

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN (PART 1 – FOR PUBLICATION)

MEETING: Council – Wednesday 9 October 2013 – 19.00 hrs.
Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

MEMBERS PRESENT: All Councillors with the exception of those listed at item 1 below.

ALSO PRESENT: ABK Mboho (Youth Mayor) and J Barnes (Youth Council)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Clark, D Cullen, C Hurst, J Lloyd CC, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, G Snell, P Stuart and B Underwood.</p> <p>The Mayor wished Councillor Cullen a speedy recovery from his operation.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
2. MINUTES - COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 17 JULY 2013
<p>It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting of 17 July 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.</p>
3. MAYOR’S COMMUNICATIONS
<p>The Mayor provided Council with a brief update of events that he had attended since the last meeting.</p> <p>The Mayor then paid tribute to Mr Arthur Bate, a Stevenage resident who had done much to further the cause of those with disabilities, and the Chamber rose to observe a minute’s silence.</p>

4. MAIN DEBATE – THRIVING FAMILIES.

Gill Gibson and Ola Sidjuwade from Children’s Services at Hertfordshire County Council gave a presentation which covered the ‘Thriving Families’ project led by the County Council.

After a full debate, which included input from the public gallery, it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

‘That this Council understands in the current financial climate how difficult a time it is for many Stevenage families and specifically recognises the importance of early intervention and support for families where there are multiple issues that need to be addressed. This Council already delivers a range of services to support these families.

However, the Council recognises the need to work in partnership with other agencies and in cooperation with families to address these issues and build family resilience through multi agency target approaches.

Therefore this Council welcomes the development of the Thriving Families project in Stevenage and pledges its support through partnership to make this a success. In this way all partners can challenge the threats from those seeking employment, those involved in criminality, poor school attendance, domestic abuse, mental illness, losing a home. Lack of early year education and lack of support for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities.’

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

9. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition enquired about the forthcoming changes to garden waste and cardboard recycling and asked if consideration had been given to expanding the capacity of blue boxes and providing options for those householders unable to take their cardboard recycling to the site at Caxton Way.

In reply the meeting was informed that since the introduction of the new scheme 750 requests had been received from residents for additional blue bins and that it was permissible for residents to leave larger cardboard boxes alongside the blue boxes for collection.

Council received updates about the following:

- The Collective Energy Scheme
- Wild Stevenage
- Environmental Health action at the Maharajah Restaurant
- A Community Funding Bid
- Shared Services Implementation
- ICT Infrastructure Upgrade
- 'Inspiring Employment' event
- Housing Matters event

The Leader then paid tribute to Roger Gochin who had recently stood down as the Chair of Stevenage Leisure Limited.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Mayor informed Council that the Motion detailed in the agenda papers had been withdrawn and that a new Motion had been circulated in the Chamber.

After a full debate, which included input from the public gallery, it was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED:**

'This Council welcomes Labour's decision to repeal the Bedroom Tax, which will give hope to the many disabled and vulnerable people unfairly hit by the Government's cruel tax.

The Bedroom Tax hits over 400,000 disabled people nationwide. For the vast majority of those affected, there is nowhere smaller for them to downsize to, and those affected are faced with an average bill of £720 a year or £14 per week. This tax is not only unfair, it does not make economic sense either as it will end up costing more than it saves in higher benefit bills overall if people are pushed into the private rented sector.

This Council believes we have a responsibility to highlight the impact of bedroom tax and to agree a set of principles to offer support to tenants affected and protect them as far as possible.

Council agrees to:

- Proactively engage with tenants and offer advice and assistance
- Prevent tenants from losing their homes through sensitive debt management and rent arrears procedures
- 'postpone' or 'suspend' any eviction action on any tenant who has agreed to move but for whom no suitable smaller property is immediately available over the next 12 months until a fuller assessment of the impacts of the Bedroom Tax and wider Welfare Reforms can be undertaken
- Identify the need for and process discretionary housing payments
- Adjust allocations and letting policies to assist tenants who wish to downsize.

Our Council is also committed to protesting to Government to repeal the bedroom tax now by:

- Working with tenant organisations who call for the repeal of the bedroom tax
- Communicating the hidden costs of the bedroom tax

- Demonstrating to Government the unfairness of the bedroom tax
- Working with the Government to provide alternative strategies to address housing shortages

This Council calls on the Government to recognise the impact this tax is having on the most vulnerable in our community and to urgently consider repealing this unfair and uneconomic tax without further delay.'

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None.

11. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2012/2013

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the prudential and treasury indicators contained within the report be approved.

12. OFFICER REPORT – MEMBER'S ALLOWANCES – REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Leader expressed her thanks to the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work in the report.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the recommendations of the Independent Panel be agreed and the Members Allowance Scheme for 2013/2014 be amended in line with Appendix A of the report with effect from 10 October 2013 incorporating the 1% increase in line with staff covered by the terms and conditions of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) as previously recommended by the Panel.

13. OFFICER REPORT – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – SECTION 85

Council was advised that as Councillor Cullen had attended the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 8 October the provisions contained within the report were no longer required. Therefore this item was withdrawn from the agenda.

14. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 9 SEPTEMBER 2013
It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that the draft Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 9 September 2013 be noted.
15. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS
None.
16. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC
<p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by SI2006 No. 88. 2. That, having considered the reasons for the following report being in Part II, it be agreed that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.
17. MATTER REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE – ARCHER ROAD REGENERATION
It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that the recommendations contained within the report were approved.
18. OFFICER REPORT – SINGLE STATUS REVIEW: IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW PAY AND GRADING ARRANGEMENTS
It was moved, seconded and RESOLVED that the recommendations contained within the report were approved.

19. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.