

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 10 December 2008

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present:

Councillors: Michael Patston (Mayor), John Lloyd CC (Deputy Mayor) Sherma Batson MBE CC, Howard Burrell, Monika Cherney-Craw, Laurie Chester, Dilys Clark, Graham Clark, David Cullen CC, Michael Downing CC, Pam Gallagher, John Gardner, Liz Harrington, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell, Matthew Hurst, Lis Knight, David Kissane, Carol Latif, Mrs Joan Lloyd, Lin Martin-Haugh, Marion Mason, Sue Myson, Margaret Notley, Robin Parker CC, Jack Pickersgill, Ralph Raynor, Graham Snell, Simon Speller, Lilian Strange, Pam Stuart, Sharon Taylor CC, Jeanette Thomas and Vickie Warwick.

Agenda Item:

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In Attendance:

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00pm
End Time: 8.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bob Clark, James Fraser, Bruce Jackson, Brian Underwood and Ann Webb.

The following Members declared a personal interest in relation to agenda Item 4, the topic of the Main Debate, 'In Sickness and in Health':

Councillor Laurie Chester, as she was employed by the National Health Service (NHS);

Councillor Richard Henry, as he was a Non-Executive Director of the East and North Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT);

Councillor Jackie Hollywell, as she was employed by the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation NHS Trust.

2 MINUTES - 1 OCTOBER, 2008

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 October, having been circulated, be taken as read, confirmed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting

The Mayor read out a letter he had received from Lewis Hamilton in which he said how proud he was to represent England at sporting events and spoke of the great support he had received from the people of Stevenage.

The Mayor then presented a certificate to Joshua Lucy, a young rugby player at Marriots School, who had been named as Male student of the year in the Daily Telegraph School Sport Matters Awards.

The Mayor wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy new year and then gave his apologies as he had a prior engagement. The Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Lloyd, chaired the remainder of the meeting.

4 MAIN DEBATE - "IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH" - HEALTH PROVISION IN STEVENAGE

The Deputy Mayor advised the meeting that before the Council moved into the Main Debate, he proposed to move a motion regarding revised time limits for speakers.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that Standing Order 17 be amended to allow for revised time limits for speakers for the main debate as follows - the mover and seconder of the Motion, together with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition be allowed up to six minutes and everyone else up to three minutes.

The Deputy Mayor introduced Dr. Raymond Jankowski, Deputy Director of Public Health for the East and North Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT), who gave a presentation about health provision in Stevenage. The Deputy Mayor advised that unfortunately, Sarah Brierley from the East & North Hertfordshire NHS Trust was unwell and could not be present on this occasion.

Dr. Jankowski spoke about the three functions of the newly formed PCT, which were to improve the health and well-being of local people, commissioning health services and providing services.

He spoke about the health of people in Stevenage and went through a number of graphs that illustrated that there had been reductions in major killer diseases and increases in life expectancy over the last nine to ten years. He spoke about the importance of working with partners through Local Area Agreements to improve the health of local people and how through partnership working teenage pregnancy rates had been reduced.

Dr. Jankowski then spoke about the challenges that faced the PCT in terms of reducing smoking and adult obesity and made particular reference to the worrying increase in childhood obesity rates.

The Deputy Mayor thanked Dr. Jankowski for his informative presentation.

Councillor Sue Myson opened the debate by moving a Motion.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Michael Downing.

A full debate then ensued with input from the public gallery.

Councillor Myson advised that improving the health and well being of the residents of Stevenage was a key part of the Council's strategy and effective partnership working had already brought about improvements. The improvement in life expectancy in Stevenage was welcomed but she stressed that there was no room for complacency.

Members welcomed the solid achievement of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Scrutiny process in helping to reduce teenage pregnancy and special tribute was paid to Councillor Sherma Batson, who had chaired the meetings.

Concern was expressed about the increase in child obesity and it was agreed that the issue needed to be one of the Council's priorities, along with ensuring that when times were hard, poverty and inequality were also prioritised.

Access to services was still seen as a problem for some residents, who could not register with a GP if they did not have a permanent address. An officer agreed to get back to a resident who raised a question about waiting times to see GPs.

Councillor Myson, in response, thanked everyone for their contribution to the main debate. She advised that with the problems brought on by the credit crunch, Grant Aid would be looking at groups that could help vulnerable residents, for example, with the issue of child obesity, where advice could be made available to parents regarding healthy eating for children. She spoke about the good work that the Childrens' Centres carried out, especially in deprived areas of the Town but emphasised that more work needed to be done.

The Motion was then put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** that:

'This Council welcomes the progress made by the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust and the East and North Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust in improving the health and well being of the residents of Stevenage.

Through effective partnership working, progress has been made on reducing health inequalities in Stevenage and we look forward to further involvement in local health issues'.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A question had been received from Mrs A Meldrum of Bedwell, Stevenage and was detailed in the Agenda.

Mrs Meldrum was unable to attend the meeting but a response was given by the Executive Member for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Councillor Simon Speller and he indicated that as Mrs Meldrum was not present to hear the response,

he would write to her.

Councillor Speller advised that It was up to the County Council to decide which contract services would be provided in Stevenage, based on affordability and explained that the withdrawal of SBC funding had resulted in the County Council cutting the least well used services.

7 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Deputy Mayor called upon Councillor Graham Clark, Leader of the Opposition to raise one matter relevant to the Borough.

The Leader of the Opposition asked for clarification regarding the future plans for the Community Health team based at 4 Ditchmore Lane. He explained that he had been advised that the facility would close in March 2009 when the lease expired, as the building was needed as part of the Town Centre Regeneration Scheme.

In response, Councillor Taylor agreed to provide the Leader of the Opposition with a full, written reply.

Councillor Downing advised that SBC's interest was linked with the longer term future of the area and confirmed that there was no immediate pressure for the Community Health team to move out of the building.

The Leader of the Council then advised that she was delighted to announce that the Council had been successful in obtaining £3.4m growth area funding to refurbish the neighbourhood centres.

She went on to speak about the current unprecedented financial situation and advised that a Credit Crunch Task Force had been set up to tackle the problems facing local people. She explained how the Task Force would provide support for the community, businesses and voluntary groups through Grant Aid and the additional pressure that this would place on the Council's resources.

Councillor Richard Henry spoke about the effects of the credit crunch on the more vulnerable members of the community. He advised that the Council was trying to identify those people who spend a high proportion of their income on heating their homes and spoke about an Affordable Warmth Strategy that was being developed.

Councillor Henry also referred to the 'Know Your Limits' campaign designed to encourage people to drink responsibly. He went on to congratulate the Council's Animal control Team for being awarded the RSPCA Gold Footprint Award for their work with stray dogs.

Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd said how pleased she was to announce that through county-wide negotiations led by the Council, an agreement had been reached with bus operators to run the Concessionary Fares Scheme for 2009/10 and urged people to use it, or lose it.

Councillor Simon Speller spoke about the Stevenage Rapid Redundancy Support Service helpline that went operational on 13 November, which was aimed at providing help for residents and small businesses faced with redundancy issues.

He also informed the meeting of the £6.8m extension to the Stevenage Business Technology Centre, to provide state of the art office space for businesses that were just starting up.

Councillor Speller stated that an informal member group that had been set up to look at community transport issues and advised that there would be a report back by March 2009. Councillor Speller also spoke about the national 'cycle city' initiative and how, in view of the excellent cycle path network in Stevenage, the Council was looking to develop a strategy for Stevenage as the 'first cycle city'.

Councillor John Gardner updated the meeting about doorstep plastic recycling and advised that it was hoped that the new bi-weekly collection initiative would start in the summer of 2009.

Councillor Howard Burrell spoke about the Talented Young People's event that had taken place on 30 November, where over 200 young and older people had enjoyed a display of skateboarding. He went on to congratulate the Shephall Centre on being awarded Quest accreditation, the Stevenage Museum for their accreditation plaque and commendation on their Roman exhibition and advised that the new extension to the Chells Childrens' Centre had now been opened.

Councillor Sharon Taylor then announced that the winners of the Blue Plaque scheme were as follows:

- Fairlands Valley Park
- Stevenage Old Town High Street
- The Wine Society
- The Stevenage Rugby Club
- The Coptic Church.

8 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None received.

9 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None received.

10 REFERENCE UP FROM OLD STEVENAGE AREA COMMITTEE - NAME OF AREA COMMITTEE

The Council considered a recommendation made at the Old Stevenage Area Committee meeting held on 30 September 2008 for a change of name for the Committee.

The recommendation was moved, seconded and it was **RESOLVED** that the name of the Old Stevenage Area Committee be change to the 'Old Town, Symonds Green and Woodfield Forum'.

11 MATTER REFERRED FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE - REVIEW OF THE

COUNCILS TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Council considered an update on the amendments to the Treasury Management procedures as a result of the current economic climate and the affect this had had on the banking sector.

The Chair of the Audit Committee advised that in light of the recent global problems, a special meeting of the Audit Committee had been convened on 17 November 2008, where the revisions to the Council's Treasury Management strategy were discussed. The Chair of Audit Committee congratulated officers on their timely response and thanked Members for their attendance at the meeting.

Members expressed their thanks to the Chair and members of the Audit Committee and officers for their speedy action and to the investment team for their competence and professionalism.

The recommendations were moved, seconded and it was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the amendments to the Treasury Management procedures put into place to safeguard the Council's investments be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the Audit Committee propose to Council the adoption of the revisions to the Treasury Management Strategy as referred to in Section 4 paragraph 4.3.

12 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES - 17 NOVEMBER 2008

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 17 November, 2008, be noted.

13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC