

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 5 December 2007

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillor G Clark (Mayor), H Burrell, M Cherney Craw, D.W. Cullen, CC, P.E.J. Gallagher, J.G. Gardner, E. Harrington, R.J. Henry, J. Hollywell, B. Jackson, P.D. Kissane, L. Knight, C. Latif, J. Lloyd, CC, (Deputy Mayor) Mrs J.E. Lloyd, M.A Mason, S.M. Myson, M. Notley, R.G. Parker, CC, M.P. Patston, J. Pickersgill, J.R. Raynor, R.G. Smith MBE, DL, G. Snell, S.K. Speller, Mrs L.G. Strange, S. Taylor, H.C.L Tessier, J. Thomas (from 7.45pm), B.G. Underwood, Mrs A. Webb.

Agenda Item:

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In Attendance: Hon. Alderman and Freeman of the Borough B.G.Hall and Mrs Hilda Lawrence, Freeman of the Borough.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 9.10 p.m.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S. Batson, R.A. Clark, M. Downing, CC, L.A. Lambert, D Royall, P. Stuart and T. Turner.

An apology for absence was also submitted on behalf of Beth Campbell, Chair of the Youth Council.

An apology for lateness had been received from Councillor J. Thomas, who joined the meeting at 7.45pm.

Councillors John Lloyd, Lis Knight, Carol Latif and Brian Underwood declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 11 concerning the Budget & Policy Framework and additional funding for SHL as they were members of the board of SHL. The Councillors left the meeting when this item was discussed and took no part in the vote.

Councillor Sharon Taylor declared a personal interest in the Main Debate as she was an employee of Herts Constabulary.

The Mayor advised the meeting that he had amended the order of business and would take agenda item 11 immediately following his Mayoral Communication.

2 MINUTES - Wednesday 3rd October, 2007

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 3rd October 2007 at Barnwell School East Campus, Stevenage, having been circulated, be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Mayor, subject to the following amendments:

1. That Councillor S. Batson's name be removed from the attendee list;
2. That at Minute number 3, Mayor's Communication, the minute should state that he opened the Wellness Centre - not the Wellfields Centre.

3 MINUTES - 19TH JULY 2007

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Thursday 19th July 2007 in the Council Chamber, having been circulated, be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

4 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor advised the meeting that before he gave his update, the Council wished to pay tribute to the late Councillor Tanis Kent and called on the Leader of the Council, Sharon Taylor to say a few words.

Councillor Taylor expressed her devastation and sadness at the death of Tanis Kent. She paid tribute to Tanis as a great community champion both for Stevenage and also as a County Councillor. Councillor Taylor said that Tanis was involved in many people's lives, both at street level and also, in particular, with the Bedwell Community Association. She was a champion of Community Associations generally. Tanis had earned the respect of all those she had worked with across the political parties and had been instrumental in taking forward Education across Hertfordshire during her work on the County Council.

Councillor Taylor informed the meeting that as an appropriate memorial, and subject to her family's agreement, the redeveloped Town Centre Gardens would be named after Tanis when they were opened.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Robin Parker said that Tanis would be truly missed and sent his condolences to her family.

Councillor Reg Smith, fellow Pin Green Ward Councillor, paid tribute to Tanis and her hard working and dedicated nature. Councillor Smith said she had been a loyal friend to all people in Bedwell and Pin Green and that she would be missed terribly.

Councillor Marion Mason, Leader of the Minority Group advised that she had worked with Tanis recently on a number of Committees and, on behalf of her Group, said that Tanis would be sadly missed.

Following these tributes, the meeting stood in silent remembrance for one minute.

The Mayor then gave a short update regarding the engagements he had carried out since the last meeting of the Council. He particularly mentioned his attendance at

the Civic Reception, Remembrance Day Parade, the switching on of the festive lights and his attendance at the official opening of the new B&Q Store on London Road. He also congratulated Hon. Alderman Brian Hall, Freeman of the Borough, for the Hon. Doctorate that had recently been bestowed upon him by the University of Hertfordshire.

Council then considered agenda item 11, Budget & Policy Framework, after which the Mayor gave his apologies as he had another engagement and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Lloyd, Chaired the remainder of the meeting.

5 MAIN DEBATE - 'COMMUNITY SAFETY - ARE WE THERE YET?'

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Chief Inspector Fiona Gaskell and Sergeant Jim Moatt from Herts Constabulary to the meeting and invited Chief Inspector Gaskell to speak about Community Safety.

Chief Inspector Gaskell gave a brief resume of her career to date and spoke about the Police's responsibility of protecting people from crime and reducing their fear of crime. She expressed the importance of partnership working and advised that she wanted to work on the success of the current partnership within Stevenage particularly with the Council but also with the Community Safety Partnership with the aim of ensuring Stevenage remained a safe place to live, work and travel through.

The Deputy Mayor then moved to vary Standing Order 18 (c) (iii) and waive Standing Order 17(f) to vary the time limit on speeches and to enable the debate to continue beyond the allotted time of 40 minutes.

Councillor John Gardner seconded the Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, it was RESOLVED that Standing Order 18 (c) (iii) be varied by allowing 6 minutes only for the mover and seconder and 3 minutes for everyone else and 17 (f) be waived to allow the debate to go over 40 minutes

The Deputy Mayor then called upon Councillor Sue Myson to open the debate. Councillor Myson advised that the reduction in overall crime figures in Stevenage had been a reflection of the strength of effective partnership working and she congratulated all of those involved in the progress which had been made although there was always scope for improvement. Councillor Myson then moved a motion which was seconded by Councillor John Gardner.

Councillors and Members of the public contributed to the debate and raised a number of opinions and issues that they considered important.

The influence and success of Neighbourhood Watch schemes within Stevenage was reiterated. Those areas with active schemes were shown to have a much lower crime incident level than those without. It was also important that all incidences of crime were reported to the police to ensure that an accurate picture of crime in certain areas could emerge. Those areas with particular problems could then be targeted.

The motion was then put to the vote.

'That this Council re-confirms its commitment to work pro-actively with all relevant partners, particularly the Hertfordshire Constabulary, to continue to reduce crime and the fear of crime in Stevenage.'

It was RESOLVED that the motion be approved.

6 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

7 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Deputy Mayor called upon Councillor Robin Parker CC, the Leader of the Opposition to raise one matter relevant to the Borough.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the problems caused by plastic carrier bags. Councillor Parker asked that the Council consider the implementation of a ban on these bags across Stevenage. This would help with litter, would save resources, improve recycling and was a good green initiative that the Council should adopt. Councillor Parker requested that officers prepare a report on the feasibility on this and report back to a future meeting.

In response. The Leader of the Council advised that although Councillor Parker's suggestion would not be ruled out, the issue would be considered as part of a much wider programme of environmental action to be undertaken by the Council.

The Leader of the Council then called upon Councillor John Gardner to speak about the Town Centre planning application, the Stevenage West planning application and a brief update on the progress of work on the Manulife building.

The Leader of the Council then called upon Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd to give an update on the new Concessionary Fares Scheme which would come into operation from 1st April 2008.

8 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None received.

9 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None received.

10 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None received.

11 BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

Councillors Lis knight, Carol Latif, John Lloyd and Brian Underwood, having declared a Prejudicial Interest, were not present in the Chamber for this item.

Council considered an officer report that sought approval for additional funding from Stevenage Homes Ltd (SHL) as recommended by Executive on 14 November 2007.

It was RESOLVED that the request from SHL for the draw down of £872, 000 held in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for additional repairs and maintenance costs in 2007/08 as recommended by Executive on 14 November 2007 be approved.

12 LICENSING POLICY 2008 - 2011

Council considered an officer report that sought approval of the Licensing Policy 2008-2011 that was attached at Appendix A to the report. It was a statutory requirement to publish the revised policy by 7th January 2008.

It was RESOLVED that the Licensing Policy 2008-2011 as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

13 THE REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS) REGULATIONS 2006. REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 1983 - SECTIONS 18A, 18B, 18C, 18D AND 18E AND SCHEDULE 1A

Council considered an officer report regarding the outcome of a review of the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in the Borough of Stevenage and the recommendation on appropriate or necessary changes or amendments to the existing Polling Districts and Polling Places Order.

It was RESOLVED that a new Polling Districts and Polling Places Order be made that would come into operation on 2nd January 2008, based on the existing Order and to include:

1. The relocation of the Polling Station in the Martins Wood Ward (which presently served electors in Polling District CEC) from the rear of the car park at Fairlands Way, adjacent to Chells Community Centre, to within the Chells Community Centre (formalising the present arrangement);
2. The relocation of the Polling Station for CGA (Chauncy House Meeting room - Pin Green Ward) to the Methodist Church Hall (Sish Lane) to operate beside the CBC (Old Town Ward) Polling Station and;
3. Amendments to apply the change of name and details specified in the notes contained in the Appendix to the report that related to both Polling Places and Polling Stations.

14 SCALE OF FEES AND EXPENSES PAYABLE AT BOROUGH COUNCIL ELECTIONS - REVIEW

Council considered an officer report that sought approval for a revised scale of fees and expenses for Borough Council Elections.

It was RESOLVED that the revised scale of fees and expenses for Borough Council Elections as set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved and applied with effect from 1st May 2008.

15 OFFICER REPORT - APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR - BEDWELL AREA COMMITTEE

Council considered an officer report that sought to appoint a Member of the Bedwell Area Committee to serve as Chair.

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Brian Underwood be appointed to serve as Chair of the Bedwell Area Committee.

16 MINUTES - AUDIT COMMITTEE - THURSDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER 2007

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on Thursday 27th September 2007 be noted.