

# Public Document Pack

Daneshill House  
Danestrete  
Stevenage  
Hertfordshire

12 July 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage on Wednesday, 20 July 2022 at 7.00pm and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully



Matthew Partridge  
Chief Executive

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## AGENDA

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

**2. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

To receive any communications that the Mayor may wish to put before the Council.

**3. MINUTES - 25 MAY 2022 (ANNUAL MEETING)**

To approve as a record the attached Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 25 May 2022 for signature by the Mayor.

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**4. COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS**

None received.

**5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

None received.

**6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

None received.

## **7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None received.

## **8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE**

In accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition shall be given the opportunity to raise one matter relevant to the Borough that has arisen since the last meeting of the Council. The Leader of the Council shall then have the opportunity to advise the Council of matters relevant to the Borough that have arisen since the last meeting.

## **9. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS**

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the recent activities of those Committees.

## **10. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

To consider the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22.

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## **11. NOTICE OF MOTIONS**

In accordance with Standing Orders, the following motions have been received for consideration:

(i) Cost of Living Crisis

To be moved by the Labour Group.

"The cost of living crisis is affecting every family across Stevenage, and many are facing dreadful decisions about what they can and cannot afford to do at the most basic levels some having to choose between heating, eating or transport to work.

The Chancellor's Spring Statement was a lost opportunity to ensure real and substantial help to those families and once again local government is left picking up the pieces of hunger, homelessness and poverty and the effects these have on everyone suffering.

In Stevenage we have now set up a Cost of Living Task Force which will work with the Stevenage Together Partnership to identify the support needed in our community and ensure we have actions in place to address the needs identified.

In Stevenage we can and must take the following urgent actions:

- We declare this to be a Cost of Living emergency and pledge to take all the action in our powers to help our community and to mitigate its impact wherever possible.
- Work through our Cost of Living Task Force to identify actions and policies to support our community and the council through the crisis.

- Call upon our MP to lobby his Chancellor of the Exchequer to take urgent measures to support individuals, communities and families through this crisis.
- Call on Hertfordshire County Council to make permanent and enduring commitment to providing holiday food to children entitled to Free School Meals.
- Work with the retail sector in Stevenage to reduce food waste, donate surpluses to food banks and ensure that affordable food is available to all.
- Ensure that all our schools have established and responsive systems for identifying and supporting those children who are struggling through food and fuel poverty
- Call upon the government to scrap the National Insurance increase, continue to impose a windfall tax on oil and gas companies while it is necessary to remove a substantial sum from citizens energy bills and immediately restore the triple lock for pensions.
- Call upon Government to restore the additional Universal Credit payment made during the Covid crisis.
- Write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to point out the critical situation facing our community and the financial impact the cost of living crisis will have on council finances.”

(ii) Homelessness Policies

To be moved by Councillor Phil Bibby CC and seconded by Councillor Wendy Kerby.

“In April of this year, there was a concerning report in the Comet newspaper under the headline ‘Couple unable to return to rented home’, describing that the landlords rented their retirement home on a short-term basis, and hoped to move back in just before Christmas last year but, two days before the tenant was due to vacate the property, having been given proper notice, she was told by the Council’s housing department to remain in the property, against the threat of being seen as making herself intentionally homeless.

Whilst it is understood that the Council and tenants acted lawfully, and this situation has now been resolved, with the couple back in their property and the tenant re-housed, the Council’s policies and practices should protect lawful landlords, who are an important source of much needed housing, with the same vigour as tenants.

We accept that the Council will always respect tenancy and homelessness legislation and guidance, but we call on it to make timely assessments of tenants facing lawful eviction and possible homelessness, being on the guard against ‘voluntary homelessness’, and make proper provision in the HRA to have an adequate supply of suitable accommodation, in case of need.”

## **12. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

In accordance with Standing Orders, written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Councillor Claire Parris

“Can I ask if the Council has any updates on the proposed radiology facility and its location?”

(B) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

“What assessment will be undertaken by officers of the negative consequences on the Council of a “lame duck Government” caused by the resignation of Boris Johnson?”

(C) Question from Councillor Stephen Booth

“What steps have the Council undertaken to work with partner agencies to ensure that the empty homes in Tabor Close are occupied as soon as possible?”

(D) Question from Councillor Robin Parker CC

What is being done, in conjunction with the County Council as the Highways “Authority, to solve the traffic congestion issues at the exit from Swingate onto Lytton Way, which continue to be a regular problem at busy times and which started following the remodelling of Lytton Way?”

(E) Question from Councillor Alex Farquharson

“Will you guarantee that a community centre will be built to replace the previously demolished building at the Hertford Road/Kenilworth Close shops?”

(F) Question from Councillor Bret Facey

“Does the Council have any plans to close or reduce the size of the indoor market in the foreseeable future?”

(G) Question from Councillor Tom Wren

“What does the Council consider to be an acceptable time for residents to wait for telephone call enquiries to be answered?”

### **13. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23 - ADDENDUM**

To consider a report recommending the approval of an addendum to the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23.

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### **14. MEMBER SUBSTITUTION SCHEME FOR REGULATORY COMMITTEES**

To appoint named Councillors as substitute Members for the Council’s Regulatory Committees (Licensing, General Purposes and Planning & Development Committees), as required by the Council’s Constitution.

[REPORT TO FOLLOW]

**15. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

To note the Minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee held on 28 February 2022, 28 March 2022 and 7 June 2022.

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### COUNCIL MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 25 May 2022**

**Time: 7.00pm**

**Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Present:** The Mayor (2021/22) Councillor Sandra Barr; and Councillors Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Nazmin Chowdhury, Matt Creasey, Michael Downing, John Duncan, Bret Facey, Alex Farquharson, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Chris Howells, Graham Lawrence CC, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Andy McGuinness, Maureen McKay, Sarah Mead, Adam Mitchell CC, Margaret Notley, Claire Parris, Robin Parker CC, Loraine Rossati, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Jeannette Thomas, Anne Wells and Tom Wren.

**Start / End** Start Time: 7.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 8.47pm

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

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lin Martin-Haugh, Liz Harrington and Wendy Kerby.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 MINUTES - 24 FEBRUARY 2022 AND 9 MARCH 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Council meetings held on 24 February 2022 and 9 March 2022 be approved as correct records and signed by the Mayor.

#### **3 ELECTION OF MAYOR**

The Mayor gave a speech thanking the Council for a wonderful term of office, and recounted some of the highlights of the year. With particular reference to the Middle Earth books of J R R Tolkien, she thanked her daughter Louisa (the Mayoress); Councillors Richard Henry and Claire Parris (her fellow St. Nicholas Ward councillors); the Leader of the Council (Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE, CC); Councillor Simon Speller; the Youth Mayor (Eden Searle); and Tracey Frost (Mayor's Secretary) and the other officers who had helped her throughout her year in office. She wished the incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor every success for the coming year.

The Mayor presented Long Service Awards to Councillors Liz Harrington (30 years' service) and Sharon Taylor OBE, CC (25 years' service).

The Mayor then presented an award to Simon Tabert (former and recently retired Chief Inspector and Stevenage Local Area Police Commander, Hertfordshire Constabulary) in recognition of his contribution to improving community safety across the town, together with a bunch of flowers to his partner, Julie Bailey. Simon thanked the Council for the award.

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Office of Mayor for 2022/23.

Councillor Sharon Taylor, OBE, CC nominated Councillor Margaret Notley for the Office of Mayor.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor Phil Bibby CC.

There being no other nominations, a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Margaret Notley be elected as Mayor for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Councillor Margaret Notley then made the statutory declaration of office.

The Mayor thanked the Council for her election and announced that Mrs Cathy Bibby would be the Mayoress for 2022/23, and that the Rev. Dr. Ruth Carroll would be her Chaplain.

The Mayor stated that it had been a pleasure to have assisted the outgoing Mayor as her deputy for the past year, and looked forward to attending as many events as possible during 2022/23. She announced that her chosen charities for the year would be the Anne Robson Trust, the Stevenage District Scouts and the Stevenage & Grange Rotary Clubs.

#### **4 ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

The Mayor asked for nominations for the Office of Deputy Mayor for 2022/23.

Councillor Lloyd Briscoe nominated Councillor Myla Arceno. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Teresa Callaghan.

There being no other nominations, a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Myla Arceno be appointed Deputy Mayor for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Councillor Myla Arceno then made the statutory declaration of office. The Deputy Mayor thanked the Council for her election and announced that her son, John Arceno, would be her Deputy Consort for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

#### **5 APPOINTMENT OF YOUTH MAYOR**

The outgoing Youth Mayor, Eden Searle, thanked the outgoing Mayor, councillors, officers, family and friends for their support over the year. She outlined some of the highlights of her year in office and wished the incoming Youth Mayor every success



in the role.

Councillor Richard Henry congratulated the outgoing Mayor on her achievements during the year, and advised that the Youth Council had nominated Paige Abrey as the 2022/23 Youth Mayor.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Paige Abrey be elected as Youth Mayor for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Paige Abrey then signed the declaration of office. In her acceptance speech, the New Youth Mayor thanked the Council for her election. She further thanked the outgoing Youth Mayor, and outlined a number of initiatives that she hoped to be involved in during 2022/23.

## **6 BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2022**

The Council considered a report that detailed the results of the Borough Council Elections that were held on 5 May 2022.

The Leader in moving the report, thanked Matt Partridge (Returning Officer), Luke Fattorusso (Interim Democratic Services Manager) and the Elections Team for the excellent and smooth management of the Election process. She congratulated councillors successful in being elected and welcomed newly elected Councillors Nazmin Chowdhury, Bret Facey and Anne Wells.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Lou Rossati welcomed back Councillor Jim Brown, who had been successful in being elected as a councillor for the Old Town ward.

It was **ESOLVED** that the results of the Stevenage Borough Council Elections held on 5 May 2022 be noted.

## **7 APPOINTMENT OF LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION**

The Chief Executive advised that the Leader of the Opposition would be Councillor Phil Bibby CC and that Councillor Graham Lawrence CC would be his deputy.

## **8 APPOINTMENT OF THE LEADERS AND DEPUTY LEADERS OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that Councillors Sharon Taylor OBE CC, Phil Bibby CC and Robin Parker CC had been appointed as Leaders of the Labour and Co-operative, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively. It was noted that Councillors Richard Henry, Graham Lawrence CC and Andy McGuinness would be Deputy Leaders of the Labour and Co-operative, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively.

## **9 CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES**

Council considered various matters relating to the Member level decision making

structure of the Council and the Council's constitution for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

The Leader of the Council commented that a full review of the Constitution was scheduled to commence in 2022/23 by way of an Informal Cross-Party Working Group, with a view to having a new Constitution in place by the time of the all-out Borough Council elections in 2024 or sooner if possible.

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

1. That the Terms of Reference, as detailed in the appendices to the report; and the size and political composition for the following bodies that form the non-Executive Member level decision making structure of the Council be approved subject to the rules of proportionality where appropriate for 100 Committee places where applicable (relevant Committees are identified thus\*) -
  - Overview and Scrutiny Committee\* (Appendix A) – 14 Members (9 Labour & Co-operative Group, 3 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Community Select Committee\* (Appendix B) – 10 Members (6 Labour & Co-operative Group, 3 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Environment and Economy Select Committee\* (Appendix C) – 11 Members (7 Labour & Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Planning & Development Committee\* (Appendix D) – 14 Members (9 Labour & Co-operative Group, 3 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Licensing Committee (Appendix E) – 14 Members (8 Labour & Co-operative Group, 4 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - General Purposes Committee\* (Appendix F) – 14 Members (8 Labour & Co-operative Group, 4 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Appointments Committee\* (Appendix G) - 8 Members (5 Labour & Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Standards Committee\* (Appendix H) – 8 Members (5 Labour & Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)
  - Audit Committee\* (Appendix I) – 10 Members (6 Labour & Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group, 2 Liberal Democrat Group) + 1 Co-opted non-elected member
  - Statement of Accounts Committee\* (Appendix J) – 8 Members (5 Labour & Co-operative Group, 2 Conservative Group, 1 Liberal Democrat Group)

- Joint Consultative Committee\* (Appendix K) – 3 Members (2 Labour & Co-operative Group, 1 Conservative Group)

\* Indicates where those bodies covered by the rules of proportionality for the purposes of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups), Regulations 1990 – total Committee places being 100

2. That the membership of the Executive and the individual Portfolios, as set out in the lilac paper circulated at the meeting, be noted.
3. That the various Executive bodies appointed by the Leader, detailed in Paragraph 4.3 of the report and the relevant Terms of Reference for each body set out in Appendix L to the report, be noted.
4. That the dates for Council meetings for the Municipal Year 2022/23, as shown at Paragraph 4.6 of the report, be approved, and that the calendar of formal meetings shown at Appendix M to the report, be noted.
5. That the substantive amendments to Standing Orders arising as a consequence of the motion approved by Council on 9 March 2022, as set out in Paragraphs 4.10 of the report, be noted and approved.
6. That the inclusion of a substitution scheme (as Standing Order 28), as set out in Paragraph 4.11 and in Appendix N to the report, be noted and approved.
7. That the following minor and consequential amendments to Standing Orders, required:
  - for the good conduct of Council meetings,
  - as a consequence of the substantive changes at 5. and 6. above, and
  - to include appropriate reference to the Hertfordshire Growth Board within the Constitution,

as set out in Paragraph 4.12 of the report, be noted and approved.
8. That the Executive's intention to establish a joint Executive Committee with East Herts District Council to support the oversight, development and delivery of the Council's joint ICT strategy, as set out in Paragraph 4.13 and with the terms of reference as detailed in Appendix O to the report, be noted.

## **10 APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

Details of the individuals nominated to serve on each Committee, together with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of those Committees, where stated, had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Councillor Sharon Taylor OBE CC moved the appointment of Committees and their Chairs and Vice-Chairs, seconded by Councillor Richard Henry.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the membership of Committees, together with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs, where detailed, are appointed for 2022/23 Municipal Year as follows:

#### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 Members (9-3-2)

Councillors – L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby, CC (Vice-Chair), R Broom, J Brown, M Creasey, M Downing, B. Facey, W Kerby, A McGuinness, S Mead, R Parker CC, C Parris, L Rossati and A Wells.

#### COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

10 Members (6-3-1):

Councillors – S Mead (Chair), A Farquharson (Vice-Chair), S Booth, A Brown, J Brown, N Chowdhury, J Duncan, L Harrington, W Kerby and A Wells.

#### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

11 Members (7-2-2):

Councillors – R Broom (Chair), A Mitchell, CC (Vice-Chair), J Ashley-Wren, S Booth, A Brown, J Brown, M Creasey, M Downing, B Facey, C Parris and L Rossati.

#### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14 Members (9-3-2)

Councillors – M Downing (Chair), J Ashley-Wren, S Barr, A Brown, T Callaghan, M Creasey, C Howells, G Lawrence CC, Mrs J Lloyd, M McKay, A Mitchell CC, C Parris, G Snell and A Wells.

#### LICENSING COMMITTEE

14 Members (8-4-2)

Councillors – M McKay (Chair), L Rossati (Vice-Chair), M Arceno, R Broom, N Chowdhury, J Duncan, B Facey, L Harrington, C Howells, G Lawrence CC, A McGuinness, L Martin-Haugh, C Parris and G Snell.

#### GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

14 Members (8-4-2)

Councillors – M McKay (Chair), L Rossati (Vice-Chair), M Arceno, R Broom, N Chowdhury, J Duncan, B Facey, L Harrington, C Howells, G Lawrence CC, A McGuinness, L Martin-Haugh, C Parris and G Snell.

#### APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

8 Members (5-2-1)

Councillors – S Taylor OBE, CC (Chair), S Barr, P Bibby, CC, R Henry, G Lawrence CC, R Parker CC, S Speller and J Thomas.

#### STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 Members (5-2-1)

Councillors – Mrs J Lloyd (Chair), M Arceno, P Bibby CC, G Lawrence CC, L Martin-Haugh, S Speller, S Taylor OBC, CC and T Wren.

Independent Person who must be consulted on alleged breaches to the Code

of Conduct – Dr. Robert Cawley

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

10 Members (6-2-2) + 1 Independent Co-opted Member (G Gibbs)  
Councillors – T Callaghan (Chair), M Arceno, S Booth, A Farquharson, J Gardner, J Hollywell, G Lawrence CC, M McKay, L Rossati and T Wren.

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

8 Members (5-2-1)  
Councillors – Mrs J Lloyd (Chair), P Bibby CC, L Briscoe, S Mead, A Mitchell CC, G Snell, S Taylor OBE, CC and J Thomas.

**JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

3 Members (2-1-0)  
Councillors – Mrs J Lloyd (Employer Side Chair), P Bibby CC and R Broom.

**11 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Council considered a list of individuals nominated to serve on Outside Bodies which had been circulated before the meeting.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the following individuals are appointed to represent the Council on the various bodies detailed below for one year, unless otherwise stated:

COUNCIL FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL ENGLAND: THE  
HERTFORDSHIRE SOCIETY - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate  
Change

EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the  
Council

EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL PLANNING - Portfolio Holder for Environment  
and Climate Change

HERTS WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP - Portfolio Holder for Environment  
and Climate Change

HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD – The Leader of the Council

HERTFORDSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND POLICY GROUP -  
Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL AUTHORITIES LEADERS GROUP - The Leader of the  
Council

HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP – The Leader of the  
Council

HERTFORDSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP -  
Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - The Leader of the Council

RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY GROUP (COMMUNITY SAFETY) - Portfolio Holder  
for Community Safety, Equalities, Health and Older People

SOSTEVENAGE PARTNERSHIP - The Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader

STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - The Leader of the Council and Deputy  
Leader

AGE CONCERN STEVENAGE – Jeannette Thomas

BEDWELL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Liz Harrington

CHELLS MANOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Andy McGuinness

CROSSROADS CARE – Sandra Barr

DOUGLAS DRIVE SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION – Maureen Mckay

HOME-START STEVENAGE – Rob Broom

KADOMA LINK ASSOCIATION - Graham Snell and John Gardner

LIVING ROOM PROJECT - Jackie Hollywell

OLD STEVENAGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Lou Rossati

OVAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Lloyd Briscoe

PIN GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Jeannette Thomas

SHEPHALL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Simon Speller

ST NICHOLAS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION - Sandra Barr

STEVENAGE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU - Michael Downing

STEVENAGE COMMUNITY TRUST – Teresa Callaghan and Maureen McKay

STEVENAGE CREDIT UNION LIMITED – Sharon Taylor

SPRUSE – Lin Martin-Haugh

STEVENAGE HAVEN - Rob Broom

STEVENAGE/AUTUN/INGELHEIM ASSOCIATION - Richard Henry and Simon Speller

STEVENAGE WORLD FORUM FOR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES - John Gardner

SYMONDS GREEN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Jackie Hollywell

TIMEBRIDGE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION – Julie Ashley-Wren

TURN THE TIDE – Nazmin Chowdhury

EAST OF ENGLAND LGA IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PANEL - Richard Henry

HCC HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Maureen McKay

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFORMATION UNIT – Jim Brown

LUTON AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE - John Gardner

## **12 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER**

The Council considered a report seeking approval to the appointment of a Monitoring Officer, in accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Prior to the consideration of the report, the Leader of the Council paid tribute to the outgoing Monitoring Officer (Simon Banks). She thanked Simon for the excellent contribution he had made to the work of SBC over the past two years, and wished him every success in his new role at South Gloucestershire Council. Further tributes and thanks to Simon were given by Councillors Simon Speller, Maureen McKay, Jeannette Thomas, Richard Henry and Jim Brown.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Mr John Oakley be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer, with effect from 1 June 2022.

