2. That this Council notes with concern the Trade Union Bill which is currently being proposed by the Government and which would affect this Council's relationship with our trade unions and our workforce as a whole. This Council rejects this Bill's attack on local democracy and the attack on our right to manage our affairs.
3. That this Council is clear that facility time, negotiated and agreed by us and our trade unions to suit our own specific needs, has a valuable role to play in the creation of good quality and responsive local services. Facility time should not be determined or controlled by Government in London.
4. That this Council is happy with the arrangements it currently has in place for deducting trade union membership subscriptions through our payroll. We see this as an important part of our positive industrial relations and a cheap and easy to administer system that supports our staff. This system is an administrative matter for the Council and should not be interfered with by the UK Government.
5. That this Council supports the campaign against the unnecessary, anti-democratic and bureaucratic Trade Union Bill.

6. That this Council resolves to seek to continue its own locally agreed industrial relations strategy and it will take every measure possible to maintain its autonomy with regard to facility time and the continuing use of check-off.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

A. Question from Councillor G Snell

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded to a question on whether the Council had made any savings following its decision to cancel the refuse and recycling calendar.

Council was advised that the savings to the Council in 2015/16 was £6,000.

In reply to a supplementary question that older people without access to computers might not be aware of changes to collection dates publicised on the Council website, the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration detailed other methods that were used to advise of changes and stated that there was no evidence that there was any increase in missed collections.

B. Question from Councillor A McGuinness

In reply to a question on Council's plans to promote mental health, the Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Older People informed the meeting that mental health promotion in Stevenage has been a key focus over the last couple of years and welcomed the work undertaken by the outreach worker who has delivered short term interventions to over 75 people in the community.

C. Question from Councillor R Parker CC

In response to a question on whether Council plans to introduce parking charges for Fairlands Valley Showground, the Portfolio Holder indicated that SBC had no plans to reintroduce charges and that it would ensure that message is effectively communicated through the press.

11. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Council considered a report seeking approval for the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Gambling Act 2005-Statement of Policy be approved.

12. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – 2015/2016 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW REPORT

The Council considered a report seeking approval for the 2015/2016 Mid Year Treasury Management Review.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the 2015/2016 Mid Year Treasury Management review be approved.

13. DRAFT AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 9 NOVEMBER 2015

The Council had before it the draft minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 9 November 2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the draft minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 9 November 2015 be noted.

14. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

16. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 11 NOVEMBER 2015

The Council had before it the Part II Minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 November 2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 11 November 2015 be noted.

Mayor