

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 28 January 2014

Time: 18.00 hrs.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: S Walker (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), L Bell, L Harrington, C Latif, J Mead, G Snell and P Stuart

Start/End Time: Start Time: 18.00 hrs.
End Time: 19.25 hrs.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence nor any declarations of interests.

2. MINUTES – 6 NOVEMBER 2013

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2013 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. HCC CONSULTATION ON CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

The Corporate Policy & Partnerships Manager gave a presentation on the HCC Child and Family Poverty Strategy 2014-2017, informing the meeting that the document was presently out for public consultation and welcomed their input which would be incorporated into SBC's responses.

The Committee was informed that although Stevenage had a number of projects / organisations such as CAB, SBC play services, credit union, children centres etc. in place to tackle a range of issues around child and family poverty, there were still a number of underlying factors that the strategy was not likely to address such as high rents being charged by private landlords, rising cost of living, affordable homes, domestic violence etc.

Members were concerned that the Strategy did not include emotional support and wellbeing as one of the various building blocks to tackle child and family poverty.

Members acknowledged the importance of early intervention programmes as a means of addressing poverty but reiterated that HCC should target its resources into areas of immediate need which could then be subsequently measured over a period to establish its effectiveness. Members were concerned that the early intervention programmes targeted families with anti-social behaviour or in trouble

with the Police but ignored those families on low incomes paying high rents in the private rented sector.

In response to a question on whether child and family poverty was prevalent, the Committee noted that it was a growing issue especially as presently the county has 35 food banks in operation. Members were concerned with the decision by HCC to disburse monies from its hardship fund to food banks just before the end of the municipal year, that this was an example of lack of strategic thinking with regards to tackling poverty in general.

Members noted that the strategy made no reference to affordable homes, a key factor in tackling poverty, nor was there any mechanism for measuring its outcomes.

In response to a question, Members were informed that residents were not aware of the support services available to them and that it was essential for partners to be able to signpost them to the appropriate services.

Members welcomed the benefit that would arise from providing relevant training for front facing staff, especially those within customer service centres who encounter people experiencing poverty.

Members noted the Officer's suggestion that since public consultation ended on February 3, the Committee's comments would be incorporated into SBC's responses to the Strategy by the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Hertfordshire's Child and Family Poverty Strategy be noted.
2. That comments from the Community Select Committee to the Strategy be reported directly to the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure to HCC and considered in his response to HCC.
3. That SBC's responses to the Strategy be agreed by both the Chair of the Community Select Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure.

4. DRAFT REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

The Scrutiny Officer tabled an amendment to the draft report and advised that the minor amendments received from the Strategic Director (Community) would be incorporated into the final report.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That findings of the review into Community Transport in the draft report be noted.
2. That paragraph 3.6.1 of the draft report be amended to reflect the discussion regarding improving shared publicity with HCC.
3. That the following recommendations be presented to the Portfolio Holders for Economy, Enterprise & Transport and Community, Health and Older People and the Strategic Director (Community) and that a response be provided from these and any other named officers and partners within two months of the publishing of this report.
 - I. That during the next round of priority based budgeting officers make a case for keeping the service not just on economic grounds but against the high social value that the service provides to its users. If the Executive proposes to make savings in this area during the 2015-16 priority based budget process then the Committee would request an interview with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise, Transport and Officers at an appropriate time during the budget process.
 - II. That Officers investigate ways in which partners can work together to provide improved publicity with joint efforts to advertise all Community Transport that is available in Stevenage and the wider area.
 - III. That Officers consider looking at ways of making the Leisure Trips available to a wider group of users by investigating the possibility of adopting a voucher scheme.
 - IV. That Officers consider approaching local businesses with regards to providing some corporate sponsorship to support the service.
 - V. During 2014/15 Officers work with current community transport providers and other stakeholders where appropriate to investigate the feasibility of establishing an integrated delivery model which meets all of the clients' needs, possibly through a new or existing (if suitable) social enterprise.
 - VI. That Officers investigate the feasibility of using the Community Transport Buses beyond their existing hours of use for hire by community groups for further income generation

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None

PART II

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

Chair