

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES****Date: Tuesday 20 June 2017****Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage****Present:** Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), J Brown,
L Harrington, J Mead, A Mitchell CC and G Snell.**Start/End Time:** Start Time: 6:00 pm
End Time: 7:45 pm**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bainbridge, E Connolly and C Saunders.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference are noted.

3. MINUTES – 15 MARCH 2017

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 15 March 2017 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. ROUGH SLEEPERS – HOMELESSNESS

The Committee received a presentation regarding the present position with rough sleepers in the town centre.

The presentation covered the following areas:

- The number of rough sleepers in the town
- Dealing with the possessions of rough sleepers left in public places
- The role of the Haven
- A benchmarking visit to Milton Keynes
- Actions currently undertaken by SBC, and
- The potential impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Committee was advised that some complaints had been received from property owners and tenants in the town about rough sleepers obstructing doorways and fire exits with their possessions, such as bedding.

The Committee was further advised that with effect Wednesday 21 June

rough sleepers' possessions left in public places would be removed within 24 hours of notification being given.

Members suggested that Officers delay implementation pending consideration of the related Communications plan and prior notice being given to all Councillors to outline what action was being taken and why. This arrangement should also outline how the Council will respond to any press enquiries.

The Strategic Director Community undertook to action this with immediate effect.

The difficulty of engaging with the 'non-engagers' was discussed and it was observed that in some cases rough sleeping was as a result of mental health issues and not a lifestyle choice as believed in some quarters.

It was acknowledged that the Council's approach to dealing with rough sleepers differed from neighbouring authorities and in reply to Members' comments the Interim Housing and Homeless Manager advised the Committee that there was currently no 'move on' policy for homeless people in Stevenage which may have in part resulted in the town being attractive to homeless people from other areas.

Additionally it was believed that some residents at the Haven were reluctant to take the next steps towards independent living which resulted in a shortage of suitable accommodation for homeless people within the town. It was noted that the Haven would prioritise local homeless people in times of demand thus providing an incentive for those from outside the area to go elsewhere. The Haven would assist by signposting hostel vacancies outside of Stevenage.

In reply to a question the Interim Housing and Homeless Manager undertook to provide details of the turnover of clients of the Haven.

It was **RESOLVED** that the presentation is noted.

5. MONITORING OF ACTIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO RESPONSE TO THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Committee received an update of the Executive Member response to the scrutiny review into conditions in the private rented sector.

The Committee was reminded that the purpose of the review had been to foster improved working relations between the Council and private landlords with a view to improving and increasing the available housing stock for residents of the town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report is noted.

6. COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND DRAFT MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2017/2018

The Committee reviewed its work programme and draft meeting schedule for 2017/2018.

The Committee was advised that the scoping exercise for the proposed review into the Application of the Housing Allocations Policy would be undertaken at a meeting of the Community Select Committee scheduled for 13 July 2017 after which meetings would be programmed to progress the review.

In reply to a Member's request for a review of Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) the Committee was advised that a comprehensive review had been undertaken in 2011. However it was noted that a review of SLL's performance had recently been undertaken linked to a specific review clause within the leisure management contract. The outcome of that review could be put before the Committee if it wished.

In response to a request the Scrutiny Officer undertook to bring forward the review of the recommendations from the Damp and Mould review from its scheduled date of March 2018, and, where possible, would look at making a more even spread of the Committee's meeting schedule.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report is noted.

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

In light of the recent tragic Grenfell Tower fire, the Chair raised the issue of the Coroner's Report received after the Harrow Court fire.

The Strategic Director Community updated Members on the activity that had taken place since the Grenfell Tower fire including reassurance communications and visits with residents of tower blocks, checks of fire and emergency plans, key information circulated to all Members, liaison with the MP and information requests from Government and undertook to progress the following questions raised by Members:

- To provide an update on the points raised in the Harrow Court Coroner's Report under Rule 43 (Reports to Prevent Future Deaths).
- To consider any necessary changes to the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements.
- To confirm the position and the Council's responsibilities concerning recent buildings works in the town, especially the conversion of office to residential accommodation.

A Member suggested that the Council could review fire safety precautions in Homes of Multiple Occupation.

8. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required

9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR