SteVenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 7 November 2018
Time: 6.00pm
Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete
Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703

Members: Councillors: S Mead (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), S Barr,
                J Brown, L Harrington, R Hearn, J Mead, S-J Potter, S Speller and
                T Wren.

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AGENDA

PART 1

1.   **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.   **MINUTES - 2 OCTOBER 2018**

        To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Community Select Committee
        held on 2 October 2018.
        Pages 3 – 6

3.   **RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW**

        Members are invited to interview North Herts District Councillor Judi Billing for a
        perspective from another authority. Members are also invited to provide some
        feedback to the Committee on the areas that they have agreed to lead on which
        was deferred from the last meeting. Finally Members are invited to begin to
        consider possible recommendations for the review.
        Pages 7 – 18

4.   **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

        To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent

5.   **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

        To consider the following motions:

        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
        ground that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described
        in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local
        Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6.   **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 7 November 2018 – http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/

Agenda Published 30 October 2018

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 2 October 2018
Time: 6.00pm
Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair - in the Chair), Sandra Barr, Liz Harrington, Simon Speller and Tom Wren

Also in attendance: Councillors Rob Broom and Jackie Hollywell

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.40pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim Brown, Roni Hearn, John Mead, Sarah Mead and Sarah-Jane Potter.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 4 September are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **DAMP AND MOULD SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Committee received an update from the Corporate Investment and Design Manager and the Principal Design Manager, Stevenage Borough Council, on the current position in relation to the Damp and Mould Scrutiny Review.

The Committee was advised that the improvement and action plan had been developed which incorporated previous recommendations and the progress made against them. It was noted that the Plan would continue to be updated and developed to ensure ongoing improvement.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Surveyors had now been tasked to take ownership of any enquiries they dealt with and that they were aware that the focus for any reports and complaints was now the fundamental cause of the reported damp and mould issue and not just remedying the problem as and when it arose.

Members were advised that the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC) programme had now commenced and that the MRC and the Damp and Mould teams were working closely together learning from historic and new damp and mould cases that will inform the programme of works to the flat blocks.

Officers advised that they were using a tracker to monitor progress for each individual case. Contact had now been made by Council officers with all those tenants who had previously reported problems. Members were also advised that following a reported problem, an initial inspection was now carried out within 3 weeks. The target for the completion of all works was 6 months although the majority of cases were completed a lot sooner.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted and that officers be thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

4   **RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Digital Transformation

The Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation reported to Members on the steps the Council was taking to make its services accessible via digital platforms and how residents would be able to interact with the Council in the future. Members were pleased to note the recent appointment of a Digital Transformation Manager who would be leading on this alongside Councillor Rob Broom as the Portfolio Holder responsible for this area.

It was noted that a new website provider had been appointed and work would commence to ensure that the new website which should be in place summer 2019, would focus on better customer journeys and include more self-service and more self-assessment options. It was also hoped that by the end of next year customers would be able to access all their SBC accounts with a single sign on. The importance of being able to access the Council website remotely was also stressed to make it as easy as possible to pay council tax/rent bills etc.

Councillor Rob Broom, Portfolio Holder Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working advised that he had organised a cross party member engagement group which would be involved in the web development project.

Members were also pleased to note that the Council's Community Engagement Team would be promoting 'internet clubs' within community centres.

In terms of IT resilience, officers advised that the Council was currently looking at alternative options in the instance of system failure including a hosted website, secondary cabling and cloud technology.

Resident Engagement

The Chair welcomed Les Isaacs – Customer Scrutiny Panel member and Jon Thurlow member of the Housing Management Advisory Board who gave their experiences of engagement with the Council on behalf of tenants and residents in the Town.

The Committee was advised that both of the Groups were well thought of and in particular the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) was using the Customer Scrutiny Panel newsletter as an example of best practice.

Members were pleased to note the positive feedback from the representatives although it was agreed that the diversity of the make-up of the different groups around the town could be improved.

Discussion then took place regarding ways the Council could engage differently with communities including social media, informal groups, time bound themed projects in task and finish groups relating to individual services which could be a recommendation of the review and engaging younger people to become IT champions.

<u>Feedback from Members</u>

At the last meeting of the Committee, some Members were asked to lead on certain aspects of resident engagement. However, it was agreed that due to several Members not in attendance, this part of the item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the feedback be noted;
2. That updates from individual members be given at the next meeting of the Committee.

5   **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6   **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7   **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

<u>CHAIR</u>

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Councillor Adam Mitchell
Examples of Existing Resident Engagement:

Council
Customer Service Centre
Planning Consultations
Ward Walk-throughs
Open Days (e.g. Waste Centre)
Housing Boards
Civic Functions

Neighbourhood
Resident Associations
Community Centres
Neighbourhood Wardens
Community Development Managers
Fetes / Coffee Mornings
Children's Centres

Political
Ward Surgeries
Elections / Canvassing
Local Democracy Week
Local Community Budgets

Culture / Leisure / Sport
Play Service
Cultural Offer
Stevenage Leisure Ltd
Stevenage Day
Pride of Stevenage Awards

Safety / Advice / Reassurance
So-safe Community Safety Partnership
Police Liaison / Priorities / Updates
Electronic
Email / Online / Payments
Social Media
Petitions
Print
Housing Matters
Comet / Chronicle
Resident Surveys
Via other Organisations
Library
Citizen Advice Bureau

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Councillor Sandra Barr – Engaging with Communities examples in other areas

Feed back to scrutiny

The Remit was other authorities' ways of engaging with communities

Example 1: The Big Map

Area: FST Local Agent Suffolk ACRE
Aim: Ensuring the views of local community were captured.
Method: Employed consultants to visit communication with a detailed large map of the area. The map was detailed and had space for people to label their concerns and needs.
Outcomes: A detailed picture was drawn up of the needs and concerns of the local community, which fed directly into the business plan priorities. Some of these priorities will involve further investigative work, while others will influence grant making strategy in the area.

Example 2: Communicate Virtually

Area: Parnwell, Peterborough.
Aim: Ensuring local community had access to information about the programme and the opportunity to respond to activities.
Method: Ran a communication project culminating in the creation of a website (www.positivelyparnwell.org.uk) to raise awareness of Fair Share Trust funded work in the neighbourhood. A logo was designed after a competition in a local primary school, and the site is to be maintained by a local volunteer. Functions of the website include:

- Details of forthcoming events
- Holding photos and downloadable newsletters
- Inviting opinions and responses to consultation.

The 'Friends of Ashfield Fair Share Trust' group on Facebook is also a popular method of communicating – with the local community in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, and wider. The group's fans have regular access to updates on funding and campaigns, invitations to events, news & research, photos and a discussion board, to make the experience truly interactive.

Example 3 - Communicate via:

- word of mouth

- events

- email & websites

- social networking

- newsletters

- leaflets

- consultations

- work plans & updates

Example 4: 'The Gedling Conversation' – an annual consultative campaign

'The Gedling Conversation' – an annual consultative campaign that now runs between June and July each year - to provide opportunities for service areas and residents to meet face-to-face. For a few years this work focused on bringing a 'Gedling Conversation' branded tent to a number of central points across the borough and staffing it with employees from across our service areas, our senior management team, and members. While the tent was up residents had the opportunity to speak directly to officers and politicians about life in Gedling - with no issues off limits. Where it was possible to answer questions immediately they did, and where we needed to find out more information to help address the concern or question they took people's details and forwarded it to the correct departments – following up to ensure that it had been done. They promoted where the tents would be through our social media channels, press releases, and in their residents magazine and ensured that they hosted the roadshows in the areas with the high footfall. They also hosted a number of targeted focus groups for groups who have been underrepresented in our survey responses, specifically diverse communities and young people.

**Responses to questions raised at Stevenage Youth Council
Wednesday 24 October 2018**

Councillor Jim Brown and the Scrutiny Officer, Stephen Weaver attended a meeting of the Youth Council on Wednesday 24 October 2018. The following responses are based on 12 completed surveys.

- Have you ever had to contact the Council? In person at the Customer Service Centre, by telephone, by letter, by email or via the website?
  Answer:

  11 answered no
  1 answered yes

- If the Council was to contact you what method would you prefer? e.g. Social Media (if so which method, twitter, Facebook, other? or face to face at a meeting?)
  Answer:

  By letter: 2
  By email: 8
  By Social Media: 6
  Face-to-face: 4

- What issues would you most likely wish to contact the Council about?
  Answer:

  Bus Services & increasing cost of bus fares: 5
  Feeling safe and violence towards young people: 3
  Look & cleanliness of the Town Centre: 2
  Current state of services for YP & schools: 2
  Parks/social care/empty shops: 1

- If you were contacted by the Council to complete a short survey would you complete it?
Answer:

Yes: 10*
No/unlikely: 2

*Caveats – If the survey was via social media (1 response); If relevant to young people (1 response)

<u>Discussion at the meeting</u>

At the meeting Cllr Jim Brown and the Scrutiny Officer were able to discuss the Youth Council's views about the Council's engagement with young people.

It was pointed out that there are 18 other young people's groups who regularly use Bowes Lyon House via the HCC Youth Connexions and Youth Service so it would be a good place to visit to get views of young people face to face. The local athletics club at Ridlins was also suggested as a good group to approach with over 100 young people attending per evening.

Others suggested that making approaches to schools would be a good idea as young people may be more willing to talk to the Council about issues that affect them in their own environment. The upcoming Youth Conference was also suggested as a good place to get the views of young people.

The issue of bus services, regularity, reliability and increases in fares was raised as an issue of concern for young people and it was suggested that this concern could be referred to the Bus User Group Stevenage (BUGS), with the view that perhaps young people could attend one of their meetings.

The issue of raising questions at Council meetings and the youth council attending other Council Scrutiny Committee's was discussed. It was felt that if a smaller less formal meeting could be set up then Youth Council members may be more inclined to attend.

On the issue of whether young people had been actively engaged about the town centre regeneration, the Youth Council said they had not but were aware of some of the changes that were taking place. The Youth Council were not aware of the future plans and would welcome young people being consulted about these plans.

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Resident Engagement
Desk top comparison exercise

The Stevenage Model

Until 2017 resident engagement formed a part of the housing service offer in Stevenage.

Stevenage operates a model where resident groups are supported by the council through a dedicated team of staff. Resident groups and independent in structure and delivery but often rely on the council for minute taking, distribution of agenda/minutes and invites and practical support in meetings.
The council has historically also provided refreshments for resident meetings and paid for venues.
Until 2017 there was no formal link between community development and resident groups, often leading to residents groups purely focusing on housing as tenants of the council.
Resident groups were designed to be the link to further levels of housing focused scrutiny and customer involvement with:

- Resident Inspectors
- Disability Panel
- Customer Scrutiny Panel
- HMAB (Housing Management Board)

The Stevenage model has been successful but often housing driven in approach, meaning wider community involvement has been limited. Many of those involved in resident engagement have been involved for a number of years with a large number involved since Stevenage Homes was a lead provider.

How does Stevenage compare?

TPAS

TPAS helpfully defines the difference between a purely tenant based approach to resident involvement and a community engagement focused response.

"We define Tenant engagement as being about working with tenants to co-produce effective services that meet a variety of needs; for example building in accountability through communication, monitoring and scrutiny. It's about empowering tenants, residents and communities to work with your organisation to achieve shared aims.
We believe Community engagement is about working with communities to address the issues they feel are a priority; for example empowering and supporting communities to develop their capacity to tackle issues they face; addressing issues that are wider than just 'housing'"

Stevenage currently has a mixed approach to resident involvement based on this understanding. Which is similar to a range of other local authorities. Specialist areas of engagement such as resident inspectors and HMAB offer tenant targeted support and empowerment while resident groups should be a voice of the local community they represent.

Brighton and Hove City Council

Neighbourhood working is supported via the councils Community, Equality and Third Sector Team, with each neighbourhood area having a commissioned voluntary sector provider in charge of developing neighbourhood plans ensuring the voice of local people is central to council development.

Resident engagement sits within the Councils Housing Department. Resident Associations are completely independent and volunteer led. While resident groups and 'Area Housing Panels' are managed via dedicated council officers.

There is no formal link between resident engagement and community development, creating a tenant focused service vs a community focused service.

Brighton and Hove begun a large scale review of their resident engagement service in 2017, finding 70% of local people did not interact with their resident group or association with the average age of engagement above 65 years.

These service are currently being remodeled

London Borough of Southwark

Community Councils

Local Councilors, elected to represent the area, sit on the community councils, involve local people in discussion about the issues, and use the points raised to help them take decisions on key areas such as traffic management, community safety, and environmental improvements.

The Community Councils also manage funds and allocate money for local projects and activities. These funds are publicised through the community council meeting, social media and voluntary sector organisations.

Attending the meetings allows local people and councilors a time to get to know groups and organisations that work in the area, including Wardens and the police, as well as meeting new neighbours and getting involved.

Meetings are usually themed around a particular topic, such as transport, health, development, environment, employment etc. with workshops for more specific discussion and presentations from council officers, special interest groups and local initiatives with some relevance to the theme.

TRA's
Tenant and resident associations are supported by the community development team, and allow individual estates or streets to set up place specific themed groups that can share views and arrange place based events and support.

Croydon Borough Council

Croydon operates a digital resident platform alongside community engagement structures and themed groups.

Housing ID is an online portal for tenants who wish to take part in consultations and surveys on a range of housing issues. For those who have less time due to work or home commitments Neighbourhood Voice asks residents for interests in small or specific issues related to their area with quick online or freepost consultations throughout the year.

Those who wish to get more practically involved in consultation can join a range of special interest groups throughout the council, from sheltered housing to disability access.

Resident associations can also be set up by local communities with the support of the Resident and Scrutiny Team.

Milton Keynes

Resident associations are encouraged by the Community Partnership Team but sit completely independently from the council. Associations are encouraged to feedback into the council via the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and the Resident Involvement Newsletter produced monthly online.

A community engagement strategy is under consultation including changes to resident involvement

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