

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 10 September 2014

Time: 18.00 hrs.

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair), L Bell, R Broom, E Connolly, M Gardner, J Mead and M Cherney-Craw.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 18.00 hrs.
End Time: 19:22 hrs.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A McGuinness and P Stuart and the Youth Mayor, Shae Field.

There were no declarations of interests.

2. MINUTES – 1 JULY 2014

The Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee that some progress had been made with officer discussions concerning the possibility of providing a single integrated Community Transport Service for the area, however the Select Committee scheduled for 23 September might be too early for any meaningful work by the Committee.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that bids for health related projects had yet to be commissioned for the grant of £100k received from the County Council. The Strategic Director Community undertook to provide an update for Members.*

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**Note, since the meeting the following update has been received:*

The Stevenage Health and Wellbeing Partnership are meeting on the 3 October to agree which projects and priorities are to be submitted for the Director of Public Health's, consideration. It is anticipated that both the Project Plans and the Memorandum of Understanding will be forwarded to the DPH on 10 October.

3. HRA BUSINESS PLAN

The meeting received a presentation on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

In introducing the presentation the Strategic Director Community stressed the importance of the plan and reminded Members that the asset investments alone over the 30 year period totalled over £1bn. There would be many challenges, not least the impact of Right to Buy sales which had far exceeded those anticipated in the original plan due to Government policy changes which offered larger discounts; the provision of properties for an aging population and the need to identify areas within the town suitable for development. It was, however, the intention of the Council to have more properties available at the end of the 30 year period than the beginning even after allowing for losses through RTB.

The presentation covered the key priorities and challenges facing the Council, which included Right to Buy / new council housing development (planned provision of an additional 1900 homes over the 30 year lifespan of the business plan), sheltered housing investment, challenging asset investment, procurement activities, welfare reform activities, proposals to improve tenant / Leaseholder customer satisfaction Decent Homes, reducing crime / Anti-Social Behaviour, Financial Assumptions and the delivery plan for the business plan.

Members then asked a number of detailed questions about the presentation which were answered by the Officers.

In reply to a query about levels of customer satisfaction with the Housing Service the Strategic Director Community undertook to circulate the high level results from HouseMark's recently published STAR Benchmarking Service Analysis for 2014 to Committee Members.

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

4. EXECUTIVE MEMBER RESPONSE TO DECENT HOMES SCRUTINY REVIEW

The Committee had before it the Executive Member response to the Decent Homes Scrutiny Review.

The Committee made the following comments regarding the response:

- Recommendation 7: The sign-off should include any consequences of work carried out in a tenant's property. It had been noted that in a few cases electrical appliances, such as freezers and fridges, had been left switched off, heating systems left on and doors left unlocked, often for days at a time once work had been completed on a property.
- Recommendation 9: A Member highlighted that vulnerable tenants were confused by the options open to them regarding the need for, or placement of, conduits. It was requested that such tenants be guided by officers or sheltered scheme wardens when making such choices. Officers would give this suggestion further consideration whilst noting that the original

recommendation was focussed upon providing tenants with an opportunity to influence the siting of conduits based upon their personal preference.

In response to a question concerning recommendation 11 the Committee was advised that the Council was working with the North Herts College to identify work experience opportunities for individuals nearing the end of their courses.

In reply to a further question it was confirmed that there was not a decorating scheme for the elderly.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive Response to the Direct Homes Scrutiny Review be noted.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

PART II

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair