

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 7 December 2016

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

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

In Attendance: Emma Chapman - Stevenage Youth Mayor

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7:00 pm
End Time: 9:40 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – COUNCIL – 4 OCTOBER 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meeting of 4 October 2016 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor subject to the following amendment:

Item 11 – First sentence should read ‘Portfolio Holder’ and not ‘Polio Holder’

3. MAYOR’S COMMUNICATION

The Mayor informed Council that since the last meeting, the Mayoral Team had undertaken a number of engagements in the town and he referred to a number of highlights including:

- A visit to Jubilee Court sheltered accommodation including the 100th birthday celebration of one of the residents;
- A meeting at the Lister Hospital with the cyclists raising funds for the hospital by cycling to our Twin Towns Ingelheim and Autun next year and hoping to raise £30,000.

- A visit to Woolenwick School to look at an exhibition of the pupils 'Dream Jars'. The Woolenwick pupils also came on a visit to Daneshill House last week.
- Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. The Mayor informed Members that he had receive a letter of thanks from Sally Burton Deputy Lieutenant, Hertfordshire County Council, which he had shared with the Stevenage Royal British Legion;
- Attending a number of Civic Services around the County. The Mayor reminded Members that his Civic Service would be held at St Hilda's Church in February 2017;
- Harvest Festival at Round Diamond School;
- Mini Olympics at the Leisure Centre;
- Re-opening the refurbished Roundmead Centre
- Attending the annual Christingle Service at St Andrew and St George's and in the evening evensong to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the late Queen Mother laying the Foundation Stone.
- Several 70th Anniversary events and Celebrations;
- A disabled ballroom championship with competitors attending from across the continent at the Stevenage Leisure Centre.

4. MAIN DEBATE – PRESENTATION FROM THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

The Mayor welcomed David Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire to the meeting.

The Commissioner advised the Council of the launch of the new Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan (previously called the Police and Crime Plan). The Plan outlined the main issues for Hertfordshire which included:

- Keeping crime low;
- Protecting local policing;
- Increasing efficiency through a greater use of technology;
- Keeping council tax low;
- Focussing on victims of crime.

The Commissioner advised that a key area for the Police was the prevention of reoffending. Organisations that were part of the criminal justice process would be brought together which would produce a better outcome for victims.

In relation to Domestic Abuse reporting the Commissioner was pleased to report positive outcomes in terms of the numbers of recorded crimes in this area. Domestic Violence Advisors were now in place to ensure support was available for victims.

A further priority for the Commissioner was to focus on the issues that were raised by residents regarding quality of life, including speeding, anti-social

behaviour, fly tipping etc.

The commissioner reported that there was the potential for bringing together the Fire Service with the Police Service in the future. A business case was in the process of being prepared for this which the Commissioner would then evaluate.

The Commissioner was pleased to inform Members that the Force were currently fully staffed and at establishment for the first time in a number of years.

The Mayor thanked the Commissioner for his informative presentation.

A Councillor raised the issue of cycling on pavements particularly within the Town Centre shopping area. He expressed concern regarding the safety of pedestrians as some cyclists regularly ignored pedestrian crossings and asked the Commissioner what actions the Police were taking on this issue. The Commissioner advised that although there was guidance on this and the Police were taking action, discretion should be used and where there was unreasonable repeat behaviour the Police would look at the possibility of restorative justice.

A Motion was moved by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Hollywell.

A full debate ensued. Points raised included:

- Congratulating the Commissioner on the recent appointment of Charlie Hall the new Chief Constable for Hertfordshire;
- Part of the Policing team had moved in to a floor of Daneshill House;
- An 11% increase in criminal damage incidents had been recorded for the Town. A number of Public Space Protection Orders were in place but they needed to be enforced to ensure they were effective.
- The increase in gang culture in the town.
- The impact on police when dealing with mental health issues, particularly since the Mental Health Unit at the Lister Hospital had been closed;
- The Commissioner advised that Hate Crime was also a priority area and he confirmed that he would make available to Members the figures in relation to the Hate Crime statistics for Stevenage.

The Leader of the Council requested that a response be sent to Mr Pereira, who had originally raised the question regarding cycling on pavements, advising of the Commissioner's response on this matter.

Following the debate it was **RESOLVED** that this Council endorses the key aims highlighted within the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan. We welcome the Police and Crime Commissioner's ongoing support, working in conjunction with the SoSafe Community Safety Partnership, to address our local priorities to reduce crime & anti-social behaviour and the

renewed emphasis on tackling domestic abuse and addressing road safety issues.

The forthcoming Policing and Crime Bill will seek to promote the value of collaboration and joined up working with the Emergency Services. This Council pledges our continued support to strengthen our joint work with our Police colleagues and welcomes the innovative and positive links being built with Neighbourhood Policing teams.

We urge the Police and Crime Commissioner to consider, as part of the action planning to deliver the Community Safety and Criminal Justice Plan, whether the levels of resourcing for policing districts in Hertfordshire adequately reflects the differential levels of crime and disorder in the County.'

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The question received from the member of the public had been withdrawn.

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition enquired about the proposed development at the Symonds Green Neighbourhood Centre and why the Council was not retaining the site for much needed social housing.

In response, the Leader of the Council advised that the Neighbourhood Centre was privately owned which meant that unfortunately the Council could not direct on the tenure of the properties.

Council then received updates on the following:

- Leaseholder Forum – Major works and caretaking charges;
- Tenancy Services – Outcomes from Tenants Wellbeing Day held on 23 November 2016;
- The Autumn Statement
- Single Person Discount Review
- Great British High Street Awards
- BTC Pride of Stevenage Awards
- Firework Display
- Christmas Lights Switch On
- A Brave New World

- Sports and Arts Finale
- Town Centre
- Play Areas

The Leader of the Council requested that thanks be recorded for all those who had been involved in the 70th Anniversary events and celebrations including members of community groups, Stevenage Arts Guild and Sport Stevenage, the Town and Country Planning Association, Stevenage Museum, Council officers and Councillor Speller who had led the events for the Council.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

A. Motion moved by Councillor R Raynor

The Mayor informed Council that the first motion regarding the rail service between Hertford and Stevenage had been slightly revised and circulated around the Chamber. The motion was then moved by Councillor Raynor and seconded by Councillor Gardner.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Raynor informed Council that the proposal would result in journey times between Hertford and Stevenage more than doubling which would have a consequence on passenger numbers. The proposal was disappointing in the light of all the positive moves around the railways at this time including expansion on many routes and the extension of the Oyster Card to Stevenage.

Councillor Gardner in seconding the motion advised that Stevenage Borough Council was united with the County Council on this issue. He expressed concern that there was a real danger that this would result in the service not being reinstated.

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

- The traffic problems that already currently existed on the A602. Replacement buses would just add to the problem. There were also engineering works planned for the A602 in the near future which would exacerbate the problem.
- The increase in traffic as people used cars as an alternative mode of transport would have an environmental impact on the area.
- The wording of the motion would be added to the reply the Council was preparing in response to the Government consultation on this issue.
- The motion should also be sent to the Local MP and the Stevenage Rail Users Group.

After a debate it was put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** that, at a time of significant planned growth, which can only be delivered

sustainably by continuing investment in public transport, the prospect of rail services between Hertford and Stevenage being severed for up to six years is totally unacceptable. Not only will this inconvenience thousands of passengers every week but it will encourage more traffic onto already congested roads.

B. Motion moved by Councillor S Taylor

The Motion included in the agenda was moved by Councillor Taylor and seconded by Councillor Burrell.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Taylor advised that many women living in Stevenage would be affected by the transitional arrangements relating to the State Pension for women born after 6 April 1951 and by the Government's failure to make provision and fail to notify the affected women. She advised that the motion had the full support of the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI).

After a debate it was put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** that the Council calls upon the Government to reconsider transitional arrangements for the state pension from women born after 6 April 1951, so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

A. Question from Councillor R Parker

In response to a question from Councillor Parker regarding the recent refurbishment of the Autun Room in Daneshill House, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd advised that the purpose for the refurbishment was to make this space more flexible, primarily to continue use for civic and committee meetings, but with the flexibility to then accommodate meetings, other events or training. The introduction of the new mobile desks would mean that the layout could be easily changed to suit the format and needs of the particular meeting.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Parker the Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the original furniture had been offered to a range of charities and had been recycled where necessary.

B. Question from Councillor G Snell

In response to a question from Councillor G Snell regarding, the refurbishment of the toilets in Daneshill House, the Portfolio Holder for Resources Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd funding for the refurbishment of the toilet facilities at Daneshill House was agreed

as part of the capital programme for 2016/17. The new and old block toilets were last refurbished over 30 years ago and were now beyond their serviceable life. In addition, as part of the Council's internal engagement work with staff, the poor state of the toilets was highlighted as a major concern.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Parker (on behalf of Councillor Snell) the Portfolio Holder for Resources reiterated that urgent investment was required to ensure operable toilet facilities within Daneshill House, keeping the building fit for purpose.

C. Question from Councillor A McGuinness

In respect to a question from Councillor A McGuinness regarding suitable homeless accommodation during the winter months, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People Councillor J Thomas confirmed that The Haven had opened up the Cold Weather Provision for the winter. This would normally run until around February time – subject to weather conditions. The Portfolio Holder also advised that there was an agreed protocol between SBC and the Haven to ensure the best use of the 10 spaces that were available.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor McGuinness the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People advised that statistics regarding the usage of The Haven would be available at the end of the winter period. In relation to the Council's own properties, those people registered on the housing waiting list and other homeless families would be given priority.

11. 2016/17 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Resources moved the recommendation and sought approval of updates to the 2016/17 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

It was then moved by Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, seconded by Councillor McKay and it was **RESOLVED** that the updates to the 2016/17 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy are approved.

12. REVISION TO CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

Councillor McKay, Chair of Audit Committee in moving the recommendations gave an update on the revision to the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Gardner and it was **RESOLVED** that the revised Contract Standing Orders are approved.

13. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS (FOR AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS FROM 2018/19 ONWARDS)

Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, Portfolio Holder for Resources in moving the recommendations gave an update on the preferred mechanism for the appointment of the Council's external auditors for the Statement of Accounts from 2018/19 onwards.

The recommendation was seconded by Councillor McKay and it was **RESOLVED** that the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements provided by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors for a five year period commencing on the 1 April 2018.

14. STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL CO-OPERATIVE CORPORATE PLAN FUTURE TOWN FUTURE COUNCIL

In moving the recommendation Councillor Taylor gave an update to Council on the proposed Council's Corporate Plan – Future Town Future Council.

The recommendation was seconded by Councillor Gardner and it was **RESOLVED** that the Council's Corporate Plan – Future Town Future Council is approved.

15. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 28 SEPTEMBER AND 9 NOVEMBER 2016

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 28 September 2016 and 9 November 2016 are noted.

15. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR