

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Thursday 29 September 2016

Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

Present: Members: M Downing (Chair), M Hurst (Vice-Chair),
D Bainbridge, J Brown, L Chester, J Fraser,
E Harrington and A McGuinness.

Start/End Time: Start Time: 6:00 pm
End Time: 7:30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Broom and P Stuart.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES – 4 JULY 2016

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 4 July 2016 are signed by the Chair.

3. OPEN SPACES

The Environmental Performance & Development Manager gave a visual and oral presentation on the provision of Open Spaces in Stevenage.

Topics in the presentation included links to Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC) policies and strategies such as the biodiversity action plan, allotment strategy and green space strategy; health benefits associated with increased community use of green spaces for example reduced obesity levels and reduced blood pressure due to increased exercise opportunities (source of information was Public Health England); existing opportunities for the use and promotion of open spaces such as allotment events, outdoor gym and green space volunteers; challenges of operating green spaces such as increasing demand and potential future opportunities in their use or promotion such as increased cooperative projects between Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Leisure Limited.

The Environmental Performance & Development Manager agreed to circulate copies of the Healthy Walks leaflet to Members of the Committee.

It was noted that the Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council would be attending a meeting of the Community Select Committee

later in October and amongst other matters he would be addressing regarding the importance of maintaining good open space to encourage exercise.

Members welcomed initiatives such as GP referrals for 'Green Prescriptions' and the use of outdoor gyms, which they would like to explore with the Director of Public Health.

In response to a Member's question, officers agreed to circulate details of the Football Club's outreach programme and invite the Head of Leisure, Environmental Health & Children's Services to provide Members with the background to the Sunday afternoon opening hours and facilities at Fairlands Valley Lakes. Also Members questioned why the Cross Country Races were now not permitted to use the Fairlands Valley Park.

Members queried why it was not possible to have a casual use of Ridlins Athletics track for one to one coaching sessions. Officers agreed to investigate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above presentation is noted.

4. REVIEW OF ALLOTMENTS

The Committee received an update from the Environmental Performance & Development Manager on the review of Allotments including feedback from Members following the site visit to Lawrence Road Allotment Site on 5 September 2016.

The Committee considered issues discussed, such as exploring greater involvement of local schools in the Allotments and potential ways to address the changing demographics of allotment users. Possible recommendations might include revisiting the current Appeals arrangements to improve and speed up the process, and to help to tidy up overgrown Allotments.

The Committee wished to thank the Stevenage Garden and Allotments Association for their help in the Allotment review.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above be noted.

5. UNDERPASSES

The Chair provided a verbal update to the Committee on a site visit he undertook with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Engineering officers to underpasses in the Old Town.

The Head of Environmental Services clarified that at the site visit the HCC officers had incorrectly stated that SBC were responsible for underpass lighting cleaning and maintenance. It was explained that SBC was only

responsible for clearing debris from the underpasses and that responsibility for the cleaning and maintenance of underpass lighting rested entirely with HCC.

In addition the Service Manager (Street Scene and Amenities) and Engineering Services Manager had both separately written to HCC requesting information on their underpass lighting cleaning and maintenance regime. It was agreed that this matter would be pursued at both an officer and Member level. When a response was received this would be circulated to Members.

Members voiced their concerns over safety issues due to continued lack of lighting in some underpasses and wished to obtain data from other district authorities on the condition of their underpasses.

The Head of Environmental Services agreed to review the current cleansing regime to see if it was still fit for purpose. This review would include the build-up of mud and leaves on stairs approaching underpasses and specifically a build-up of debris at the 'Broom Barns' underpass from the Six Hills Way Spur. It was agreed that staff could and should report any problems in the underpasses when they carried out cleansing work, including faulty lighting, flooding and any other blockages.

It was **RESOLVED** that the above be noted.

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR