

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 7 October 2009

Time: 7.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Lloyd CC),
Councillors S Batson MBE DL, H Burrell, M
Cherney-Craw, L Chester, B Clark, G Clark,
D Clark, D Cullen, M Downing, J Fraser CC,
P Gallagher, J Gardner, R Henry, J Hollywell,
M Hurst CC, B Jackson, D Kissane, C Latif,
Mrs J Lloyd, M Mason, M Notley, R Parker
CC, M Patston, J Pickersgill, R Raynor, S
Speller, P Stuart, S Taylor CC, B
Underwood, V Warwick and A Webb

Agenda Item:

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In Attendance: Nick Heslop and David Powell from the
Youth Council

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 8.56 p.m.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Mayor, Councillor Sue Myson, and from Councillors L Harrington, L Knight, L Martin-Haugh, G Snell, L Strange and J Thomas.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Councillor D Cullen back to the chamber after his recent illness, and also welcomed the representatives of the Youth Council who were in attendance.

2 MINUTES - 22 JULY 2009

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 22 July 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

3 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor J Lloyd CC, spoke on behalf of the Mayor, explaining that she had attended 114 events since taking office. Since the last meeting of the Council, these had included the award of the Green Flag Award to Fairlands Valley Park, the launch of the Stevenage Disability Network, the launch of Stevenage in Bloom, and AGMs of the the Ingelheim/Autun Link and the Kadoma Link. The

Mayor had also met Aaron Briggs, a previously unemployed young man who had taken up a trade apprenticeship with Apollo, a sub-contractor for Stevenage Homes Ltd (SHL).

The Deputy Mayor referred to the works being undertaken to high rise blocks which had recently begun in Harrow Court. The works, which related to cavity wall insulation at a total of eight blocks, had been funded by the Homes and Communities Agency and were being delivered by SHL via a local contractor 'Zero Carbon'.

In addition, the Deputy Mayor updated the Council on his own activities since the last meeting of the Council, which had included welcoming a sponsored walk in support of the Royal Anglian Regiment, and the 20th anniversary celebrations for the Kadoma Link. This event had been marked by the presentation of the Handshake Sculpture which had been commissioned especially and which was on display outside the Kadoma Committee Room.

4 MAIN DEBATE - WINTER WARMER - THE AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY

The Deputy Mayor welcomed Emma Rose, the Council's Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, and Pieter Shipster, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Partnership at Hertfordshire Primary Care Trust, who were present to give a presentation on the Affordable Warmth Strategy:

'Fuel Poverty' was defined as 'the inability to afford to adequately heat the home', or specifically, when a household was required to spend more than 10% of its income to achieve adequate levels of warmth. It was estimated that 22% of households in Stevenage were in fuel poverty, compared with 18% across the whole of England.

The most vulnerable groups in terms of under-heated homes were as follows:

- Elderly people: It was estimated that in Stevenage, there were 24 'excess winter deaths' each year, which often related to spells of cold weather.
- Disabled people: Fuel poverty could often exacerbate the ill-health of people who suffered from long term illnesses or disabilities. In addition, these groups of people were more likely to have a low income and to spend more time in the home.
- Children and young people: Although not traditionally seen as a group vulnerable to fuel poverty, children could suffer long term impact from living in an under-heated home. This could relate to health problems, or to increased levels of stress and anxiety.

The Affordable Warmth Strategy had been produced by the Council, in partnership with other public bodies to develop a multi-agency response to the issue of fuel poverty. Several key outcomes had been identified, including improvements to heating and insulation, maximising grant assistance, access to financial advice and support, and provision of quality energy advice. A number of projects were underway to achieve these goals, including the Herts and Essex Energy Partnership (HEEP) which provided subsidised or free energy efficiency improvements to homes. Future projects included the appointment of an Affordable Warmth Coordinator, and the Heatseekers initiative, which sought to identify

households in need of improved insulation through the use of thermal imaging.

The Deputy Mayor thanked Emma and Pieter for the presentation, and invited Councillor A Webb, as Portfolio Holder for Housing, to open the debate by moving a Motion which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Motion was seconded by Councillor M Downing.

A full debate ensued with input from the public gallery. The main points raised were as follows:

- The Affordable Warmth Strategy was welcomed by Members, as the issue of Fuel Poverty was seen as a cause of great concern.
- Improvements to the energy efficiency of homes would also have a beneficial effect in terms of reducing carbon emissions due to lower fuel requirements, and the reduction of direct global warming by way of heat loss.
- Reference was made to the additional cost of VAT on energy efficiency measures, and it was suggested that the Government could make some measures exempt from VAT.
- The winter fuel allowance was an essential benefit and should not be removed.
- Although the measures in the Affordable Warmth Strategy were targetted towards those on benefits and low incomes, all residents could benefit from additional energy efficiency, and could receive subsidy towards some measures.

The Motion was then put to the vote and it was **RESOLVED** that the Council works with its partners to ensure that every effort is made to eliminate fuel poverty to help our residents to be healthy, comfortable and free from the worry of whether or not they can afford to keep their homes warm.

The Deputy Mayor thanked everyone for their contribution to the debate.

5 PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

The Deputy Mayor invited Mr Richard Howard to present a petition relating to the Council's proposals for parking in the Old Town High Street.

Mr Howard commented that he appreciated the efforts of the Council to alleviate problems caused by commuter parking in the Old Town area. However, he considered that the proposals for parking limited to two hours on the High Street would have a severe adverse impact on the vitality of the area, particularly in relation to small business and community groups. Mr Howard reported that small business owners considered that a four hour limit would be more appropriate, and it was suggested that three hours would be a suitable compromise.

At the Deputy Mayor's invitation, Councillor J Gardner, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, responded to Mr Howard's comments. Councillor Gardner emphasised that there had never been any intention to charge for parking in the High Street. A review of the current parking provision had shown that most of the spaces along the High Street were used by commuters or by residents. The proposals were designed to improve the vitality of the High Street, by increasing the turnover of spaces, giving more people the opportunity to shop. As

such, the scheme had been developed to provide time-limited on-street parking on the High-Street, with long-stay parking available at the nearby car parks.

It was noted that the scheme was not a revenue generating scheme, as any income would be used to maintain the car parks and to fund the enforcement of the on-street parking limits.

Councillor Gardner thanked Mr Howard for the petition and for explaining the issues raised therein, and commented that the views would be taken into consideration prior to a final decision being taken.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

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 raised the issue of lining Kitchen Caddies, commenting that the commercially available liners did not fit the bins and were not suitable for recycling, and that the use of newspaper was not always sufficient to hold the contents together. In addition, not all residents had received a calendar of collection dates. The Leader of the Council undertook to provide a detailed written response.

At the Deputy Mayor's invitation, the Leader of the Council, Councillor S Taylor CC, presented her update:

Councillor Taylor referred to the successful bid to the Future Jobs Fund. This had been a joint bid for the whole of Hertfordshire, and the funding would provide 15 new jobs in Stevenage primarily aimed at 18-24 year olds.

Councillor Taylor also commented that the Council had started to use social networking sites including Facebook and Twitter. A demonstration had been given to Members earlier in the evening on the use of these sites and how the Council could use this medium to to engage with residents.

The Leader of the Council then invited Portfolio Holders to speak on her behalf:

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, Councillor J Gardner, announced that since 1 September 2009, Stevenage residents had been able to recycle food waste and cardboard in their brown bins. As a result of this, the tonnage for material sent by the Council for composting had increased by 25% compared to the same period last year.

The Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Councillor S Speller, announced that the official launch of the Business Technology Centre would take place on 19 November 2009. The event had been planned, designed and organised by young people under the guidance of experienced business mentors.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People, Culture, Sport and Leisure, Councillor H Burrell, reported that the summer play schemes had seen a 29% increase in use over the School Holiday. Councillor Burrell also referred to the "Have a go" day planned for 31 October at Fairlands Valley Park, where young people could try out various outdoor activities. In addition, Councillor Burrell announced that the Mini Olympics for 8 and 9 year olds would be taking place over 18 and 19 November.

The Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Older People, Councillor M Downing, referred to the Take Part Pathfinder, which was a two-year Government funded programme being delivered through a partnership between Stevenage Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The project sought to develop engagement between local people and community leadership, by raising awareness of lay governance roles and encouraging residents to pursue civic activities.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, referred to recent press coverage of the efficiency savings achieved by local councils. Stevenage had delivered £1.497 million of savings against a target of £598K, which was the 16th best performance of any council in the country.

8 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None.

9 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None.

10 OFFICER REPORT - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ~ AUTHORISATION TO PREPARE JOINT AREA ACTION PLAN

The Council considered an officer report which sought authority to prepare an Area Action Plan jointly with North Hertfordshire District Council, in relation to the proposed residential growth to the north and west of Stevenage.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Head of Planning and Regeneration be authorised to prepare a joint Area Action Plan with North Hertfordshire District Council, as part of both Authorities' Local Development Frameworks, to control and guide the growth of the town to the north and west of the existing urban area lying within both Authorities' administrative areas.
2. That officers and Members be authorised to work upon the joint plan through informal processes as set out in the report and that it be noted that the Executive will formally authorise further progress.
3. That officers continue to record achievements against, or any variations from, the milestones set out in the approved Local Development Scheme 2009 through the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report and quarterly reports to Government (also to be published on the Council's own

web-site) as required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 12 (Local Spatial Planning).

4. That the work undertaken so far on the joint Area Action Plan (the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Action Plan or SNAP) as outlined in paragraph 4.13 of the report be endorsed.

11 MATTER REFERRED FROM EXECUTIVE -TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2008/09

The Council considered a report which set out the 2008/2009 actual Treasury Management activity compared to the 2008/09 Treasury Management Strategy, and which had been recommended for approval by the Executive at its meeting on 16 September 2009.

Responding to Members' questions, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd, reported that all of the institutions listed at Appendix A to the report which had been used for investment during 2008/09 were 'AAA' rated.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the 2008/09 Treasury Management Review be approved.

12 MATTER REFERRED FROM HIGHWAYS JOINT MEMBER PANEL - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council considered a report which set out a request from the Stevenage Borough Council / Hertfordshire County Council Joint Member Panel (JMP) to amend its Terms of Reference.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that 'Community Transport Issues' be added to the list of functions at paragraph 3.1 of the Terms of Reference for the Highways Joint Member Panel.

13 KEY DECISION TAKEN UNDER THE COUNCIL'S URGENCY PROCEDURE

The Council considered a report for information which set out the details of a Key Decision taken by the Leader of the Council.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the Key Decision taken by the Leader of the Council under the Council's Urgency Procedures (Standing Order 37 (b)), concerning funding for the Town Centre Gardens, be noted.