**MAYOR**

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**Meeting: COUNCIL**  
**Date: 20 JULY 2022**

## **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/2022**

Author – Stephen Weaver (on behalf of the Scrutiny Members) Ext.No. 2332

Lead Officer – Tom Pike Ext. No. 2288

Contact Officer – Stephen Weaver Ext.No. 2332

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To report on the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees during the 2021/22 Municipal Year and to outline the Work Programme for the three Committees for 2022/23.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the work undertaken by Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees during 2021/22 be noted.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 Overview and Scrutiny's role is to operate as an independent function of the Council's decision making process, by having overview of the Council's decision making, holding the Executive to account, having the power to "call in" decisions for reconsideration and undertake internal and external scrutiny reviews.
- 3.2 The Council's Constitution requires that there be an annual report to Council on the scrutiny activity over the past Municipal Year (see Article 6.3 of the Constitution).
- 3.3 This report is a retrospective look at the scrutiny review work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the two Select Committees during the 2021-22 Municipal Year.
- 3.4 In accordance with the Constitution the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was also charged with scrutinising the Executive's proposals on Budget & Policy Framework items that go before Council for decision. In addition, the Committees considered updates on Scrutiny studies that had been undertaken previously, examining the progress of recommendations and where appropriate following up on matters raised.
- 3.5 The Committees have also worked with their relevant Executive Portfolio Holders on a number of separate policy development meetings developing

policies and considering reports before their submission to the Executive. This report, however, focuses on the Committees' Scrutiny role.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEWS FOR 2021/2022**

4.1 Each Select Committee review made formal recommendations to the relevant Executive Member, officers and external partners. The following is a summary of the outcomes of each scrutiny review.

#### **4.2 Community Select Committee**

##### **4.2.1 Pre-scrutiny of a New Towns Heritage Centre**

In conducting this review the Community Select Committee met on 6 occasions (including 2 site visits) and were supported by the following officers Rob Gregory, Assistant Director, Communities and Neighbourhoods Nick Mallinger, Arts & Cultural Development Officer, Jo Ward, Museum Manager/Curator and received written and oral evidence from the following people:

- Bill Griffiths, Milton Keynes Museum Director
- Liz McCaffery-Payne MK Director of Development
- Shan Downer, MK Heritage and International Partnerships
- Councillor Robin Bradburn, Executive Member for Culture and Deputy Leader of Milton Keynes
- Anthony Spira, Director of Milton Keynes Gallery
- Sally Shaw MBE, Director of the Colchester Firstsite Museum & other Firstsite Museum staff

The review looked in detail and made recommendations on the following 7 areas:

- 1 Curation** – Led by the Museum Curator who will engage with local residents through co-curation projects to provide a mix of: aspirational, informative, inclusive, accessible and affordable museum and arts offers to Stevenage people.
- 2 Community Engagement** – The principle of meaningful engagement with the whole of the diverse community is important and should happen, to see what the Community would like to have included in their Museum and that the offer is accessible to all.
- 3 Management/Governance Structures** – recommended that an independent culture body be set up to provide autonomy for the Heritage Centre made up of a mix of stakeholders, similar to the model with the Regeneration Town Centre Board, supported by a panel of people who are outside of the Council and have a specialist arts and heritage expertise from Stevenage, Herts and/or the Eastern Region.
- 4 Museum without walls** – The concept of “Museums without walls” should be pursued. This would incorporate the use of technology, having a virtual museum and utilising QR codes around the town. This should be undertaken in conjunction with a physical New Towns

Heritage Centre building as part of the new Civic Hub in the regenerated Town Centre.

**5 Building design features and use of technology in the building -**

The building should have the highest possible environmental credentials and be a carbon neutral building and incorporate the use of technology in the building including:

- mixed use/flexible building with wall dividers that can make the room smaller or bigger
- Provide touch screen information points
- Provide digital images as visitors walk through different spaces – (example provided of Mars Rover space vehicle)
- The Museum space within the hub should be agreed in advance with the permanent exhibit areas well thought through so that the Museum doesn't get crowded out by other uses
- A small-seated cinema would be a desirable feature as a draw for visitors as well as an income stream
- Lessons from the sites visited showed the value of having an on-site Café as a place for people to visit and provide a positive user experience

**6 Commercial activity/funding/cost point for entry -** During the site visits Members were taken with the crucial role that various commercial activities can do to support the users of the building: This could include:

- Irrespective of the whether free or not for entry, contactless payment/donation points for bank card use should be provided at various points around the building
- events, theatre (livestream) and other activities that raised money for other non –commercial activities in the Heritage Centre
- There should be places in the building for commercial activity with a profit share with the Council. This could include small start-up linked businesses to provide spaces to sell their services such as on-site catering etc. and spaces for new/young artists to display their work and sell it
- Hiring out of the building at specific times could be an option for extra income
- Officers supported by Members should go directly to the big companies, and major developers, under their corporate social responsibility agendas for grants and sponsorship
- There should definitely be a Café that is either run in-house to provide income for the building or is run under a profit share by a tenant to bring in income
- Having a unique selling point/exhibition (outside of the New Towns story) could be worth considering – e.g. Mars Rover Space Exploration (linked to recommendation 5)

**7 Developing a hub and spoke approach for arts & historical heritage across the town -** consider continuing a hub and spoke model which makes best use of our CNM and Play Services

infrastructure, i.e. in our neighbourhoods which would support the main hub core offer at the New Towns Heritage Centre.

The details of the review report but can be found by following the link to the meeting that they were agreed 16 March 2022 – [Report & Recommendation CSC - New Towns Heritage Centre](#)

#### **4.2.2 Neighbourhood Wardens**

The Community Select Committee received a presentation from the Neighbourhood Wardens Team regarding their work through the pandemic. The presentation covered a range of areas and issues including Covid marshalling, food hub, vaccination centres, litter picking and hedge pruning, stewarding and anti-social behaviour. Members were very impressed with the quality of the work that the Neighbourhood Wardens were providing and also with the range and complexity of this work. Members agreed to keep a watching brief on the work of the wardens.

#### **4.2.3 Update on Damp & Mould**

The Investment Programme Manager provided the Community Select Committee with a report in relation to damp, condensation and mould in Council properties. The Council continued to deal with the damp and mould cases during the Covid 19 pandemic. Members heard that the tools that the Council had previously used for dealing with the damp and mould had been too simplistic. Better and improved ventilations were needed, and fans alone were not enough and that there was a need to have specialist contractors in place to carry out required works. The Committee resolved:

- That the Committee supported the current approach which was in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service Report.
- That the Committee continued to support the Team to deliver on its promise to tackle damp and mould issues by ensuring that sufficient funding was available.
- That the Committee would provide feedback on the draft Mould Leaflet for the final version.

#### **4.3 Community Select Committee sitting as the Council Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee**

4.3.1 The Community Safety Manager provided a presentation to the Community Select Committee who were sitting as the Council's Statutory Crime & Disorder Committee, in relation to Crime and Disorder matters including detailed information on the work of the No More Service (NMS) and the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA).

4.3.2 Members welcomed the work that the No More Service and the Survivors Against Domestic Abuse were providing to Stevenage and Hertfordshire residents and now further afield into other local authority areas, but expressed some concern regarding the way the service is funded via bids to Government

funding streams as and when they become available, and queried how long this model could be sustainable.

4.3.3 The Executive Portfolio Holder responsible for Community Safety shared the CSC's concern around the funding for these projects and suggested that they should be recognised, and resourced by the Government. Members recognised that the core funding had been reduced in the last decade and was the reason that the Team was constantly looking to fund these projects. The Portfolio Holder said the success of the service was largely down to the dedication of the team that has been built up over the years. Furthermore, on the issue of funding, the Chief Executive as Chair of the Responsible Authority Group, stated that the reason for the funding position was that the core spending power of the Council had been reduced by £12.5m over the past decade and is the reason why the Council had to search for pots of money to bid for to run these services. The Government were beginning to recognise that this was not a good way to operate and not good use of resources, making authorities compete with one another for the same funds. Unlike many other local authorities, because of the need, the Council have chosen to extend services that were non-statutory. The Chief Executive and Members congratulated Sarah Pateman and the whole team as an exemplar in this area of work at a district level.

#### **4.4 Public Health meeting with the HCC Director of Public Health**

4.4.1 The focus of the meeting with the Director of Public Health, Professor Jim McManus was once again on the Covid-19 pandemic. Members discussed the measures that HCC Public Health were taking in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Director of Public Health answered Members questions regarding the pandemic. Professor McManus provided Members with a detailed overview of the current challenges that the pandemic was bringing to public health. Members raised concerns they had on the mental health challenges that the Covid pandemic had brought to young people. Children had been put into difficult situations where and when rules changes and restrictions in school were different to restrictions out of school. Children were confused and afraid when restrictions were lifted as there was no explanation for this. The Chair asked Director of Public Health to consider the ongoing effect on children's mental health and do whatever he could to help them. The Director of Public Health shared an example of a mental health online service for children and invited Stevenage to bid for funding should they wish to put together a similar project.

#### **4.5 Environment & Economy Select Committee**

##### **4.5.1 Economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Stevenage and the local economy and the Council's response**

4.5.3 The review started in September 2020 and was completed in October 2022 and held 6 formal committee meetings, and the member sub-group met on a further 6 occasions.

4.5.4 The Committee interviewed the following people:

- Adam Wood, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Helen Spencer, STEMPOINT East CE
- Judith Sutton, Area Team Manager for North Herts & Stevenage HCC YCH Services for Young People
- Kit Davies Principal and Chief Executive North Herts College
- Sean Trimble Head Teacher Larwood School Stevenage
- David Pearce Head Teacher Brandles School Baldock
- Mark Lewis Head Teacher Alleyne's Academy
- External Business witnesses from the following witnesses (Fin Divers Ltd, Westend Wi-Fi Ltd and Relton Associates Ltd)
- The Leader, Cllr Sharon Taylor
- Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Cllr Lloyd Biscoe

4.5.5 The Committee were supported by the following officers:

- Mena Caldbeck, SBC Business Relationship Manager
- Steve Dupoy, Assistant Director, Stevenage Direct Services
- Tom Pike, Strategic Director
- Gareth Wall, Corporate Policy & Research Officer
- Chris Barnes Assistant Director Regeneration
- Paul Cheeseman, Community Development Officer
- James Chettleburgh, Development Manager

4.5.6 The review looked in detail at the following areas, and were helped be a member sub-group who held 6 informal meetings via zoom when the main Committee was suspended due to the corporate focus on the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Impact on Young People – extensive review work undertaken by a Member sub-group of the Environment & Economy Select Committee
- Impact on self employed
- Impact on Small to Medium sized Enterprises (up to 250 employees)
- Impact on large sized companies (over 250 employees)
- Impact on various protected characteristic groups including Women, BAME, Disability Groups and in addition the low incomeed
- Impact on private investment (planning and development activity)
- Impact on Town Investment Plan
- On the ground support – Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP)
- Grants provided to local business administered by the Council
- CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) / Stevenage Works
- Evidence from the sessions with the Leader, Cllr Sharon Taylor and Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Cllr Lloyd Biscoe

4.5.7 The review made a total of 7 recommendations that were designated as short, medium and long term:

**Support for Young People – Recommendation 1. Medium term recommendation regarding Young People (Spring/Summer 2022) – Supporting third sector response to provide training opportunities for young people.**

That the Executive support, with whatever means are at its disposal the efforts of STEMPOINT East to provide some hands-on events in 2022. This would support STEMPOINT to promote and build science capital in young people, particularly those who may not naturally choose STEM learning routes. Possible venues to support this could be the STEM Centre, NH College, Canyon's Scout building and the environmental charity Waste Not Want Not.

**Support for Young People – Recommendation 2. Long term recommendation regarding Young People (Starting Spring 2022 and for remainder of the year) – Supporting partners outreach to local young people and their families.**

That the Executive be asked to consider the work of the sub-group focussing on the impact of Covid-19 on Young People. This work identified a successful project led by HCC, YCH (Services for Young People, Children's Services) at the Oval with a small group of young people who would be in danger of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). It is recommended that Officers engage with the interested partners (HCC YCH, STEMPOINT and NH College) to explore what role SBC could play to roll out to other outreach opportunities as identify young people/families to help those families with encouragement towards careers and employment in general. Potential locations to focus as sub-ward levels include Bedwell, Shephall and Martins Wood. HCC and SBC Local Community Budget funding could be targeted at a short-term project to extend this initiative.

**Support for Young People – Recommendation 3. Long term recommendation regarding Young People & Vulnerable Families (Starting Spring 2022) – Using social outreach models / events to identify and help vulnerable local young people and their families.**

That the Executive Portfolio Holders for Neighbourhoods & Co-operative Council, Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture and Communities, Community Safety and Equalities be asked to consider the case study of Brandles School, using foodbank outreach to vulnerable families. To ask these Executive Portfolio Holders to provide examples how this type of outreach is used or consider how this could be used through the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management or other programmes or other ways where the Council could reach out to vulnerable families to help their young people access services and opportunities.

**Support for Young People – Recommendation 4. Medium to long term recommendation regarding Young People (Starting Spring/Summer 2022 and for remainder of the year) – Working with partners together to identify a project lead and sources of funding for a local work experience project.**

That the Executive Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise and Transport and Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture should work with partners, including schools, the third/voluntary sector and employers, both large and small, who identify their social responsibility, to seek funding sources and a project lead/project manager to establish a local work experience project for Stevenage school leavers in 2022 to enable them to find local employers who can offer work experience. This is proposed as a recommendation for the Executive to consider for 2022, and may require initial Council pump priming and resource to support project management.

**Support for Young People – Recommendation 5. Long term recommendation regarding support for Young People (Starting in 2022) – Supporting HCC Education and partners re longterm funding to support the STEM Centre.**

That the Executive Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise and Transport and Children, Young People, Leisure and Culture be asked to consider the case study of the Herts Careers School Hub, that all partners work together to establish how funding can be found to assist the STEM Centre to secure its future funding.

**Impact on vulnerable groups – Recommendation 6. Short to Medium term recommendation regarding various vulnerable groups impacted by the pandemic (Starting Spring 2022 and for remainder of the year) – monitoring the progress of the CV-19 Community Reassurance Cell's impact assessments.**

That the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Community Safety and Equalities be asked to engage HCC and partners via the Covid-19 Community Reassurance Cell to check that they carry out a revised impact assessment on the impact on BAME, Disabled and Young People, looking at all ten local areas. This notes that Stevenage had particular challenges with disabled, BAME and young people, who in many cases started the pandemic in a deficit position and were in danger of this being further compounded, and that the impact assessment leads to direct initiatives to seek to address any gaps in provision for these groups.

**Impact on the Council's financial position and wider economy impact - Recommendation 7. Medium to long term recommendation regarding the monitoring of progress of the Council's financial position and the local economy and the position of various vulnerable groups impacted by the pandemic**

That the Environment and Economy Select Committee will bring back two snapshot update reports one six months from receiving the formal Executive



Member response to the review (this is two months on February 2022) from the date of the final report being circulated to the Executive (December 2021) and one year on from this date (January 2023). These reports will check on the economic position of the Council and of the local economy and see how the vulnerable groups identified in the review are, post pandemic.

4.5.8 A copy of the full report can be accessed via the [link](#) and a copy of the [E&E Minutes 21 October 2021](#) (where the report was considered at the E&E).

#### 4.6 **Interim report and recommendations of the E&E Select Committee Climate Emergency Scrutiny Review**

4.6.1 The Environment & Select Committee started a review in October 2021 and an interim report and recommendations were prepared in March 2022. The Committee held 5 formal committee meetings, and the member sub-group met once in January 2022.

4.6.2 The Committee interviewed the following people:

- Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, Cllr John Gardner
- Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Cllr Lloyd Biscoe
- Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People, Cllr Jeannette Thomas
- HEART – Hertfordshire for Enabling and Adapting for Resilience Together (Various members of this Environmental Campaigning Community Group)
- Professor Lubo Jankovic, University of Hertfordshire, Professor of Advanced Building Design/Director of Zero Carbon Lab
- David Thorogood, Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator at EHDC & SBC Councils
- Jonathan Sayers, SBC Interim Communications Campaigns Manager
- Mena Caldbeck, SBC Business Relationship Manager

4.6.3 As part of its interim report made on 23 March 2022, the Committee made the following 13 recommendations:

1. **Links to the 8 key themed areas within the Council's Climate Change Strategy** - Recommendations: (i) That Officers provide Members with the plans to decarbonise its housing stock over the coming decade. (ii) That the plans for working alongside and influencing local people be provided to Members.
2. **Resident engagement:** Recommendation: With regards to the Citizen Panel, the handling of future iterations needs to be improved regarding the feedback with the group and ongoing engagement.
3. **Baseline figures** - measuring how we are doing with regards to our Net Zero targets for 2030 linked to a shared study with the University of

Hertfordshire Zero Carbon Lab: **Recommendation:** Officers continue to work with the University of Hertfordshire towards its zero carbon ambitions.

4. **Establishment of a Climate Change Lead Officer - Recommendation:** that this post be made permanent.
5. **HEART - Recommendation:** that the Council engage further with HEART to provide some Member seminars on the Climate Emergency and that the Council teams up with HEART in support of a social enterprise such as a Climate Resilience Hub, or Climate Emergency Centres (CEC's) Increasingly, these local physical hubs or spaces are popping up over the UK, and they collaborate, network and learn from each other. There are none so far in Hertfordshire
6. **Mainstreaming of Climate Emergency thinking with regards to all Council activities - Recommendation:** look for opportunities where the Council can consider if an activity or an event can be made as low carbon as possible. A helpful on-line tool is available with good ideas about running a reduced carbon sustainable event considering things such as: measuring the current events carbon footprint; making a plan; consulting with contractors; organise essential waste management and start simple.
7. **Tree Canopy - Recommendation:** That the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Regeneration and Officers establish a plan to meet the 2% gap in Stevenage's Tree Canopy, and that an even more ambitious plan be considered to expand the number of trees in Stevenage or offsetting in other locations as this offers one of the best measures for carbon reduction open to the Council.
8. **Planning & Development - Recommendation:** Within the constraints of the exiting planning legislation and powers for local planning authorities, establish a plan to make Climate change a planning consideration for all applications.
9. **Focus on improved Recycling - Recommendation:** That the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Regeneration and AD Stevenage Direct Services brings back a report to Scrutiny Members on the actions and strategy it is taking to improve the Council's recycling rates.
10. **Protecting climate emergency targets within the budget setting process - Recommendations:** (i) That Members and Officers involved in the budget setting process, as a minimum, consider the climate change implications of any budget decisions. Nor should there be a cut to services if there is a detrimental climate change implication; and Page 6 (ii) Going further, scrutiny members would like the Executive to consider creating a small, ring-fenced budget in each service delivery area to investigate the long-term budget implications of climate change for that business unit.

- 11. Session with Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport – Cllr Lloyd Briscoe - Recommendations:** (i) Re EV Charging in neighbourhood centres – Members recommended that, where possible, officers consider the locations used should be close to the cycle network; (ii) Members suggested that when the Electric Car Club charging equipment was reinstalled in town centre locations that a promotional campaign with residents of town centre accommodation be carried out to promote their use and officers should consider rebranding it, making it clear that it is for public use not just for SBC officers as the original livery made it appear it was just for corporate use.
- 12. Session with Executive Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People – Cllr Jeanette Thomas - Recommendations:** (i) That new tenants receive information on climate change in their “welcome packs” when they enter a new property, to include the Council’s ten climate change pledges and the most up to date information on recycling at their property. (ii) In addressing the gap between the Council’s current engagement processes and where it needs to be, can more be done with resident’s groups to, over time, move Page 7 residents away from the day-to-day housing tenant issues to considering wider, more strategic, Climate change matters that in time will affect all residents? (iii) encouraging very local, small scale, grass roots events that can focus resident’s involvement in things such as environmental projects (gardens/trees) or community kitchen/growing or bulk buying schemes as an example, which needs to be joined up with other neighbourhood activities and needs to be a thread through all activities to address climate change, not as an add on or special one off focus.
- 13. Members met informally and agreed their own short term quick wins and more long term strategic recommendations covering areas such as:** (i) a revised strategy for trees re P&D; (ii) various quick wins re use of plastic cups etc.; (iii) consider how to show delivery of the strategy via Gantt/Fishbone chart;(iv) revised communications plan ; (v) review embedding of carbon reduction practises across the council; (vi) engage with young people; and (vii) promote 20 Minute Neighbourhoods.

#### **4.7 Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

4.7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 12 occasions to provide overview of the work of the Executive, specifically looking at all Key Decisions made by the Executive and all Budget and Policy Framework items and in particular monitored progress of the Council and the Executive’s ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to these meetings the Committee also considered the Towns Fund business cases in detail at their meetings.

#### **5.1 2022/2023 Scrutiny Work Programmes**

5.1 Following the usual practise, the Scrutiny Officer canvassed scrutiny Members in January and February for their feedback on scrutiny activity and

ideas for future scrutiny reviews. This informed a report to each of the three scrutiny Committees in March 2022. The shape of the three committees work programmes are as follows:

## 5.2 Community Select Committee:

The Community Select Committee agreed to scrutinise the following issues:

- An officer presentation updating Members into the way the Local Community Budgets scheme is operating
- A Portfolio Holder's Advisory Group (PHAG) meeting on the Community Centres
- The statutory meeting on Crime and Disorder
- Continuation of a standing item on Public Health looking specifically at Health Inequalities for Stevenage
- An update on the Housing Allocations Policy
- A main review item on Housing Repairs and Voids standards, the review to begin with a broad presentation from officers on the service and then Members to agree a more narrow scope for a review

## 5.3 Environment and Economy Select Committee:

The Environment & Economy Select Committee agreed to scrutinise the following issues:

- Continuation of the Climate Emergency Review (as the Committee's substantive piece of work for the year)
- At the conclusion of the Climate Emergency Review begin a review on the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis
- A one-off single meeting performance review on parking
- An officer information update on fence repairs
- A Portfolio Holder's Advisory Group (PHAG) on Sustainable Travel Towns
- Add to the work programme the issue of access to STEM employment opportunities for local people

The programmes above will be prioritised to ensure the key review activity takes place during the Financial Year. As well as carrying out review work the Committee will also undertake any other pre-scrutiny Policy Development work in Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings as directed by the officer Strategic Leadership Team and the Executive Portfolio Holders.

## 5.3 Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:

- 5.3.1 In addition to undertaking all scrutiny of Budget & Policy Framework items and decisions of the Executive, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the capacity to undertake a "Select Committee" style meeting during the year if it

so wishes. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not specifically agree to sit as a select Committee but has the capacity to do so if it required. The Committee agreed to add the following items to its work programme:

- Council Constitution review (as a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group)
- Communications review

As well as carrying out review work the Committee will also undertake pre-scrutiny Policy Development work in Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings, as directed by officer Strategic Leadership Team and the Executive Portfolio Holders.

5.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and also consider all 'Call-in' requests in accordance with the Council's Constitution as well as considering any Councillors Call for Action in relation to matters relating to Resources and any Petition appeals, in accordance with the Councils Petition Scheme, regarding matters relating to Resources or of a Corporate or Council wide nature.

#### 5.5 Scoping reviews

5.5.1 A schedule of generic dates for meetings for the two Select Committees has been arranged for the 2021-22 Municipal Year, as and when specific meetings are scheduled from these dates electronic diary invites will be sent to Members on the Committee. These meetings will incorporate the scoping of the review where Members will identify the areas they wish to cover during the review, who to interview, what evidence/background information is required and which Members will lead the questioning on a specific area, as well as undertaking site visits, where appropriate. Meetings will also be arranged to revisit previous reviews to monitor actions.

#### 5.6 **Portfolio Holder Advisory Groups (Policy Development Meetings)**

5.6.1 Pre-scrutiny Policy Development meetings will continue to be undertaken as and when requested by Executive Portfolio Holders in consultation with Assistant Strategic Directors and will be referred to as Portfolio Holders Advisory Groups (PHAG). These meetings are chaired by the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and the relevant O&S or Select Committee Members are invited to attend. Unlike regular Select Committee meetings PHAG's are private meetings and are not open to the public.

## 6. **IMPLICATIONS**

### 6.1 **Financial Implications**

There are none specific to this report.

### 6.2 **Legal Implications**

Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government Statutory Guidance on Overview & Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities was published in May

2019 and Scrutiny Members should have regard to this when undertaking their Scrutiny review work and carrying out the function.

### **6.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

Equalities and Diversity issues are considered at the scoping stage of each Scrutiny review with regards to questioning of witnesses and the collection of oral and written evidence. Also E&D issues are addressed in the final report for each review.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Individual agendas and study material for each Scrutiny review undertaken by the Select Committees as described in this report are available for inspection.

The full Executive responses to the Scrutiny Reviews are available for inspection.

Part 1 – Release to Press



**Meeting: COUNCIL**

Portfolio Area: Resources



**Date: 20 July 2022**

## **ADDENDUM REPORT – PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022-2023**

Author – Kirsten Frew                      Ext No. 2321  
Lead Officer – Matt Partridge          Ext No. 2456  
Contact Officer – Kirsten Frew        Ext No. 2321

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To approve the addition of a recruitment and retention premium for Assistant Directors to the pay policy statement for the financial year 2022/23.
- 1.2 Since the drafting of the original statement, approved by the Council at its 9 March 2022 meeting, a requirement to apply recruitment and retention premium to some Assistant Director roles has arisen due to the changing employment market.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the amended Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A revised pay policy statement has been drafted in response to the need to apply a recruitment and retention premium to some Assistant Director roles due to the changing and increasingly more competitive employment market since the statement was approved in March 2022. The changes to the pay policy statement approved on 9 March 2022 are shown in red in Appendix 1 to this report. For background purposes, Appendix 2 is the report considered by the Council on 9 March 2022.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Revised Pay Policy Statement 2022/23

Appendix 2 – Report to Council: 9 March 2022: Pay Policy Statement 2022/23

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## APPENDIX 1 – AMENDED PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR STEVENAGE BOROUGH 2022/23

### COUNCIL

This Pay Policy Statement is made in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Localism Act, 2011.

This policy shall apply from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 subject to amendment by Council.

To date no Chief Officers' Pay Award has been agreed 2022/23 at a national level. Should an award be agreed this will be implemented in line with national guidance.

#### Remuneration bands of senior officers are set out here:

Head of Paid Service/ Chief Executive	£109,269-£126,993
Deputy Chief Executive (Strategic Directors pay band plus 10%)	£91,385-£106,207
Strategic Directors	£83,077-£96,552
Monitoring Officer/ Borough Solicitor	Employed by Hertfordshire County Council as part of a shared legal service.
Section 151 Officer	The section 151 officer receives a supplement of up to £7300 per annum in addition to their Strategic Director pay
Deputy Section 151 Officer	The deputy section 151 officer receives a supplement of up to £1000 per annum in addition to their Assistant Director Pay
Assistant Directors	£68,985-£80176
Assistant Directors (with Recruitment and Retention premium attached or additional Operational responsibilities)	Up to £85,000
Interim Operational Director (Assistant Director pay scale with 10% premium attached for additional operational responsibilities)	Up to £87,000

*Lowest Paid Employees with effect from 1 April 2022	£19,100
**Mean Average Basic Earnings	£33,349

\*Excludes apprentices. 'Lowest Paid Employee' means the employees on the lowest grade assuming that the posts are full time.

\*\* At the time of writing no pay award for NJC staff has been agreed for financial year 2021/22 or year 2022/23

1. Any employee, up to and including those on grade 6, is eligible for an overtime payment at an enhanced rate of +0.33 of their basic salary for any overtime hours worked Monday to Saturday and +1.00 for any overtime hours worked on a Sunday. for any additional hours worked over 37 per week.

Employees at or below Grade 6 that are required to undertake non-standard working are entitled to non-standard working enhancements. In addition to their normal salary those employees at or below grade 6, who are required as part of their contracted hours to work on a Saturday, or for longer than 4 consecutive hours between 10pm and before 7am receive a shift enhancement of +0.33 of their basic salary for those hours, and employees at or below grade 6 who are required to work on a Sunday as part of their contracted hours receive a shift enhancement of +1.00 of their basic salary, this rate of enhancement also applies to any hours worked on a public holiday.

2. With effect from 1 January 2014 the Council commenced paying the Living Wage to all employees, excluding apprentices. SBC updates the Living Wage on 1 April each year. With effect from 1 April 2021 this will be £19,100 (£9.90 per hour)
3. The pay of the Chief Executive (excluding payments for elections) is currently 6.55 times the pay of the lowest paid worker and this ratio is not expected to change significantly. The pay of the Chief Executive is currently 3.8 times the pay of mean average earnings. It should be noted at the time of writing a national pay award has been agreed and implemented for Chief Executives for year 2021/22, however, nationally no award has been agreed for staff on NJC Terms and Conditions.
4. Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive are paid an allowance of £24.95 per month for expenses but otherwise no bonuses performance related pay or other forms of additional remuneration are paid to Chief Officers or Deputy Chief Officers.
5. Many of the Chief Officers, Deputy Chief Officers and other employees receive a payment for attending and performing certain duties at elections. These payments are set in line with guidance produced per election type.
6. Salary packages amounting to £100,000 or more for new appointments will be approved by Full Council.
7. Salary increments are paid annually by default for all employees of the Council up to the top of the pay grade
8. The pay of Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers is based on job evaluations undertaken through the Inbucon scheme.
9. The terms and conditions of Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers are set in accordance with the JNC.
10. Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers including any new appointments at this level will be made in accordance with the pay scales set out above.
11. All employees including Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers are entitled to redundancy payments based on the same multiple of 2.5 times statutory provision and based on actual weekly pay.
12. Any redundancy or severance packages of £100,000 or more for Chief Officers must be approved by Full Council.
13. Any employee who takes voluntary redundancy will not be permitted to

return to the employment of Stevenage Borough Council, either as a permanent or fixed term employee, for a minimum period of 12 months following the date of their redundancy. There is no restriction on returning to employment following compulsory redundancy but an employee who is re – employed following redundancy must have a break of at least four weeks between the termination of the first employment and the start of the second in order to retain a redundancy payment

- 14.** All employees including Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers are entitled to retirement pensions calculated in the same way under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Administration) Regulations 2008, Regulations 2014 and the Council Pension Discretion Policy. These Regulations require the Council to publish its policy on increasing an employee's total pension and on awarding additional pension.
- 15.** The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 require the Council to formulate, review and publish its policy on making discretionary payments on early termination of employment.
- 16.** The terms and payment of terminating the employment of any officer of the Council in any contentious circumstances which do not result from an award made by an Employment Tribunal or Court are settled by the Council on the basis of the legal merits of the case, the time and disruption which protracted litigation would involve, any limit of statutory entitlement on monetary claim available to an employee and what is considered prudent in all the circumstances.

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Meeting: **COUNCIL**

Portfolio Area: Resources

Date: 9 MARCH 2022

### **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23**

Author Kirsten Frew Ext No. 2321  
Contributors Tim Greenwood Ext No 2943  
Clare Fletcher Ext No 2933  
Contact Officer Clare Davies Ext No. 2164  
Lead Officer Matthew Partridge Ext No. 2456

#### **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 To approve the amended pay policy statement for the financial year 2022/23.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the Pay Policy Statement set out in accordance with the Localism Act, 2011 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 as Appendix One to this report be approved.

2.2 That the pay policy is placed on the Council's web site

#### **3. BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION**

3.1 The Localism Act requires local authorities to adopt annually a statutory pay policy statement which must then be published (including on the Council's website) 'to help local people understand how public money is being

spent in their area and to hold the Town Hall to account'. The first of these Pay Policy Statements was approved on 29 February 2012 and has been published annually since then.

**3.2** No remuneration may be made to officers which falls outside the Pay Policy Statement although it will be possible for a meeting of the Council to amend the Statement at any time.

**3.3** The Pay Policy Statement must include its policies on the following matters:-

- the remuneration of its chief officers
- the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer,
- the remuneration of chief officers on recruitment
- increases and additions to remuneration for each chief officer
- the use of performance related pay
- the use of bonuses for chief officers
- the approach to the payment of chief officers on their ceasing to hold office

**3.4** 'Remuneration' of chief officers includes pay and terms and conditions which may apply in the future and to chief officer appointments which may be made in the future.

**3.5** The Statement may also set out policies relating to other terms and conditions relating to Chief Officers.

**3.6** The Statement must also set out:

- The relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and that of its employees who are not chief officers.
- The Authority's definition of its 'lowest paid employees' for these purposes and the reasons for this definition and
- The remuneration of its 'lowest paid employees'

**3.7** For clarity, 'Chief Officer' includes the Head of Paid Service (the Chief Executive), the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer (Borough Solicitor), non-statutory chief officers (the Strategic Directors), and deputy chief officers (Assistant Directors).

**3.8** In approving its pay policy statement the Council must have regard to any

guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State. In 2012

‘Openness and accountability in local pay’ (“the Guidance”) was issued. The Council is not bound to follow the guidance but must take it into account in approving the Statement.

- 3.9** The Act itself does not require local authorities to publish specific salary details in the Pay Policy Statement. However, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 require the publication in the accounts of salary bands and the salaries of Chief Officers. Salary bands for these posts have therefore been included in the Pay Policy Statement as suggested in the Guidance.
- 3.10** The Guidance refers extensively to the Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector. This Review comments on fairness in pay and that the salary gap between the highest and lowest paid officers has grown in recent years. Hutton suggests that the relationship between chief officers and other employees is explained and taken into account in remuneration decisions for all staff. This relationship he recommends can be illustrated by the publication of pay multiples – the ratio between the highest paid employee and mean average earnings.
- 3.11** The Statement therefore includes pay multiples comparing the Chief Executive’s remuneration against the lowest paid employees and mean average earnings across the Council.
- 3.12** The Guidance also expresses concerns that senior staff moving posts within the public sector could be seen as driving up average pay levels particularly where the sector as a whole is paying twice through a salary and a pension. As a closely related issue ‘Authorities should use their Pay Policy Statement to explain their policies towards re-engaging chief officers who have received severance or redundancy payments from that authority’. Although it is not envisaged that any such appointments will be made the Council has adopted a policy which relates to all Council officers, including chief officers and states

that “Any employee who takes voluntary redundancy will not be permitted to return to the employment of Stevenage Borough Council, either as a permanent or fixed term employee, for a minimum period of 12 months following the date of their redundancy. There is no restriction on returning to employment following compulsory redundancy”.

There is no restriction on returning to the wider public sector, however, in line with the Redundancy Payment (Local Government) (Modification) Order 1999 (as amended) officers who are made redundant, receive an offer of employment from another public body before their employment terminates and then start work in the new job within 4 weeks of that termination will lose their entitlement to a redundancy payment.

**3.13** The proposed pay policy takes account of the supplementary statutory guidance issued under the Localism Act 2011, in February 2013 by the Secretary of State, on pay policy statements and remuneration above £100,000.

**3.14** At the time of writing no national pay award for chief officers for financial year 2022/23 has been agreed. If any award is agreed at a national level this will be implemented for chief officers in line with the national guidance.

#### **4. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** The Council has a legal obligation to comply with the Equality Act 2010, and to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, for men and women. The Council implemented single status with effect from 1 July 2014 to ensure compliance.

**4.2** The Council publishes its Gender Pay Gap Report on an annual basis. A copy of this report can be found on the Council’s website at the following link –

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/access-to-information/data-transparency/gender-pay-gap-31-march-2020.pdf>



## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### AUDIT COMMITTEE

(MEETING JOINTLY IN PART WITH THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE)

### MINUTES

**Date: Monday, 28 February 2022**

**Time: 6.00pm**

**Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete**

**Present:** Councillors: Teresa Callaghan (Chair), John Gardner (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Nick Leech, Maureen McKay and Loraine Rossati.  
Mr Geoffrey Gibbs (Independent Co-opted Non-voting Member).

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.29pm

#### 1 APPOINTMENT OF PERSON TO PRESIDE

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Teresa Callaghan be appointed to preside over the meeting which was held jointly with the Statement of Accounts Committee.

#### 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Graham Lawrence CC and Claire Parris.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3 2019/20 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Audit Committee and the Statement of Accounts Committee meeting jointly received a presentation from the Strategic Director (CF) on the Statement of Accounts (SoA) 2019/20.

The presentation from the Strategic Director (CF) included the following Information:

- as at 31 March 2020, the Council's Revenue and Capital Reserves had totalled £59,298,063;
- since then, changes to the draft SoA related to invoices received in September 2020, updated accruals, and a loan error relating to Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), meant that the revised 31 March 2020 Revenue and Capital Reserves now totalled £60,859,000;

- the effect of Covid-19, including a Government Grant underspend of £45,000; Covid loss of income and additional costs overspend of £178,000; Covid Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay resulting in an underspend of £1.22M; carry forwards of £794,000; and pilot gains from Non-Domestic Rates of £518,000;
- Capital receipts during the year had amounted to £14.79M;
- The total of 2019/20 unusable reserves was £514,287;
- A summary of the balance sheets revealed net assets of £573,581;
- Long term assets totalled £812,964; and
- Long term liabilities totalled £271,597.

The Strategic Director (CF) commented that key points arising from the ISA 260 report were that valuations were required and these would be reviewed for 2020/21; Pension entries required changes; and adjustments for the Hertfordshire LEP loan and some other working accruals. She added that adjustments had not been made regarding the valuation of Queensway LLP; that the asset valuations would be adjusted in 2020/21; and that the £153,000 Capital underspend was unadjusted as it was an extrapolation of £985.

In relation to work on the 2020/21 SoA, the Strategic Director (CF) reported that the Draft Accounts and Public Inspection Notice had been published on 26 October 2021. Audit planning had taken place in February 2022; Sample selection, fieldwork and conducting the audit would take place in March and April 2022; and it was estimated that the draft Audit report would be issued in May 2022.

The Strategic Director (CF) concluded by stating that proposals for an update of the 2021/22 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting included a deferral of the implementation of IFRS 16 Leases, which was currently set to be implemented in the 2022/23 Code; and pausing the requirements for professional valuation of operational property, plant and equipment assets in 2021/22.

In response to Members' questions, the Strategic Director (CF) advised:

- once the Covid-19 pandemic had started, measures were put in place to ensure the Council's financial resilience when a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved in June 2020. This included a significant Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay;
- the asset valuation differences between the Council and Ernst & Young amounted to £2M out of a total of £780M; and
- it was confirmed that the external auditors' sample testing of property, plant and equipment had identified 7 low value items (cumulative value £985) for which the Council was unable to provide evidence to support the capital nature of this expenditure. Accordingly, the external auditors had extrapolated these items to calculate a projected audit misstatement of £153,480. The Council had not adjusted the financial statements for this projected misstatement.

Neil Harris (Ernst & Young) presented the Audit Results Report (ISA 260) for 2019/20, and made the following points during his presentation:

- the “lateness” of the 2019/20 audit report was due to resource constraints and staff turnover, both in the public sector audit industry and in Local Authority Finance Teams. This should be viewed in the context of increased regulatory demands, coupled with the complex nature of the SBC audit (including Queensway LLP valuations), against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic and increased home working;
- the outstanding matters to conclude on the 2019/20 audit were outlined in the report. Work was nearly concluded, and it was likely that there would be no material uncertainties that needed to be disclosed. If any material uncertainties arose, then this matter would need to be reported back to the Audit/Statement of Accounts Committees;
- reference was made to the summary of the unadjusted audit differences set out in Section 3 of the report, as previously mentioned by the Strategic Director (CF), namely the inappropriate capitalisation of revenue expenditure (£153,000); valuation of property, plant and equipment (£120,000); and Queensway lease accounting treatment (£175,000);
- attention was drawn to the summary of agreed adjusted audit differences, also set out in Section 3 of the report, which included the accounting treatment of Hertfordshire LEP funding for Capital regeneration schemes in Stevenage; the Pension liability; and Property, Plant and Equipment valuations; and
- Following work carried out investigating and addressing a significant risk concerning the Council’s financial resilience, Ernst & Young was currently expecting to report an unmodified value for money conclusion in relation to the 2029/20 audit.

Neil Harris concluded by referring to the Ernst & Young fees for the audit, set out in Section 9 of the report. There had been a significant increase in the level of fees due to the complexity of the audit. However, he advised that Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Ltd would be arbitrating between Ernst & Young and the Council on this matter.

In reply to a series of questions, Neil responded as follows:

- there was a 50% backlog in local authority audits. It could possibly take 2 to 3 years to get back on track;
- audit priority was given to “major” local authorities, such as Hertfordshire County Council, who administered pension funds. Whilst a lower level of materiality was applied to Borough/District councils, such audits were often more complex, especially for those councils like Stevenage BC which operated a Housing Revenue Account. Delays also occurred at times when the audit timetable and the Finance Team resources available at District/Borough councils to assist were not aligned (eg) Budget setting;
- there had been an increasing scarcity of auditors experienced in public sector audit, and part of this was that the work was not seen as attractive, due to the audit complexity and constrained timetables. However, CIPFA and the audit firms had been concentrating on a recruitment drive aimed to address this shortfall; and
- the number of staff at Ernst & Young had increased over the past 18 months. Ernst & Young operated an Audit Risk Sub-Committee, which ensured that the complexities and risks associated with each audit were recognised, and which

aimed to address any resource issues that had arisen which showed that an audit would need an increased level of support.

Note – At this point in the meeting the Statement of Accounts Committee RESOLVED to adjourn until the rise of the Audit Committee.

The Strategic Director (CF) responded to a further series of Members' questions as follows:

- Section 106 monies – these Capital monies were received in advance and were not committed until certain conditions were met. They were therefore not treated in the same manner as grants income. A good proportion of Section 106 monies were allocated for Hertfordshire County Council functions, such as education;
- Valuation of market based property assets – the 4 properties out of a sample of 8, where the valuation of the asset was outside of a reasonable expected range, thereby resulting in an audit misstatement, was considered a sufficient sample size; and
- Joint ventures liability – there is no finite figure that could be applied to the extent of SBC's liability, as the Council was a partner in but had no direct control over a number of joint ventures, such as the Hertfordshire Building Control Partnership.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Chief Financial Officer be delegated authority, after consultation with the Chairs of the Audit Committee and Statement of Accounts Committee, to authorise changes to:
  - (i) the Council's Letter of Representation (Appendix 2 to the report), provided no matters arise from the conclusion of the audit which are material in nature.
  - (ii) the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (Appendix 3 to the report), provided no matters arise from the conclusion of the audit which are material in nature.
2. That the Audit Results Report to those charged with Governance for 2019/20 (Appendix 1 to the report) be noted.
3. That the Annual Governance Statement (Appendix 1 to the report) be recommended to the Statement of Accounts Committee for approval.

#### **4 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

#### **5 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

**6 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date: Monday, 28 March 2022**

**Time: 6.00pm**

**Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Present:** Councillors: Teresa Callaghan (Chair), Graham Lawrence CC, Nick Leech, Maureen McKay, Claire Parris and Loraine Rossati.  
Mr Geoff Gibbs (Independent NonVoting Co-opted Member).

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm

**Time:** End Time: 6.37pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Myla Arceno, Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth and John Gardner.

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 MINUTES - 8 FEBRUARY 2022 AND 28 FEBRUARY 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee held on 8 February 2022 and 28 February 2022 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

### **3 SAFS PROPOSED ANTI-FRAUD PLAN 2022/23 AND PROGRESS ON THE ANTI-FRAUD PLAN 2021/22**

The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) Manager presented the proposed Anti-Fraud Plan for 2022/23, together with a progress update on the 2021/22 Anti-Fraud Plan.

In relation to the proposed 2022/23 Anti-Fraud Plan, the SAFS Manager advised that it had been designed to meet the recommendations of the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally (FFCL) Strategy by adopting the five “pillars” of Protect, Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent and Pursue, the objectives of which were set out in the 2022/23 SBC/SAFS Action Plan included in the report.

The SAFS Manager reported that, in December 2021, the SAFS Board had agreed to increase fees for all Partners by 2.5% to meet increased service costs from April 2022. Stevenage Borough Council fees for 2022/23 were £107,707. In respect of resources, SBC Council would have exclusive access to 1 FTE Counter Fraud Officer (Investigator); access to intelligence functions; data-matching services being offered through the Herts Fraud Hub; and could call on SAFS management for liaison meetings, management meetings and three Audit Committees reports per annum. An Accredited Financial Investigator was also available to assist in money

laundering or proceeds of crime investigations. SBC's Tenancy Fraud Investigator would remain seconded to SAFS for 2022/23, and their workload and line management would be provided directly by SAFS.

The SAFS Manager drew attention to some changes to Key Performance Indicators for 2022/23, namely the sharing of fraud alerts within 2 working days; dissemination of non-SBC referrals to third parties within 2 working days; the introduction of a Money Laundering Reporting Officer role; and support for Covid grant schemes and other local/national responses to the pandemic.

With regard to progress on the 2021/22 Anti-Fraud Plan, the SAFS Manager advised that between April and December 2021 SAFS had received 88 allegations (referrals) of fraud affecting Council services. Of the 88 matters reported, the majority (45) were reported by the general public; 33 by staff; and 10 from proactive work, including data-analytics. He was pleased to add that no Covid grant frauds had been reported in 2021/22.

The SAFS Manager stated that, in conjunction with SBC's Housing Department and Shared Legal Services, 7 Council properties subject to an element of tenancy fraud had been recovered. The use of information provided through National Fraud Initiative (NFI) programmes had also proven very useful, producing a number of positive results.

In response to Members' questions, the SAFS Manager replied as follows:

- there had been a slight reduction in fraud reporting from staff during hybrid working throughout the Covid pandemic. Further fraud awareness training was planned, both face to face and via Teams, with a view to simplifying the process for fraud reporting;
- public awareness of fraud issues was to be raised through another communications campaign; and
- a breakdown of the fraud/loss savings of £475,000 for 2021/22, as referred to in Paragraph 4.5 of the report, would be provided as part of the SAFS Annual Report to be submitted to the Committee in September 2022.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the proposed SAFS Anti-Fraud Plan for 2022/23, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.
2. That the activity to protect the Council against fraud and corruption, as outlined in the report, be noted.

#### **4 SIAS INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22 - PROGRESS REPORT**

The SIAS Client Audit Manager presented a progress report with regard to the SIAS Internal Audit Plan 2021/22 (up to 11 March 2022).

The SIAS Client Audit Manager advised that most of the planned 2021/22 audit work had been completed, as set out in Appendix A to the report. Since the previous



progress report, one planned audit (IT Resilience) had been cancelled. The two outstanding Critical/High Priority Recommendations relating to the Landlord Health & Safety audit, as described in Appendix B to the report, were due for completion by 31 March 2022. The full year-end position would be reported to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee.

The Committee requested the SIAS Client Audit Manager to re-instate the cancelled Quarter 4 IT Resilience audit into the Audit Plan for 2022/23.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the SIAS Internal Audit Plan 2021/22 progress report be noted.
2. That the changes to the Internal Audit Plan, as at 11 March 2022, be approved.
3. That the status of Critical and High Priority Recommendations be noted.
4. That the SIAS Client Audit Manager be requested to re-instate the cancelled Quarter 4 IT Resilience audit into the Audit Plan for 2022/23.

## **5 SIAS INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022/23**

The SIAS Client Audit Manager presented a report in respect of a proposed SBC Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23.

The SIAS Client Audit Manager advised that the Council's Internal Audit Plan outlined the programme of internal audit work for the year ahead, and formed part of the Council's wider assurance framework. He referred to Appendix A to the report, which contained the proposed outline scope of each audit, and included the Council's Key Financial Systems; various operational audits; IT audits; and Joint/Shared Service audits. The Plan had been endorsed by SBC's Strategic Leadership Team in February 2022. The Committee would be informed of any unforeseen work arising during the year undertaken by SIAS at the request of SBC.

The following answers were given to questions raised by Members:

- in relation to the re-instated IT Resilience audit, this would either replace a programmed audit with a lower risk level or would be resourced through contingency audit days;
- due to its low risk level, no audit of the Indoor Market was planned for 2022/23;
- the process for deciding which audits to include on the active list and which to include on the reserve list was through the overall risk assessment score for a variety of factors (financial risk; reputational risk; risk to the public, etc.). The higher the score, the more likelihood of an audit appearing on the active list;
- although an audit of Council garages was on the reserve list, it was confirmed that the Executive was aware of current performance issues and would be receiving a report in Quarter 1 or Quarter 2 of 2022/23 regarding a Business Case for performance improvement. The Strategic Director (RP) would give consideration to a possible presentation of the Business Case to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed Stevenage Borough Council Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

## **6 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented a report in respect of the activity carried out in 2021/22 to strengthen the Council's corporate governance arrangements, together with corporate governance enhancement for delivery in 2022/23, which would be reflected in the Council's 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement.

In respect of progress on activity carried out during 2021/22 (set out in Appendix A to the report), the Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer advised that a significant amount had been achieved, in spite of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer referred to the proposed activity identified for delivery in 2022/23 (set out in Appendix B to the report). These would be included in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) report to be submitted to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee. She reminded Members that activity was deemed significant if recommended for inclusion in the AGS by SIAS following their review of control arrangements to meet the Audit Plan or identified as key to the management of "very high/high" strategic risks.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the progress on corporate governance enhancement activity during 2021/22, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted.
2. That the corporate governance enhancement activity identified for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix B to the report, for inclusion in the Council's 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement, be noted.

## **7 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

### Effectiveness of the Audit Committee

The Chair advised that she and the Committee's Independent Member had discussed a review of the effectiveness of the Committee. To this end, she would be sending some information to Members in the coming months, so that feedback could be reported back to the Committee in the summer of 2022.

## **8 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A 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 involved 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 considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

## **9 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented a Part II report in respect of the Council's latest Strategic Risk Register.

It was **RESOLVED** that the latest Strategic Risk Register (set out in Appendices A1 – A3 to the report) be noted.

## **10 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

## **CHAIR**

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# STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date: Tuesday, 7 June 2022**

**Time: 6.00pm**

**Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Present:** Councillors: Teresa Callaghan (Chair), John Gardner (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Stephen Booth, Alex Farquharson, Jackie Hollywell, Graham Lawrence CC, Maureen McKay and Loraine Rossati.

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm

**Time:** End Time: 6.52pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Wren and Mr Geoff Gibbs (Independent Co-opted Non-voting Member).

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was moved, seconded and, following a vote, **RESOLVED** that Councillor John Gardner be elected as Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

### **3 MINUTES - 28 MARCH 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 28 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **4 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received a tabled set of revised Terms of Reference, which contained minor amendments.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee, as agreed by the Annual Council meeting on 25 May 2022, and with the minor amendments as per the version tabled at the meeting, be noted.

### **5 2019/20 AND 2020/21 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF SBC ACCOUNTS - UPDATE**

The Committee received a verbal update from Ernst & Young in respect of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 External audit of SBC accounts.

Neil Harris (Ernst & Young) reminded Members that, at the joint Audit

Committee/Statement of Accounts Committee meeting held in late February 2022, they were advised that the 2019/20 audit of accounts was substantially complete, with a target of the end of April 2022 for full completion.

Neil explained that since then a national issue had arisen regarding how expenditure on replacement infrastructure was accounted for in local authority accounts. CIPFA was currently consulting in respect of this issue. This was very much a technical exercise to ensure that there was no material understatement or overstatement of infrastructure assets. Ernst & Young was waiting for the conclusion of this consultation process before signing off the 2019/20 accounts.

Neil also referred to an actuarial error relating to the 2019/20 accounts with regard to an overstatement of the Pension Fund assets concerning the Hertfordshire Building Control Consortium. An appropriate correction would therefore be made to the 2019/20 accounts.

Neil advised that he had agreed with the Strategic Director (CF) that the aim would be to conclude the 2020/21 audit by the end of July 2022.

In respect of the 2020/21 audit, Neil commented that fieldwork would be continuing throughout July 2022, although the external audit plan for the 2020/21 accounts would need to be reviewed before being presented to the Audit Committee.

Neil informed the Committee that he would be leaving Ernst & Young in early September 2022 to take up a senior position with the Financial Reporting Council.

In reply to a question from the Chair, Neil confirmed that he was committed to the completion of the 2019/20 audit. Ernst & Young was in the process of reviewing their Engagement Leads for Local Authority auditing. He undertook to ensure a smooth handover of duties, and agreed to advise the Committee of the name of the new Engagement Lead once appointed.

It was **RESOLVED** that the verbal update from Ernst & Young regarding the 2019/20 and 2020/21 External audit of SBC accounts be noted.

## **6 ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT AND ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

The SIAS Client Audit Manager presented a report in respect of the SIAS Annual Assurance Statement and Annual Report 2021/22.

The SIAS Client Audit Manager advised that, based on the results of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards self-assessment, the Head of Assurance (Hertfordshire County Council) had concluded that SIAS “generally conforms” with internal audit standards. It was noted that “generally conforms” was the highest rating and meant that SIAS had a charter, policies and processes assessed as conformant to the standards and was consequently effective.

The SIAS Client Audit Manager stated that a reasonable assurance opinion had been issued regarding the Council’s financial and non-financial systems, and that SIAS had concluded that SBC’s corporate governance and risk management

frameworks substantially complied with the CIPFA/SOLACE best practice guidance on corporate governance.

The SIAS Client Audit Manager referred to the proposed Audit Charter, set out at Appendix D to the report, was unchanged from the 2021/22 version.

In response to a number of Member questions, the SIAS Client Audit Manager stated that:

- he accepted that the report was of a technical nature, and would endeavour to remove as many technical terms as possible from future versions;
- the efficiency/effectiveness of audits generally depended on the adequacy of audit fieldwork, which was led by an evidence-based approach. Audits were also subject to an internal quality review, as were any judgements made;
- in Paragraph 1.3 of the report, the phrase “business as usual” referred to the situation going forward, rather than suggesting that the Council had returned to its pre-pandemic position;
- he would ensure that the abbreviations “C, H, M and NA” shown in the Audit Plan (Appendix A) were explained earlier in the document in future versions; and
- in Paragraph 3.5 of the report, the Landlord Health and Safety Follow up audit did include Council tenanted and leasehold properties. It covered areas of building compliance, such as gas, electrical and water safety.

In relation to the cancelled IT Resilience audit, the Strategic Director (CF) advised that it was hoped that the resilience of the shared IT service would be addressed via the recently established Joint SBC/EHC ICT Executive Committee.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22 be noted.
2. That the results of the self-assessment required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) be noted.
3. That the SIAS Audit Charter, as attached at Appendix D to the report, be approved.
4. That it be confirmed that the scope and resources for internal audit were no subject to inappropriate limitations in 2021/22.

## **7 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22 AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2021/22.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer advised that the AGS was required to be reviewed each year, and had to be published in draft by 31 July 2022. It described the Council's governance arrangements, how they were reviewed, significant governance challenges and actions to address them. She drew attention to the planned improvement activity for 2022/23 set out at the end of the AGS document.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer stated that the Local Code of Corporate Governance had been drawn up in conformity with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016)". The document had been reviewed, and the major changes were summarised in the table set out in Paragraph 3.2.4 of the report.

The Chair and Strategic Director (CF) thanked the Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer for her work on the report.

In response to a Member's question, the Strategic Director (CF) commented that the determination of what was in the "public interest" in terms of the AGS related to ensuring that the Council had the best possible governance principles in place to act in residents' best interests, including appropriate and robust controls, whilst recognising that actions could be implemented to achieve continuous improvement.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the changes to the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
2. That the Council's 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement, as attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be recommended for approval by the Statement of Accounts Committee.

## **8 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

## **9 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. Under Section 100A 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. Members considered the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determined that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.



**10 PART II MINUTES - AUDIT COMMITTEE - 28 MARCH 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 28 March 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**11 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer presented a report providing the Quarter 4 2021/22 (January to March 2022) update in respect of the Strategic Risk Register.

The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer, assisted by the Strategic Director (CF), responded to a number of questions raised by Members on the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the latest Strategic Risk Register, as set out at Appendix A1 to the report, be noted.

**12 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

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