

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 6 October 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, G Snell and P Stuart.

Also Present Councillor S Speller, Portfolio Holder Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council

Start Time: 18.00 hrs.

End Time: 19:05 hrs.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were neither apologies for absence nor any declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – 10 NOVEMBER 2014

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. MINUTES – 29 JUNE 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. DISCUSSION ITEM – MEMBERS' FUTURE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

With the agreement of the Chair this item was dealt with after Item 5, Update on Landlord Incentivisation Scheme.

The Committee received a presentation from the Portfolio Holder Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Council and the Head of Service (Chief Executive's Unit) on the use of social media.

Members were advised of the types of social media, the potential issues of its use, the merits of separating personal and professional life on-line and the importance of being clear about when responses can be provided.

Particular emphasis was placed on the benefits of social media and Members were further advised that digital inclusion was essential as many new national initiatives, such as Universal Credit, would be driven entirely on-line.

There followed a discussion in which the following key points were raised:

- Members' exposure to social media varied from expert user to occasional (and reluctant) observer.
- Many Members were cautious about the use of social media and concerns were expressed that its use could lead to an expectancy of 24/7 availability with an immediate responses being provided.
- There were many potential positives of making better use of social media including the opportunity to engage much more widely with local people than The Council does at present, in particular younger people.
- Social media should not though be used as the sole method of communication, nor should it be used to avoid playing an active role in community leadership.
- The value of more personal contact, such as telephone calls or face to face meetings, should not be undervalued.
- Social media can be used to 'signpost' issues to the most appropriate agency.
- The need to consider Council wide standards for social media usage.
- The advantages and disadvantages of Members having individual social media accounts for their role or whether a ward / town wide approach would be more appropriate.
- Training and 1:2:1 peer mentoring would be essential before widespread use of social media by Members.
- Observing social media was a useful way of picking up upon developing issues within the town. Some example cases were highlighted.

In reply to a request for volunteers to join the Portfolio Holder in forming a reference group to move the topic forward and report back to the Select Committee at a future date, Councillors S Hearn, L Bell, C Saunders, J Mead, G Snell and P Stuart put their names forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that the points raised be noted.

5. UPDATE ON LANDLORD INCENTIVISATION SCHEME

With the agreement of the Chair this item was dealt with before Item 4, Discussion Item – Members' Future Use of Social Media.

The Committee received an update on the Landlord Incentivisation Scheme from the Head of Housing Management.

In response to a question concerning funding the Committee was advised that once the current budget had been exhausted it would be necessary for the project manager to bid for further monies.

In reply to a further question concerning success measures the Committee was advised that any reduction in the number of homeless people in the town could be regarded as a positive result.

In response to a Member request the Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate electronic copies of the handouts issued at the meeting.

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

6. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

PART II

8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

Chair