

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 23 March 2022

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair)(Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Maureen McKay, Claire Parris and Simon Speller.

Start / End Start Time: 06:00 pm

Time: End Time: 06:50 pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sarah Mead and Wendy Kerby.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES - 10 JANUARY 2022 & NOTES OF INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE ON 17 JANUARY & 3 MARCH 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the committee meeting held on Monday 10 January 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Members noted the notes of the informal Committee meetings held on Monday 17 January and Thursday 3 March 2022.

3 **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Work Programme for the new Municipal Year 2022/23. He advised Members that a survey was conducted on improving scrutiny work. All Members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees were emailed a survey for their views on the Scrutiny work. A total of 8 responses were received from the 23 Scrutiny Members. These were all summarised in the Officer report.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- A one-off performance review on Parking would be added on to the Work Programme for 2022/23.
- Members noted the issue regarding the Council garages affected by asbestos, and officers advised that a strategic options analysis is currently being

undertaken to identify some costed options for future consideration, and could also feed in to the session on Parking.

- Members noted that the climate emergency review would continue into the 2022-23 Municipal Year. Members noted that the target for net zero emission by 2030 would be challenging to achieve and is reliant on a range of external factors e.g. funding. Members discussed issues around the Council's response to fence repairs, and requested that a report update should be provided to Members on how the Council was tackling the issue.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Work Programme for the new Municipal year 2022/23 be noted and that the following items will be included in the Committee's Work Programme for 2022-23:

- Continuation of the Climate Emergency Review (as the Committee's substantive piece of work for the year)
- 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

4 **EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSE TO THE E&E SELECT COMMITTEE REVIEW OF ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19**

The Committee received the Executive Portfolio Holder response on the review of the economic impact of Covid19. Members welcomed the response of the Executive to the report and the recommendations. Members suggested that in future the Executive response should be circulated to Scrutiny Members as soon as it is ready not waiting for the next formal meeting of the Committee, as in this instance it delayed the publishing of the response for 2 months.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive response on the review of the economic impact of Covid19 be noted.

5 **INTERIM REPORT - CLIMATE EMERGENCY SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Committee received a report in relation to the interim review findings and emerging recommendations of the climate emergency scrutiny review. The report included the emerging recommendations at this stage of the review. The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the Committee had heard from a range of witnesses and it had received information and evidence through expert presentations, external witnesses, SBC officers and a number of Executive Portfolio holders. However, there were a number of witnesses still to interview in the next municipal year and officers would meet with the Chair & Vice-Chair to consider the best way to complete the review in the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

Members were happy with the progress the review had made and the recommendations that they had made so far.

Members noted that trees play a vital role in combating the climate change

emergency, and one of the best measures towards its net zero target for 2030.

Members commented that the review would need to address the issue of the current policy of trees in relation to the Council's Planning and Development responsibilities and also the size of the financial funding required to help the Council achieve net zero. Members were also keen to hear how the Council was engaging with young people on this issue.

Comments were received from David Thorogood the Environmental Sustainability Coordinator regarding the interim review recommendations. These comments had not been received in time to be included in the interim recommendations but would be included and considered with the Chair and Vice-Chair outside of the meeting and would be reported to Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that the interim review findings and emerging recommendations be noted and when completed would be circulated to the relevant Executive Portfolio Holders for comment.

6 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

7 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no exempt information.

8 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR