

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 19 October 2016

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Members: S Mead (Chair), M Notley (Vice-Chair),
J. Brown, E Connolly, J Mead, A Mitchell and
G Snell.

In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6:00 pm
End Time: 7.00 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bainbridge, E Harrington and C Saunders.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – 7 SEPTEMBER 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 7 September 2016 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. REVISIT TO RECOMMENDATIONS AND AGREED ACTIONS FROM THE 2012 REVIEW INTO THE STEVENAGE MUSEUM

Jo Ward, Museum Curator updated the Committee on the current situation with regard to the Museum in response to the original review recommendations. In particular the Committee was updated in respect of the work undertaken following the flood, IT issues, the Heritage Lottery Fund Project and the current anti-social behaviour issues affecting the museum.

The Committee was advised that in relation to the flood damage, only a small number of items remained to be restored but these had now been agreed with the insurers and the work would be completed shortly.

Members expressed concern regarding future flood prevention. Officers informed the meeting that it was only at one of the doors in the Museum where there was a tendency to flood regularly. Members requested that officers look into what was available in terms of flood doors/gates as it was not acceptable for officers to have to put sandbags down every evening.

In response to a question, Jo Ward confirmed that although the Museum

entrance did not have automatic doors, the use of CCTV cameras by staff and also the installation of a bell for people to press if they required assistance ensured there was no problem with access.

Officers advised the Committee of the anti-social behaviour around the museum, specifically in relation to the drug paraphernalia that was being found in the grounds. Unfortunately the CCTV cameras did not cover the whole of the grounds. PCSOs did check the area on a regular basis but the Museum staff were still finding evidence of drug use around the building. The Chair commented that there were health and safety concerns around officers carrying out these checks. It was suggested that the local Bedwell Ward Councillors could take up the matter with the Police.

In response to a question, the Strategic Director, Community advised that currently a definitive plan did not exist in terms of location or budget for a new Museum but that it was anticipated to form part of the new leisure provision linked to the Town Centre Regeneration plans. This would also potentially involve the County Council and the provision currently provided at Bowes Lyon House. Officers mentioned the possibility of further Arts Council funding as they were currently looking for areas for investment and it was thought that Stevenage could fit their criteria. The Strategic Director advised that he would be meeting with the Arts Council and Councillor Henry, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Leisure to talk about the future arts provision, including the Museum, in Stevenage.

Members also asked officers to clarify where the museum store would be sited following the regeneration of the Town.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee's thanks be conveyed to Jo Ward, Museum Curator and her team for their work and commitment to the Museum particularly during the difficult time after the flood.

4. SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO DAMP AND MOULD IN STEVENAGE HOUSING STOCK

The Strategic Director, Community submitted apologies for this item on behalf of Neil Wilson-Prior, Head of Asset Management who was unwell and unable to attend the meeting.

He advised that since the last meeting, officers had been actively working with the two SBC tenants who had been in attendance. The contact with the tenants was believed to be positive in terms of the Council's engagement with them, however, in relation to Council staff resourcing, two key officers had recently left which had had an impact on the work of the section. Following a recent interview, it was hoped that an appointment would be made shortly to the Team. The Chair stated that staff turnover was one of the main issues affecting the work in this area.

It was agreed that it would be helpful for Councillors to be able to be clear when responding to constituents on any enquiries regarding damp and

condensation issues, in terms of the timeline for when they should expect to receive a response as well as what should be expected as a response from the Council to those enquiries.

In relation to the draft Damp and Condensation Strategy, as the officer was not in attendance to answer any questions, it was requested that the Strategy should be re-circulated to Members for comments to be submitted to Stephen Weaver, Scrutiny Officer within 2 weeks from this meeting. The Strategy, including any comments from the Members, should then be trialled for 6 months with officers bringing a report back to this Committee on its implementation.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- 1 That the Scrutiny Officer circulate the draft Damp and Condensation Strategy to Members for comment by Wednesday 2nd November;
- 2 That a progress report be submitted to this Committee in 6 months' time detailing the implementation and progress of the Strategy.
- 3 That the Head of Asset Management be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee regarding the current position in relation to the scale of the damp and mould problem within the Council's housing stock.

5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR