

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**Date: Monday 29 June 2015**

**Time: 18.00 hrs.**

**Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Present:** Councillors: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice Chair), L Bell, E Connolly, L Harrington, S Hearn, J Mead, C Saunders and P Stuart.

Start Time: 18.00 hrs.

End Time: 19:05 hrs.

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

The Chair welcomed new Members to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor G Snell.

Councillor E Connolly declared a personal interest in item 8 as a member of the Irish Network Stevenage and as a trustee of the Stevenage World Forum for Ethnic Communities, organisations that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor J Mead declared a personal interest in item 8 as the organiser of the Stevenage Food Bank an organisation that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor L Harrington declared a personal interest in item 8 as the Council's nominated representative on the Bedwell Community Association an organisation that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor L Bell declared a personal interest in item 8 as the Council's nominated representative for the Bragbury Centre (formerly known as the Hertford Road Community Association) an organisation that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor M Notley declared a personal interest in item 8 as a member of the Kadoma Link Association and as Chairman of the Symonds Green Community Association, organisations that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor P Stuart declared a personal interest in item 8 as a member of the Kadoma Link Association an organisation that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

Councillor S Hearn declared a personal interest in item 8 as her husband is the Chair of the Shephall Residents' Association an organisation that had applied for and been awarded funds under the Local Community Budget scheme.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference be noted.

## **3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Councillor M Notley be appointed as the Vice-Chair to the Community Select Committee for the Municipal Year 2015/2016.

## **4. MINUTES – 18 MARCH 2015**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **5. MINUTES – 30 MARCH 2015**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **6. MEETING SCHEDULE FOR COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015-2016**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the proposed work programme for the Committee for the Municipal Year 2015/2016.

The Committee was advised of a typographical error in the programme. The question mark against the date of 2 December 2015 in the second item should be deleted.

The Committee was advised that the timeframe for the review of the HRA Business Plan could change. The Strategic Director undertook liaison with the Scrutiny Officer to confirm a revised date. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate a revised workplan as appropriate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting schedule for the Community Select Committee Work Programme for the year 2015/2016 be noted.

## **7. EXECUTIVE MEMBER RESPONSE TO CONDITIONS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Head of Housing Management presented the Executive Member response to the scrutiny review into conditions in the private rented sector.

The Committee was advised that a number of measures had been reviewed to encourage private landlords to work with the Council. In addition other actions, such as quicker processing of housing benefit payments, had been initiated to support tenants.

It was also proposed that the Council offer a range of management services to leaseholders who let their properties.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that a number of London Boroughs were purchasing properties on the open market in the town, however the Council was also undertaking this as a course of action to bolster its own housing stock where practicable.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that a leaflet had been produced outlining the behaviours expected of tenants.

Some questions were raised about the option to offer cash incentives to private landlords through the Incentivisation Scheme which was being developed to respond to the pressures upon emergency and temporary accommodation. The Head of Housing Management undertook to provide a written update to the Committee in early September prior to the launch of the scheme.

The Committee was advised that Resident Involvement Groups and their relationships with the Council fell within the remit of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council. Methods of engagement with the groups had been considered although no progress towards a unified approach had been made at this stage. It was anticipated that this topic would be brought before the Committee as a policy development item at a later date.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive Member response to the Scrutiny Review into conditions in the private rented sector be noted.

## **8. DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT – SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO LOCAL COMMUNITY BUDGETS**

The Scrutiny Officer presented draft scoping document for the proposed scrutiny review into Local Community Budgets (LCBs).

Members requested that the following information be provided:

- The percentage of monies paid to bids inside and outside the ward by Members
- Guidance as to whether bids from other statutory bodies and outside agencies should be considered
- A list of recipients of LCB awards made in years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015 to date
- A breakdown of LCB awards by ethnicity, religion and age
- Desk top research of other LCB schemes (in lieu of a 'critical friend')
- Analysis of allocations by project - looking at some examples to determine possible risks to the Council around issues such as financial status, safeguarding etc.

It was noted that the recommendations from the Shared Internal Audit Service audit of LCBs could be used as evidence in the review.

It was agreed that the scoping document be amended as follows:

- Include a review of the existing policy and application procedure
- Clarify the statement regarding complaints about LCBs to say that no complaints have been received from external groups
- Include in the focus of the review possible areas where the Council could be at risk
- Include the Chief Executive as an interviewee
- Include the Leader as an interviewee.

Group leaders were requested to nominate Members for interview.

It was agreed that the lead roles for questioning in topic areas be as follows:

- Cllrs E Connolly and L Harrington – Purpose and focus of LCBs
- Cllrs L Bell and S Mead – Analysis of LCB allocations by project
- Cllrs P Stuart and C Saunders – Value for Money, use of resources
- Cllr S Mead – LCB spend alignment with corporate, local and town wide needs
- Cllr J Mead – Equalities and Diversity Issues.

It was **RESOLVED** that the scoping document, along with the amendments above, be noted.

## **9. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

None.

## **10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

## **PART II**

## **11. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

## **Chair**