

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 1 April 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice Chair), Sandra Barr, Jim Brown, Liz Harrington, John Mead and Sarah-Jane Potter

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.00pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Wren.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE - SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2019/2020

The Committee considered a report by the Council's Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2019/2020 Municipal Year. The report was based on responses from all Members involved in the scrutiny process regarding current scrutiny arrangements and possible scrutiny topics. It was noted that the public had not raised any issues for consideration.

The Committee discussed the following potential Scrutiny reviews items for 2019/2020:

The length of time that Housing assets (Bathrooms and Kitchens) go without being replaced – The Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) informed Members that details of the lifetime of housing assets were included in the recently approved Asset management Strategy which could be circulated to Members.

Use of Local Community Budget (LCB) funding – Members noted that the use of LCB funding was thoroughly reviewed in recent years. It was highlighted that LCB cannot be used for ongoing expenses.

Homelessness – It was reported that homelessness in Stevenage was not on the increase. However, officers were finding it difficult to provide meaningful support to a small group of hard-to-help individuals. The Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) informed the Committee that there were plans to carry out a publicity campaign focussing on myth busting and raising awareness of Council initiatives to tackle homelessness. A Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was due to be

considered by the Executive in July 2019 and a Portfolio Holders Advisory Group meeting would take place beforehand.

Stevenage Leisure Limited, Fairlands Valley Park and Sports & Leisure across Stevenage – It was acknowledged that there could be merit in reviewing the combined private, public and voluntary leisure and cultural services offer for Stevenage to help inform the next Leisure Management Contract. Members were of the opinion that the sailing centre at Fairlands Valley Park appeared to be attracting relatively few participants from Stevenage. The sailing centre was being sustained by revenue from other amenities in Fairland Valley Park. This could be used to inform the development of SBC's future Leisure Management Contract and could contribute more broadly to the Cultural Strategy. Consideration would have to be given to the resourcing of such a piece of work should Members wish for it to proceed.

Museum Review – Members were informed that the Museum received new equipment after the review in 2016. Officers were looking at relocation options for the Museum as part of the town centre regeneration.

Neighbourhood Wardens – The Assistant Director (Communities & Neighbourhoods) informed the Committee that a number of sessions were being scheduled to introduce Members to their respective neighbourhood wardens. It was hoped that the briefing sessions will provide clarity on the role of neighbourhood wardens. Members indicated that a review on Neighbourhood Wardens could incorporate the proposed area-based working model, interviews with neighbourhood wardens, comparison of working arrangements in Stevenage wards and benchmarking against other local authorities.

The Healthy Hub – The Committee agreed that the 2018/19 Public Health session was beneficial because it covered topical issues such as obesity and diabetes awareness. Members were informed that the Hertfordshire Stop Smoking Service started working with Stevenage Food Bank as a follow up to the public health scrutiny session. It was noted that the Committee was still awaiting an update from Hertfordshire County Council Director of Public Health regarding funding for diabetes courses. Members may wish for the Healthy Hub to receive further focus as part of the next years Health focused scrutiny session.

Fly-tipping of bulky goods in Stevenage housing blocks – The Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) informed Members that a number of security cameras had been installed at flat blocks to monitor fly-tipping and other cases of anti-social behaviour. It was confirmed that the Council could exercise the option to prosecute fly-tipping cases.

Members put forward the following issues as additional potential scrutiny items:

- Council's IT services
- The perceived concern of "digital exclusion" for the town's low-income groups, including older people and those with disabilities. It was suggested that the Council's Welfare Reform Group Chair provide an update re action taken in conjunction with partners to seek to address this matter.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Scrutiny Members' feedback on ideas for improving Scrutiny (see section 4 of the Scrutiny Officer's report) be noted
2. That the Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) circulates to the Committee:
 - a) A copy of the diagram in the Asset management strategy which shows the life cycle of each element
 - b) Email address that can be provided for Members and for customers to contact to understand when an element might be replaced
3. That the issue of homeless people living with family and friends be clarified in the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy that is due to go to the Executive in July 2019
4. That the Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) provides the Committee:
 - a) A written response on current arrangements for fly-tipping recharges
 - b) An update on issues relating to digital exclusion that were highlighted in preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit
5. That the Assistant Director (Communities and Neighbourhoods) provides updates on the following:
 - a) Current guidelines on the use of LCBs
 - b) Cultural Strategy & Stevenage Museum
6. That the Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) provides an update on the roll out of the new play areas across the town
7. The Healthy Hub be a key focus for the 2019/20 annual Public Health session
8. That having considered ideas put forward by individual Members the following matters be added to the list for consideration, prioritisation and scoping as possible Community Select Committee Scrutiny Work Programme items for 2019/2020
 - a) Stevenage Leisure Limited, Fairlands Valley Park and Sports & Leisure across Stevenage (Paragraphs 5.1.5, 5.1.6, 5.1.14 and 5.1.16 to the report referred). This would be covered under the heading of "Sports & Leisure in Stevenage"
 - b) Neighbourhood Wardens (Paragraphs 5.1.8 and 5.1.15 to the report referred)
9. That, the following statutory and standing items also be provided for within the Committee's Scrutiny Work Programme for 2019/2020:

- a) Crime and Disorder Committee (Statutory Committee)
- b) Public Health Meeting (Standing Item)

10. That the following Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings to carry out policy development work identified so far be noted (Paragraph 7.1 to the report referred):

- a) Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy (June 2019)
- b) Housing Older Persons Strategy (June 2019)
- c) Housing Service Charge Review (October/November 2019)
- d) Community Centres Review (October 2019)
- e) Rent Policy (December 2019)
- f) Tenancy Strategy
- g) Customer Strategy

3 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

4 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Not required.

5 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR