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ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 4 October 2021
Time: 6.00pm,
Location: Council Chamber
Contact: Lisa Jerome - Tel: 01438 242203

Members: Councillors: M Downing (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair),
J Ashley-Wren, D Bainbridge, S Booth, A Brown, W Kerby, M McKay,
S Mead, C Parris and S Speller

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES -13 SEPTEMBER 2021

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on Monday 13 September 2021.

Pages 3 – 6

3. CLIMATE EMERGENCY - OFFICER PRESENTATION

To receive an officer presentation on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

4. DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT - CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY REVIEW

To consider and amend as appropriate the draft scoping document for the scrutiny review into the Council's response to the Climate Emergency.

Pages 7 – 10

5. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

6. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

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 Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 24 September 2021

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 13 September 2021

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Doug Bainbridge, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Wendy Kerby, Maureen McKay, Sarah Mead and Claire Parris

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00 pm
End Time: 7.04 pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Simon Speller.

2 **MINUTES - 22 JUNE 2021 AND 5 JULY 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Committee meetings held on Tuesday 22 June 2021 and on Monday 5 July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **UPDATE ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CV-19 PANDEMIC ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

As part of its review of the economic impact of Covid19 on Stevenage, the Committee invited three organisations (Fin Divers Ltd, Westend Wi-Fi Ltd and Relton Associates Ltd) to offer their view on how Covid19 impacted their business and their path to recovery following the lockdowns.

The guest speakers from each organisation provided the following key updates to committee:

- The pandemic was described as catastrophic for small businesses.
- The Government Recovery Roadmap helped businesses survive the pandemic through the Bounce Back Business Loans, grants and the Furlough Scheme. Businesses survived and some emerged even stronger.
- It was also an opportunity for some businesses to look in to their systems and improve them during the pandemic.
- Banks were usually strict with providing loans to businesses, however, the Bounce Back Business loans enabled smaller businesses to access finance

more quickly during the pandemic.

- The Council provided support to businesses by processing the Government grants quickly and efficiently and also by providing clear and timely information about what help from the Council and what government loans were available
- Grants made a huge difference for businesses, and this support also had positive impact on their personal lives.
- Businesses took the opportunity to furlough staff during the pandemic.
- The Kickstart Programme mitigated the risks of the uncertainties in the business environment.
- The Government's introduction of a new reduced rate of VAT for businesses helped them survive during the pandemic.

Members asked a number of questions and received the following comments:

- Bounce Back Business Loans were introduced quickly and efficiently, and the application process was easy and straight forward.
- Businesses were reliant on the Government funding and it provided them with some business confidence.
- The Council adapted quickly to support businesses in Stevenage to process grants.
- For businesses based at the BTC operated by Wenta on behalf of the Council, these businesses received very quick support and information but it was harder for businesses located elsewhere, who did not always receive the information or the same level of advice that was available via Wenta so struggling to make the right choices about accessing grants and loans etc so getting the message out to them would be the most important change if this was ever to be repeated in the future.

The Chair outlined for Members the next steps in the review, which would be for a draft report and recommendations to be brought back to the Committee for consideration in October 2021.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the update.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

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DRAFT

Template Scoping Document

<u>Environment & Economy Select Committee</u>	
<u>Scrutiny Review Title:</u>	Climate Emergency Scrutiny Review
<u>Background issues</u> to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	When Members considered their work programme for the 2021-22 Municipal Year at its meeting in June 2021 it was agreed that the review into the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan and the impact of the Climate Emergency on Council services, Executive Portfolio Holder's Business Unit's future plans
Is this issue covered by Corporate Plans?	Yes, the Council has signed up to a Climate Emergency and has an agreed associated Climate Emergency Action Plan.
<u>Focus of the review:</u> (State what the review focus will be)	<p><u>Initially the review will consider how the Council is delivering against the agreed Climate Emergency Action Plan and will interview each Executive Portfolio Holder who will be supported by the relevant Strategic Director/Assistant Director to see how their own individual plans are progressing?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are the public engaged in this project?• Establish how the funding to support measures are being implemented to mainstream this work?• Compare with other local authorities of a similar size and demographic to see how the plans look?• Establish what equalities and diversity measures will be considered for this project?• What does the Council need to do that it currently isn't doing that will help mainstream a climate emergency approach to its day-to-day practises?• What should Council's be doing to lead on Climate Change? - <i>Cllr David Renard, Environment spokesperson for the LGA, said: "The climate challenge really does impact every aspect of our lives and subsequently, every aspect of our local authorities.</i>

	<p><i>“Councils are working hard towards net-zero carbon emissions. Waste collections are getting increasingly more efficient and recycling rates over the past decade show that people really do care. We’ve also seen council investment in flood defences, electric vehicle infrastructure and parks and green spaces, which create cleaner air in our communities and thriving habitats for wildlife.</i></p> <p><i>“There is still a long way to go in our work to protect our planet, but councils will continue to lead local efforts to become more environmentally conscious.”</i></p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the review can help establish if the Council is on course to meet its own targets within the Climate Emergency Action Plan? If it is in line with the sectors standards as set by central government? and is it offering a tangible lead role for local residents, local businesses and the voluntary sector?
<p>Timing issues: Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?</p>	<p>This work is likely to take some months to complete and could roll into the following Municipal Year.</p>
<p>The Committee will meet on (provide dates if known):</p>	<p>Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair and Vice-Chair and AD Planning and Regulation meet together in September to establish the review scope • 4 October 2021 – Presentation from Officers on the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan and agree the scoping document • Series of interviews with the Executive Portfolio Holders to examine their Business Units plans and how the Climate Emergency is affecting those plans, beginning in 2021/22 and will likely run into 2022/23 Municipal Year. • Early recommendations and outline draft report to Select Committee in 2022 • Final recommendations & report – 2022
<p>SBC Leads (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD’s Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):</p>	<p><i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All Executive Portfolio Holders</i> • <i>All SD’s & Assistant Directors</i> • <i>Other officers to be identified</i>

Any other witnesses (external persons/critical friend)?:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “Critical Friend” Co-optee to the review – a leading local Climate Change expert • Youth Mayor/ Youth Council for comment from younger people (including Chair of the Youth Council) • Local Business Community – SME’s, Large Employers • Environmental Groups – The Chair has suggested inviting HEART Community Group (Hertfordshire for Enabling and Adapting for Resilience Together) a Hertfordshire based environmental community group of Hertfordshire residents “who believe that we are facing existential threats brought about by climate change and other associated predicaments”
Allocation of lead Members on specific individual issues/questions: Any other Questions Members wish to cover:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. Members will undertake their own desktop and fact finding research and ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews): To be identified at the scoping meeting.
Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community	To be identified.
Equalities and Diversity issues: The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised	The review should address equalities and diversity issues directly in the review. Equalities & Diversity Issues – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? – The review should consider what equality and diversity issues there are in delivering on the Council’s Climate Emergency Action Plan actions?
Constraints (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):	<i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting 4 October 2021</i> (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc) Any other matters that could be part of a wider Cultural Framework but are not directly

	addressed by the review should be directed to the Assistant Director for Communities & Neighbourhoods.
Background Documents/data that can be provided to the review	<p>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting 4 October 2021:</p> <p>Evidence requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC Climate Emergency Action Plan • The Council’s Climate Emergency Declaration – 12 June 2019 - https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=150&MId=4387&Ver=4 • SBC Climate Change Strategy September 2020 - https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/climate-change-strategy/climate-change-strategy-september-2020.pdf • Climate Change Citizens Panel Report https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/climate-change-strategy/climate-change-citizens-panel-report-executive-summary.pdf • Question at Council in July 2021 re Climate Change - https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s28963/Public%20-%20Questions.pdf • Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership - http://www.hccsp.org.uk/ • Local Government Association - https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/councils-spearheading-national-climate-change-effort • Links to Central Government Policy Documents Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – “Local government, climate change and the environment” – “This collection brings together information for local councils on climate change and the environment. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-climate-change-and-the-environment
Agreed Milestones and review sign off -To be agreed by Members and officers	<p>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): DD MM YY</p> <p>Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)</p>