

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL
MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 22 July 2015

Time: 7.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: The Deputy Mayor (Councillor J Lloyd CC)
and Councillors D Bainbridge, S Batson MBE DL CC,
L Bell, P Bibby, L Briscoe, R Broom, J Brown,
L Chester, E Connolly, D Cullen, M Downing, J Fraser,
J Gardner, M Gardner, L Harrington, S Hearn,
G Lawrence, Mrs J Lloyd, A McGuinness,
M McKay, L Martin-Haugh, J Mead, S Mead, R Raynor,
G Snell, S Speller, S Taylor OBE CC, J Thomas,
V Warwick and A Webb.

Also present: Pam Charman and Caron Kendall of the Bedfordshire,
Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, Federation of
Businesses
Yvan Tiako (Youth Mayor) and J McCarthy (Youth
Council)

Start/End Time: Start Time: 7.00 p.m.
End Time: 8.55p.m.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillor H Burrell and Councillors D Cullen, R Henry CC, C Latif, M Notley, R Parker CC, C Saunders and P Stuart.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – TUESDAY 26 MAY 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Annual Council held on Tuesday 26 May 2015 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

3. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATION

The Deputy Mayor informed the meeting that due to personal and health reasons, Councillor H Burrell has taken a short leave from his official duties as a Mayor. All mayoral engagements had been covered either by the Deputy Mayor or the past year's Mayor-Councillor S Batson.

He wished the Mayor a speedy recovery on behalf of the Council.

The Deputy Mayor highlighted a number of Mayoral engagements which he had undertaken visiting primary schools presenting educational attainment certificates and sports awards. He also welcomed the 'beat the street initiative' which he had personally participated in and hoped it would be an ongoing event as it encouraged residents to engage in activities such as walking, running and cycling.

He also praised the activities of Home Start in supporting vulnerable residents having had the opportunity of meeting and speaking to its clients, staff and volunteers when he attended the Annual General Meeting.

The Deputy Mayor expressed his and the Council's best wishes to Jochebel McCarthy, Chair of the Youth Council as she continued with her studies at university. He acknowledged her regular attendance at Council meetings over the last 7 years and most importantly her positive contribution to debates especially from a young person's perspective.

Finally the Deputy Mayor extended the Council's condolences to the family of Mrs Connie Rees, a Stevenage resident and enthusiastic volunteer community worker who recently died. A memorial service was to be held in September 2015.

4. MAIN DEBATE – 'ENTERPRISING PEOPLE – ENTERPRISING PLACE'

Councillor R Raynor, the Portfolio Holder, Economy, Enterprise and Transport introduced Pam Charman, the Chair of the Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire, Federation of Small Businesses who gave a presentation.

Pam Charman informed the meeting of a number of issues raised by the business community in Stevenage including the need to reduce the amount of time spent around regulation compliance; support for start-ups; fair rents and business rates; housing needs and infrastructure update. She acknowledged that these concerns were not unique to Stevenage alone but were county wide and were presently being addressed through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a number of other initiatives.

Pam Charman noted the advantages of Stevenage that made the town attractive to businesses, such as Business Technology Centre (BTC) and its role as a business incubator; its good road and rail links to the north and south of the country; its proximity to both Stansted and Luton airports; and the good links with North Herts College and Hertfordshire

University, a potential source of skilled labour for future employers.

Pam Charman advised Council that the future prospects for businesses in Stevenage were encouraging especially with the proposed expansion plans for Luton Airport; the town centre regeneration plans and growth in the science links with Cambridge. Challenges remained though around lack of additional homes in the town and congestion on the A1(M) which could impede business growth and opportunities in future years.

In proposing the Motion Councillor R Raynor described Stevenage as a town with a range of industries in aerospace, pharmaceutical, engineering, information technology and environmental sectors and referred to the contribution of entrepreneurs working in the business services, health and care, manufacturing and retail sectors. Councillor Raynor affirmed the Council's willingness to work in partnership with the private sector to promote and support business growth in the town in forthcoming years. The Borough had always performed well in attracting inward investment. He also welcomed the initiatives being introduced by the LEP in conjunction with the Council, especially with the efforts of the regeneration team in being proactive by following up enquiries from potential investors seeking sites in the town.

Councillor J Gardner in seconding the motion acknowledged the Council's resolve in addressing business concerns over the years but stated that large companies should recognise that they have a vital role to play supporting small businesses.

A full debate ensued with both Councillors and members of the public taking part. Points raised and the views put forward included -

- The Business Technology Centre offered Stevenage Start Ups and a wide range of affordable business services
- Business growth initiatives should be directed specifically at small businesses
- Publicity promoting the range of business support available to businesses should be increased
- Small firms experience skill shortages especially among the young people and there was an urgent need to upskill this age group
- The issue of prompt payment by big companies was of serious concern to local small firms as it created cash flow problems
- More small local firms should be encouraged to participate in public sector procurement of services
- Regional banks should be established locally to support small firms with finance
- The living wage for employees should be actively supported by employers
- Initiatives introduced by the coalition government such as reduction in corporation tax and a proposal to abolish National

insurance contributions was widely supported by small businesses

- Pension funds could assist in rebuilding and supporting the local economy and businesses
- Night time economy should be promoted in the town centre
- Some businesses suffered from slow broadband speeds

The Deputy Mayor thanked Pam Charman and Caron Kendall and the contributors to the debate.

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

That the Council supports small business owners, recognising their contribution to the local economy i.e. trading with other business owners, providing goods/services which people need, employing local residents and choosing to both live and have a business in Stevenage. We are particularly keen to support business innovation and growth, to strengthen firms with high growth potential and to encourage new firms to set up. We will work closely with the Federation of Small Businesses, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Hertfordshire LEP, North Herts College, Hertfordshire University and business support providers to ensure business owners have services/opportunities which are responsive and meet the needs of businesses now and in the future.

5. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL.

None

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH

None

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

The Leader of the Opposition enquired about Council plans to address the car parking issues in and around neighbouring streets off Coreys Mill Lane and around the Lister hospital.

In response Councillor Taylor acknowledged that car parking was a town wide issue, but in this particular area problems had increased as a result of the closure of services at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and its subsequent relocation of staff to Lister Hospital; the reduction of bus services to the hospital and the hospital's own green travel plan. She

indicated that following a number of discussions with Nick Carver of Lister hospital, it was suggested that a long term solution would require the construction of a multi storey car park on site. She also noted that parking restrictions introduced around Ingelside Drive were being monitored by SBC Officers.

Council received updates on the following:

- Council's new Work Experience Programme
- Stevenage Skate Park opening
- Stevenage Day
- Aviva Women's Tour
- Beat the Street
- Ridlins Play Equipment
- Flooding
- Future East
- Housing Enforcers on BBC and Archer Road
- The Chancellor's Emergency Budget.
- Shared Anti-Fraud Service
- Police Priorities

Members requested their thanks to the Head of Leisure, Community & Childrens Services, Aidan Sanderson and his team, particularly Geoff Caine, be recorded, for the work undertaken in organising both Stevenage Day, the Aviva Women's Tour and dealing with the flood at the museum.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

None

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

None

11. MANDATORY STANDING ORDERS

The Council considered an Officer report with regards to changes to the Officer Employment Rules in the Council Constitution

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that amendments to the Officer Employment Rules (Part 4 of the Council's Constitution) as set out in Appendix A of the report are approved.

12. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2014/2015

Council considered a report detailing the work undertaken by the

Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees during the year 2014/2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the work undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees during 2014/2015 is noted.

13. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Council considered proposed revisions to the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to take account of the revised officer senior management structure.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revised terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny are approved.

14. AUDIT COMMITTEE – MINUTES 23 MARCH 2015

The Council had before it the minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 March 2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 23 March 2015 are noted.

15. DRAFT AUDIT COMMITTEE – MINUTES 10 JUNE 2015

The Council had before it the draft minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 June 2015.

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the draft minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held on 10 June 2015 are noted.

16. 2014/2015 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE OUTTURN

The Chief Executive advised meeting that Executive on 14 July 2015 considered the above report and approved the recommendation as set out in the order of business (para 2.7 of the report).

It was moved, seconded and **RESOLVED** that the virement of £3.817 million between the Decent Homes budget in 2015/16 and the New Build Programme and the use of £1,635,860 New Build Receipts for the New Build Programme be approved.

Mayor