



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 11 February 2020

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Lisa Jerome - Tel 01438 242203

lisa.jerome@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: M Downing (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair),
D Bainbridge, S Barr, S Booth, A Brown, J Brown,
T Callaghan, D Cullen, J Hanafin and L Rossati

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES 20 NOVEMBER 2019

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019.

Pages 3 – 6

3. UPDATE ON PREVIOUS REVIEW INTO MAINTENANCE OF TREES HEDGES & SHRUB BEDS

To consider an update on the previous scrutiny review of the Environment & Economy Select Committee into the Maintenance of Trees, Hedges and Shrub beds.

Pages 7 – 16

4. REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

To receive an update on the review of local neighbourhood centres and some background information for the review.

Pages 17 – 24

5. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

6. 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 grounds 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.

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 20 November 2019

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Michael Downing, Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Jim Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Jody Hanafin and Loraine Rossati.

Also Present: Cllr R Broom (Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working)
Cllr L Briscoe (Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport)
Christine Donnelly (Director of North Thames and East Anglia Federation of Sub Postmasters)
Marie-Claire Clinton (Chair of Stevenage Old Town Business Partnership)
Chris Newbitt (Manager of the Co-op Symonds Green)

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.15pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bainbridge and D Cullen and apologies for lateness were received from Councillors M Downing (Chair) and L Rossati.

Councillor A Mitchell CC in the Chair.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 3 SEPTEMBER 2019

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 3 September 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 REVIEW OF LOCAL POST OFFICE SERVICES IN STEVENAGE

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and a round of introductions was made.

The Chair then invited Christine Donnelly to address the Committee.

Ms Donnelly made a presentation during which she outlined the issues facing sub postmasters, which included competition from alternative service providers, declining letters volume and a revised payments schedule which has resulted in reduced earnings potential for sub postmasters. On a more positive note the Committee was advised that an increase in parcel traffic, mostly returns to internet retailers, had provided additional business albeit at the cost of providing extra secure storage space for those items.

The Committee was advised that for most locations there was a need for the sub postmaster to have an alternative revenue stream (for example retail) within the premises to make a sub post office economically viable. It was acknowledged that a customer using a post office could return at a later point to make a purchase that might have been made elsewhere, thus further bolstering the sub postmaster's revenue.

The Committee was further advised of a number of activities that local authorities could undertake to support the post office network in their area. Such activities could include allowing tenants to pay council bills over a post office counter or providing free short term parking outside post office premises.

Members then asked a number of questions which included the strategic oversight of the post office network, the vulnerability of post offices within retail chains, the Crown Office closure problem and potential emergency measures to provide post office services to the Old Town.

With respect to the strategic oversight of the post office network the Committee was advised that Post Office Ltd had a target of providing services for the majority of the population within a three mile area, with exceptions made for remote rural areas. It was noted that headcount was not a factor in determining the number or locations of post offices, except in the aforementioned rural areas. When an application to open a new post office was received an impact assessment on other post offices in the area would be made and the application judged accordingly to support the viability of the existing network.

For those post offices located within retail premises provision of services was at risk from decisions made by the owner of the premises such as the closure of the Waitrose branch in the Old Town. The Post Office would have no say in such decisions. Post office services were also at risk from the retirement of either the sub postmaster or the business owner when no successor could be found.

In reply to the question concerning the Crown Office closure program the Committee was advised that Crown Offices had been closed and moved into retail outlets such as W H Smith in most towns of a comparable, and larger, size to Stevenage.

Contingency arrangements for the provision of post office services for the Old Town were then discussed and the Committee was advised that in certain circumstances Post Office Ltd could provide alternative arrangements where local conditions and Post Office Ltd funding and decision making permitted. Often this could be in the form of a porta cabin or temporary visit services. Members requested that Officers pursue this as an option and the Strategic Director undertook to write to Post Office

Ltd to request that they consider provision of emergency post office facilities in the Old Town.

The Chair thanked Christine Donnelly for her input to the meeting and then invited Chris Newbitt, manager of the Co-op at Symonds Green to address the Committee.

Mr Newbitt informed the Committee that following the closure of the discrete and secure post office facility in the store the decision to provide a range of post office functions had been taken at the Co-op's head office as part of its commitment to provide community services.

The Committee was then advised of the issues of providing both post office services and retail sales at the same till and the difficulties of balancing staff and customer expectations against business need.

Mr Newbitt identified a number of issues that had arisen including the length and complexity of some transactions, storage space for parcels and the lack of privacy for customers wishing to deal with confidential matters. The lack of a secure area also precluded the store dealing with larger banking transactions.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that staff had undergone training and adhered to compliance requirements set by Post Office Ltd.

In reply to a further question the Committee was advised that the store was expected to reopen on Tuesday 26 November 2019.

The Chair thanked Chris Newbitt for his input to the meeting and then invited Marie-Claire Clinton, Chair of Stevenage Old Town Business Partnership, to address the Committee.

Ms Clinton advised the Committee that the effect of the closure of the Old Town post office had yet to be fully felt by local businesses although the lack of banking facilities in the Old Town High Street had caused some issues for local traders, especially around cash handling.

A reduction of footfall in the High Street had also been noted.

A request for a further update regarding the application for a replacement post office in the Old Town was then made of the Strategic Director to be requested from Post Office Ltd.

The Committee was advised that Post Office Ltd was actively considering an application to run a post office in the Old Town but that further details had not been forthcoming due to reasons of commercial sensitivity. Additionally a timescale for the reopening was unknown at this stage.

A Member suggested that the Council could lobby the Co-op's head office to reinstate full post office facilities in the Symonds Green branch.

The Chair thanked Marie-Claire Clinton and then invited comment from the Portfolio Holders present at the meeting.

It was noted that the views expressed by Members, the local community and Post Office Ltd reflected a clear need for post office services in the Old Town.

It was acknowledged that Post Office Ltd did intend to provide services in the Old Town and it was hoped that the reopening of a post office could be expedited, or reasons given should there be any delay to the process.

With regard to the closure of the Waitrose branch, regrets were expressed that neither the Council nor Post Office Ltd had received forewarning of the impending closure. However Officers confirmed that usually when new or changed facilities are proposed Post Office Ltd, as had been the case in Bedwell with the recent addition of new services, the Council and Members are made aware of this.

The Chair again thanked those in attendance, including members of the public, for their input and requested that the issue be revisited with a brief update at a future meeting of the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Officers be requested to approach Post Office Ltd to seek provision of an emergency post office in the Old Town and to provide such assistance as necessary to facilitate the arrangement.
2. That the subject of post office provision be reviewed a meeting in the New Year.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR

Executive Member Response to
Maintenance of Trees, Hedges & Shrub Beds Scrutiny Review

Date Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Select Committee:

Environment & Economy Select Committee, Tuesday 24 February 2015,
amended and circulated final recommendations and report on Friday 27 February 2015

**Date responses should be made by
(Executive responses should legally be received within two months of publishing):**

An Executive response on behalf of the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration should be
received by Monday 27 April 2015

**All actions have been allocated to Lee Myers who will delegate internal responsibility regarding responses
on behalf of the Executive Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration.**

Recommendations:

Executive Response:

**Update 2016
(If item complete mark as
signed off – exception
reporting for items still
not complete)**

Update 2020



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| <p>1. That Officers from Environmental Services and Housing be requested to reconsider the current service level agreements between the two services (that were drawn up for the former ALMO, Stevenage Homes), whilst still complying with the rules governing separate funding arrangements for the Housing Revenue Account, in order that a one Council, uniform service approach to the maintenance of trees, hedges and shrub beds on Council land in the town be achieved. Members requested that officers ensure that in delivering a 'one Council' approach there be no drop in service of frequency or standard of maintenance currently provided within the HRA and General Fund, as it is hoped that some efficiencies would be achieved by adopting this approach.</p> | <p>After a series of meetings with the Housing Tenancy team, we have now managed to extend the council's tree routine maintenance to communal areas. In April, we started this project and we are working together with Tenancy on implementing an uniform approach to trees across the borough and Housing. It is expected that, due to the fact that housing trees have not been routinely maintained for a long time by Environmental Services, it could take us possibly upwards of two to three years, initially, to bring all the trees to the desired standards. However, afterwards it would be a case of maintaining the achieved standards across the whole tree stock. With regard to the shrub beds, we are currently investigating the one Council approach to all; as part of the overall project on the shrub beds going forward, whilst trying to ensure that there would not be a drop in both the frequency and standards.</p> | <p>We are now 18 months into the programme of maintenance of HRA tree works to the same policy as the street trees, applying a One council response. So far, the arrangement seems to be working well and we are seeing a similar level of maintenance for both categories of trees in the areas already covered: St Nicholas and Broadwater.</p> <p>We have also been audited for our management of trees by SIAS, with a full assurance being given no further actions required.</p> | <p>We have now completed almost two cycles of routine maintenance throughout the whole town since adding HRA trees to our schedule. We are therefore confident that the tree stock in courts and communal gardens are maintained at the same level as the general fund ones.</p> <p>We are also now in the position where if any claims of damage to property are filed against the council, records of maintenance for almost six years can be provided, which is sufficient to prove that trees are being regularly maintained and negate future insurance claims.</p> <p>The council has also continued to maintain hedges and grass on HRA land to the same standard as the general fund one.</p> |
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| <p>2. That Officers be requested to undertake a full survey of the shrub beds on Council land to provide a cost benefit analysis to see which sites would be suitable and cost effective to be grassed over.</p> | <p>New homes bonus budget has been allocated for works to be carried out on approx a 30% of shrub beds for their removal to grass or for replenishment and replacement works. A survey of all shrubs has been completed to determine their current condition. In addition, a note has been sent out to ask Members for their input on particular priority shrub beds to help us identify any that could either be removed and reverted to grass or repopulated with new shrubs. Following this, we plan to consult over the Summer months with residents in the vicinity of the identified shrub beds. With the intention that works to the beds will begin during October 2015 be completed by March 2016.</p> | <p>A full survey undertaken during 2015 with assistance from Members insight into known trouble sites. Works were completed during the winter of 2015/16 to numerous shrub beds, hedges and other landscaped areas across the town.</p> <p>Moving on from this, we are now programming this year's winter works in accordance with the Council's FTFC targeted neighbourhood working. We have re-surveyed Pin Green and Shephall wards, with works due to commence in these locations in November 2016.</p> | <p>During the winter of 16/17 work was completed in Pin Green and Shephall area. 96 shrub beds were removed, 48 in each area. These areas were mainly returned to grass. Traffic calming island beds on Shephall Way were tarmacked.</p> <p>17/18 and 18/19 no improvement works were undertaken</p> <p>19/20 Shrub beds have been surveyed in Bedwell and Longmeadow. No additional funding was approved by CNM. 35 shrub beds in the Bedwell area have been identified as priorities to be removed and returned to grass. In addition to this additional improvement works such as edging pathways, bollards and knee rail will be undertaken. Locations have been identified to improve neighbourhoods, to have immediate visible impact, and to aid service delivery.</p> |
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| <p>3. That Officers be requested to consider ways that the service could further promote gardening services to those residents that who are unable to maintain their own gardens, be this through directing residents who require help with maintaining their gardens to a list of trustworthy and affordable local gardeners, to promoting Groundwork Hertfordshire's 'Green Aiders' scheme or North Herts CVS 'Time Bank' volunteer garden service.</p> | <p>Officers will work with the Council's Comms Team this year and investigate ways in which to be able to sign post gardening services as suggested to those residents that who are unable to maintain their own garden.</p> | <p>This area of work still requires actioning and officers will progress this as soon as practicable.</p> | <p>This area of work still requires actioning and officers will progress this as soon as practicable.</p> |
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| <p>4. That regarding volunteering: (i) Officers be requested to negotiate with the Council's insurers, ensuring that sufficient safeguards are in place, so that suitable volunteers can be trained to lead future volunteer activity, which would extend the opportunities currently available to volunteers; (ii) That the Campaigns Officer be requested to work on linking up with a local secondary school to become an Eco School so that in time the Officer could promote the opportunity of become involved in volunteering for those interested in working in Environment based jobs which they could use in their CVs; and (iii) That Officers be requested to take every opportunity to publicise the great work that the Green Space Volunteers are doing.</p> | <p>(i) In November 2014, a detailed proposal was sent to the council's liability insurers to request cover for Lead Volunteers. They responded, later that month, to advise that they had no issue with the documents provided and liability cover will be provided in the circumstances set out.</p> <p>(ii) Officers will seek to explore opportunities with secondary schools, as resources allow.</p> <p>(iii) Promotion of the Green Space Volunteers activity to date has been achieved through Chronicle, local paper, banners when out working on site, uniform worn by the volunteers, Community events, and nomination for So Stevenage Pride Awards. It is the intention that this will continue going forward.</p> | <p>This has been completed with Lead Volunteers now in place.</p> <p>We are having ongoing interactions and liaison with the Eco Schools.</p> <p>This has been completed and we will continue this going forward.</p> | <p>We continue to deliver a busy programme of Green Space Volunteering activities.</p> <p>Over the last few years the Green Space Volunteers have given hours to a value of around £25k/annum.</p> |
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| 5. That Officers be requested to access any external funding linked to biodiversity work that the Green Space Volunteers are undertaking | Officers will continue to seek and identify opportunities of external funding to support green space improvements including those involving volunteers where available. | This is ongoing and we will continue to seek and identify opportunities of external funding to support green space improvements including those involving volunteers where available. | Green Space Volunteer activity is currently funded through existing budgets – this includes overtime payments for operational staff who support weekend activity with specialist skills (chainsaws, chipper etc); purchase of PPE, tools and equipment; training for our Lead Volunteers |
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| <p>6. That when designing new planting schemes or developments to the town's green spaces that Officers be requested to give consideration to and make adequate provision for making those spaces accessible to all people with disabilities in line with the Council's commitments to Equalities and Diversity.</p> | <p>Officers will give consideration to and make adequate provision for accessibility purposes when designing future schemes in green spaces, so that the town's open spaces are accessible to all in line with Council's commitments to Equalities and Diversity.</p> | <p>This is taken into consideration with EQIA's and good practice.</p> | <p>27 Barclay Crescent, thoughtful planting to enable access, prevent grass verge being driven onto and enhance the street's landscape</p>  <p>Gordian Way open space, four newly planted trees accessible off the tarmac footpath and also designed around an open space, not in proximity of parking bays.</p>  |
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| <p>7. That notwithstanding the complications of entering into Licences to Cultivate and Licences Occupy, Members are keen to promote these as an option for residents but the current system appeared to have a number of disincentives including entering into a legal agreements with the Council (for licences to cultivate) and the fee (for HCC licences to occupy). Members suggested that perhaps with better publicity using the Council's resident magazine, Chronicle, it might encourage more residents to take on areas adjacent to their property to smarten its appearance. Officers are also requested to consider the current issuing of licences to see if it is possible to simplify the process in any way and take away some of the perceived bureaucracies that may put off potential take up from residents.</p> | <p>Officers are looking to work with the Council's Comms, Housing and Estates Teams to publicise and promote the Licences in Chronicle.</p> <p>Furthermore, we are reviewing the processes involved, to ascertain, if it is possible to simplify or remove any barriers going forward and this review will be completed by December 2015.</p> | <p>We have not yet explored the Chronical link, although we have used the shrub bed work interactions for opportunities to promote options for licences.</p> <p>As yet following a review no solution has been found that will simplify processes.</p> | <p>The initial work was completed, and the process is currently being delivered through the environmental policy team.</p> <p>The new process has been in place for a year now and a review is being undertaken of some possible gaps / risks that have been identified.</p> |
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| <p>8. That with regard to the way Officers select the planting of trees and shrub beds as detailed in the report at paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7, it be recorded that the Committee supported Officers' approach regarding the careful selection of species, keeping up to date with research on the implications of climate change and disease to safeguard the long term viability of the Borough's tree and shrub stocks.</p> | <p>It is the intentions of Officers to continue with the approach as detailed in the report in 3.6, focusing on the diversity of the tree stock, which in time will offer better protection from disease than just a monoculture. That replacement trees are thoughtfully considered to ensure the right tree is in the right location. Over the long term assessing the impact of climate change on the tree stock.</p> <p>In regard, to shrub bed species, Officers will continue with the approach as detailed 3.7, where shrubs are determined by location and how hardy the plant is to disease, again to deter a monoculture. Species will be chosen depending on what purpose they are serving and beyond the primary reason of providing an improved visual amenity. Therefore, in some locations shrubs maybe selected to offer added security to a site or to offer a screen from ball games and for low maintenance.</p> | <p>Last November and December we managed to plant a record number of trees totalling 86 due to additional HCC funding available that was available. There were 13 different species planted to include Paul's Scarlet Hawthorn, Winter Flowering Cherry and Greenspire Lime. 11 of these trees were planted in the town centre and have been doing well so far in softening the landscape here.</p> <p>Whilst selecting trees and shrubs, we have been considering the need for diversity, the threat of climate change and the impact these would be having on people's lives before choosing any new species.</p> | <p>Species of trees planted in the recent few years include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pecan Purple Turkish Hazel Black tupelo Empress Tree Japanese Cherry Japanese Rowan Orange Lime Chestnut leaved holly Indian Bean Smoke Tree Pandora cherry Wych Elm Gold Birch Red robin Golden weeping willow Red Oak Red maple |
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| 9. That the Scrutiny Officer be requested to investigate and report back to Members on a mechanism for diarising automatic review dates to avoid the chance of recommendations and agreed actions being lost. | The Scrutiny Officer has advised that a further row has been added to the template scoping documents that incorporates an agreed deadline to include expected response date from the Executive (2 months following the review) and 1 year following the review for final review recommendations sign off. | Subject to Members wishes, following the revisit to the review, the Scrutiny Officer recommends that any outstanding issues are diarised in a year from now, to further monitor progress. | The original recommendation was completed by the Scrutiny Officer. In the 2019/20 O&S review of the Council's Scrutiny function it has been agreed that an action tracker be included in all future Scrutiny Committee agendas as a standing item to address this issue. |
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Summary background document for review of the Local Neighbourhood Centres

It is not intended that this document is a definitive glossary for the term Neighbourhood Centres as this can encompass a wide range of elements, nor is it a description of all of the activity or knowledge of the neighbourhood areas, but for the purposes of the review the following can be included as background information:

- Neighbourhood Shops including the individual shops and employment units are facilitated by SBC Estates in the Finance and Estates Directorate who operate as Landlord for the Council, collecting rent and business rates and keeping a directory of the individual businesses that operate out of them
- Community Centre Buildings, owned by the Council but run by independent Community Associations with oversight and support provided by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Assistant Directorate, Community Development officers and the Neighbourhood teams
- The Cleansing of the Neighbourhood Centre shops, staff from Stevenage Direct Services Assistant Directorate provide this cleansing service
- Maintenance and replacement of the physical infrastructure such as benches, static bins, planters are looked after by SBC Engineers in the Planning & Regulatory Assistant Directorate
- Maintenance of shrubs, grass and flowers at the Neighbourhood Centres is the responsibility of Grounds Maintenance in the Stevenage Direct Services Directorate
- Car Parking sites at the Neighbourhood Centre Shops are the responsibility of SBC Engineers in the Planning & Regulatory Assistant Directorate

Number of Local Neighbourhood Centres in Stevenage provided by SBC Estates & Stevenage Direct Services: Estates record 16 Neighbourhood Centre shopping areas – Stevenage Direct Services cleanse 24 Neighbourhood Centres.

Number of individual shop units that SBC Estates manages: (Information provided by Estates)

| | Number of shops |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| ARCHER ROAD | 2 |
| HEPWORTH COURT | 1 |
| BEDWELL CRESCENT | 11 |
| BROADWATER CRESCENT | 23 |
| BURWELL ROAD | 4 |
| CANTERBURY WAY | 3 |
| GLEBE | 24 |
| HYDE | 32 |
| HYDEAN WAY | 6 |

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| LONSDALE ROAD | 2 |
| MOBBSBURY WAY | 6 |
| OAKS CROSS | 12 |
| OVAL | 30 |
| POPPLE WAY | 6 |
| ROCKINGHAM WAY | 6 |
| WILLOWS LINK | 8 |
| | 176 |

A description of the physical assets and their maintenance and replacement in each Neighbourhood Centre: (Information provided by Engineers was for car parks only)

| Area | Site | Description of car park | Ownership |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| PIN GREEN | Oval * | All car parks | SBC Owned |
| | Archer Road | Main car park | SBC Owned |
| | Lonsdale Road | Side of PH | SBC Owned. |
| | | Main car park | Highway |
| ST NICHOLAS | Canterbury Way Front | | Adopted highway |
| | | Rear 1 Car park | SBC owned |
| | | Rear 2 Car park | Adopted Highway |
| CHELLS | Glebe | All car parks | Adopted Highway |
| | Austen Paths | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| | Mobbsbury Way | Main Front | Adopted Highway |
| BROADWATER | Oaks Cross | | Adopted Highway |
| | Roebuck | Side car park | Adopted Highway |
| | Marymead | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| | Kenilworth Close | Main car park | SBC owned |
| SHEPHALL | The Hyde | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| | Oxleys Rd | Main car park | Private |
| | Peartree | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| | Burwell Rd | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| BEDWELL | Bedwell Crescent | Main car park | Adopted Highway |
| SYMONDS GREEN | Filey Close | Front car park | SBC owned |
| | | Rear car park | SBC owned |
| POPLARS | Sainsburys | Main car park | Private |
| | | Side car park | SBC owned |
| CHELLS MANOR | Emperors Head | Rear car park | Private |

*SBC Engineers have spent approximately £2,500 at the Oval car park.

A description of the cleansing and shrub maintenance regime: (Information provided by Stevenage Direct Services)

Stevenage Direct Services complete a daily litter pick and bin empty service to all the neighbourhood centres (listed below) in town, which also includes the

removal of fly tipped items. In addition they are mechanically swept at least once a week. Beyond the scheduled programme we provide a reactive services responding to issues that may arise on a daily basis.

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| Rockingham Way |
| Bedwell |
| Peartree |
| Roebuck |
| Marymead |
| Sainsbury's |
| Hertford Road |
| Oaks Cross |
| The Hyde |
| Burwell Road |
| The Squirrel |
| The Glebe |
| Mobbsbury Way |
| Emperors Head |
| The Oval |
| St Nicholas |
| Lonsdale Road |
| Archer Road |
| Newton Road |
| Popple Way |
| Whitesmead Road |
| Albert Street |
| Fishers Green Road |
| Filey Close |

Shrubs are pruned twice a year. Once between June and September – this is a summer sightline prune, cutting back growth obstructing paths, roads and vision splays. During the winter, between November and March a full prune is completed.

A brief description of the support that Communities & Neighbourhoods provide to the Community Centres and neighbourhood areas: (Information provided by Co-operative Neighbourhood Management)

The Community Development Team are already working in alignment with the Co-operative Neighbourhoods programme designed to place officers in localities

enabling them to work more closely with their communities. This supports the recent Community Centres Review which outlined a new model for the relationship between the Council and Community Associations. This aims to further enhance the co-operative working relationships and augment the social value provided to communities. These combined elements allow officers to support community centres in a tailored and individual basis.

This development also applies to the Neighbourhood Centres in which many community centres are located. The increased officer presence in these areas should result in a more positive relationship with local residents and more agency to solve local issues.

Survey of older People re Neighbourhood Centres:

Scrutiny of the Local Neighbourhood Centres – What do you think about the quality and choice of the shops near to you? What do you think about the public areas that are looked after by the Council? Are the facilities fit for purpose?; in a good state of repair?; does the Community Associations/Centres offer relevant facilities and activities for local needs?

From the 76 survey responses 46 felt that their local neighbourhood centre shops were of a good or reasonable quality, while 20 thought that the shops were poor.

Regarding the areas maintained by the Council 8 said that the Council was doing a good job at maintaining the facilities whilst 6 thought the service was poor and more should be done to keep the areas clean and up to date.

Regarding the Community Centres and the activities on offer in them, 27 felt that the centres offered good facilities and activities whilst just 1 said they were poor.

Updated Feb 2020

Template Scoping Document

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| Community Select Committee | |
| Scrutiny Review Title: | Review of the local Neighbourhood Centres |
| Background issues to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue: | Members raised the issue of reviewing the facilities and condition of the Local Neighbourhood Centres when the committee agreed items for the work programme in March 2019. |
| Is this issue covered by the Future Town Future Council Programme? | (i) <u>Co-operative Neighbourhood Management</u> - “Work with our communities to improve our neighbourhoods” – “Better understand our communities’ needs and priorities” to “Work with our residents to design and deliver services” and to Invest in and improve our neighbourhoods. |
| Is this issue one that raises interest with the public via complaints or Members’ surgeries or with Officers?: | The appearance and offer of the Neighbourhood Centres shops and facilities have generated some comment and complaints over the years. |
| Focus of the review: (State what the review focus will be) | <p><u>That the review would establish whether the current offer of shops, facilities and community centres meet the needs of local residents and where each centre sits in the Asset Management Strategy and the Locality Reviews</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establish if the facilities meet the needs of local residents?</i> • <i>Identify any deficiencies that can be addressed by the Asset Management Strategy and Locality reviews</i> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a view from Scrutiny Members on the current provision of facilities at the Neighbourhood Centres – are they fit for purpose; in a good state of repair; is the offer of shops and facilities what local residents require; do the Community Associations/Centres offer relevant facilities and activities for local needs? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To scrutinise the plans to modernise and improve the offer at the Neighbourhood Centres. |
| Timing issues: Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out? | Officers will advise at the meeting if there are any timing issues to consider. The review will have to fit in with the timing of the other Select Committee review work programme items. |
| The Committee will meet on (provide dates if known): | Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue September 2019 – Discuss daft scoping document with AD Stevenage Direct Services & Communities & Neighbourhoods who will lead the review on the officer side supported by the Scrutiny Officer. Dates agreed for site visits to Neighbourhood Centres in February 2020 – (further visits may need to be arranged) Presentation from Officers on the neighbourhood centres in Stevenage – (given the wide ranging nature of the review an officer presentation is not easily allocated to a lead directorate) Interview Witnesses and gather evidence - June/July 2020 Date to be agreed for recommendations & final report – likely to be in late Autumn 2020. |
| SBC Leads (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD's Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses): | <i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Portfolio Holder(s) for Neighbourhoods and Co-operative Working, Cllr Rob Broom and Environment and Regeneration, Cllr John Gardner Assistant Director Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory (Co-operative Neighbourhood Management, Jane Konopka) Interim Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services, David Brown (Operations Manager, Lloyd Walker) Assistant Director Planning & Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawad (Engineering Services Manager, Rob Woodisse) Assistant Director Finance and Estates (Investment Project Manager, Andy Sowden & Senior Estates Surveyor, Paul Sirrell) |
| Any other witnesses (external persons/critical friend)?: | To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ? |

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| <p><u>Allocation of lead Members</u> on specific individual issues/questions:</p> <p>Any other Questions Members wish to cover:</p> | <p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting.</p> <p>Members will ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews):</p> <p><i>Depending on what major strands are identified in the scope these can be allocated to lead Members.</i></p> |
| <p><u>Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community</u></p> | <p>Site visits to the Neighbourhood Centres would be helpful to the review. This can be carried out during the summer 2019.</p> <p>Some suggested areas for a site visit are as follows: ?</p> |
| <p><u>Equalities and Diversity issues:</u> The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised</p> | <p>To be identified by the lead Member – Cllr ?</p> <p><u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? –</p> |
| <p><u>Constraints</u> (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):</p> | <p><i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting ? 2019 (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)</i></p> |
| <p><u>Background Documents/data</u> that can be provided to the review</p> | <p><i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting ? 2019:</i></p> <p>Evidence requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| <p><u>Agreed Milestones and review sign off</u> -To be agreed by Members and officers</p> | <p><i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): DD MM YY</i></p> <p><i>Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)</i></p> |

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