



## ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 22 September 2020

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Virtual (via Zoom)

Contact: Fungai Nyamukapa 01438 242707

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

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

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### AGENDA

#### PART 1

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

2. **MINUTES - 10 MARCH 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 10 March 2020.

Pages 3 – 6

3. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

To note the Terms of Reference for the Select Committee, as agreed at Annual Council on 20 May 2020.

Pages 7 – 8

4. **WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21**

To receive an updated version of the Economy and Environment Select Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21

Pages 9 – 14

5. **NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES REVIEW**

To receive update on actions from the Neighbourhood Centres Review

Pages 15 – 20

**6. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

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

**7. 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.

**8. 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: Tuesday, 10 March 2020

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

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

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

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

#### 2      **MINUTES - 11 FEBRUARY 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 11 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3      **ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21**

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report detailing potential items for the Committee's Work Programme for the new Municipal Year.

The Chair advised that although the previous year's work programme had been affected by a number of unforeseen interruptions including the European and Parliamentary elections, the work that had been undertaken included a review of local Post Office services in Stevenage, the Stevenage Rail Station, and a number of reports back on previous scrutiny reviews.

The review of the Neighbourhood Centres had started and would continue into the new Municipal Year.

Members agreed that the environmental and economic impact of the Coronavirus and the Council's response to the situation should be considered by the Committee at a future meeting.

It was also agreed that a main topic for the Committee's work plan should be the Council's response to the Climate Change emergency with Portfolio Holders being invited to report on the work being done within their own portfolio areas. Other topics as set out below in recommendation (1) could also be looked at as individual

issues but with Climate Change as a common thread.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED**:

(1) that the items listed below be included in the 2020/2021 work programme:

- Continuation of the review of Neighbourhood Centres;
- The economic and environmental impact of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) on the Town;
- Climate Change Strategy including individual issues such as recycling, grasslands, trees, transport and parks.

(2) That the policy development work identified for the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meetings be noted.

#### 4 **REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES - UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer gave an update regarding the Review of the Neighbourhood Centres following the site visits to Oaks Cross, The Oval, Symonds Green, Bedwell and St Nicholas. Photographs taken during the visits were circulated and shown at the meeting.

Members agreed that the outcomes of the Community Centre Review which was currently being undertaken by the Council would have an impact on the findings of this review.

The general consensus of Members following the unattractiveness of the centres with a lot of monotone concrete and not many green spaces to break it up. Extensive regeneration was a way off for any of the centres so any issues should be flagged up now for improvements.

The following site specific issues were raised:

##### **Oaks Cross**

- Trees had been removed from the planters and not replaced;
- Some Members had used locality budgets for neighbourhood improvements;
- Fly tipping at the rear of the commercial premises was an issue;
- Unsightly barbed wire around a storage area;
- Possible evidence of drug use in the residential area;
- The area could be enhanced by changing colours of the concrete around the centre which was all one colour and very drab;
- Half-finished painting on the wall.

##### **Symonds Green**

- The area to the rear of the shops was unsightly particularly where the scaffolding was in place;
- Members were pleased to hear of the successful programme at the recently

expanded Community Centre.

### **St Nicholas**

- Unightly security fence probably from the 1990's;
- 2 concrete planters previously situated in the Town Centre had been purchased through a Member's LCB allocation which would be installed shortly. Clarification was sought regarding whether or not a fee should be payable for these previously used planters which were currently stored at Cavendish Road Depot to be redeployed in Neighbourhood Centres;
- A new notice board would be put up in the centre;
- The telephone box had now been removed;
- There was a dispute regarding the ownership and responsibility for the damaged wall and flagstones to the rear of the community centre which was currently being looked into;
- Officers agreed to check to see if the area was included on the replacement programme for rails and shrub beds;

### **The Oval**

- The damaged steps were dangerous and could easily result in accidents and potential claims. There was still a dispute regarding ownership and responsibility for the repairs between SBC and HCC. Strategic Director (TP) agreed to take the matter up with the appropriate officers. Councillor Callaghan also advised she would speak to the HCC Portfolio Holder responsible for highways;
- New signage and a new mural would shortly be in place;
- The flower beds would be full of wild flowers in the summer. Cllr Callaghan as Chair of the Community Garden advised that a national charity offering crocus bulbs had been approached and that these would be planted late in the year for flowers to come up early next year.

### **Bedwell**

- All but one of the shops were let;
- Paint was peeling on some of the railings and a deep clean was required;
- Graffiti on walls including the mural which needed updating;
- One of the cash machines charged a fee for use.

Members were keen that any lessons learnt from this review should be fed into new developments such as the Town Centre and Bragbury End.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) That the individual actions noted above and those included in the Scrutiny Officer's report be picked up by officers;
- (ii) That a further report be brought back to this Committee in the new Municipal Year;
- (iii) That the Assistant Director (Housing Development) be invited to a future

meeting to report on future regeneration plans and timescales for the Neighbourhood Centres.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

**CHAIR**

## ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

1. Membership - 11 (not Members of the Executive)
2. Quorum - 4
3. Terms of Reference
  - 3.1 To determine a Scrutiny work programme to examine the spending, policies and administration of the Council's services within the purview of the Assistant Director (Regeneration), Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services), Assistant Director (Housing Development) and Assistant Director (Planning & Regulatory) and relationships with partners and external agencies involved with these services, together with a timetable and method of study for each topic.
  - 3.2 To determine formal recommendations in relation to scrutiny studies undertaken for reporting to the Council, Executive, other Committees, Officers and / or partner agencies as appropriate.
  - 3.3 To review the Forward Plan of Key Decisions in relation to services within the purview of the Strategic Director (Environment), considering if it wishes to make any input to policy issues contained in the Plan and if so, how. In undertaking this work the Committee may call upon the relevant Executive Member and/or the Strategic Director to provide a briefing or take part in discussion.
  - 3.4 To consider any policy issues within the remit of the Select Committee referred by the Executive and raising any other issues it considers appropriate.
  - 3.5 To work with the Community Select Committee or the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate when considering cross-cutting scrutiny studies and policy development when both Committees have so agreed.
  - 3.6 To consider matters referred to the Committee under the procedure for the Councillor Call for Action in relation to matters within the purview of the Strategic Director (Environment).
  - 3.7 In accordance with the Petitions Scheme, consider Petitions, Petition Reviews and interview Senior Council Officers (as requested by a Petition) in relation to matters within the purview of the Strategic Director (Environment).

- 3.8 In conjunction with the Community Select Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, responsibility for the ongoing development of the Policy Development and Scrutiny function of the Council.
- 3.9 To report to the Executive, other committees or Council, as appropriate.



<b>Lead AD</b>	<b>AD (Stevenage Direct Services) Steve Dupoy</b>
<b>Deputy</b>	<b>AD (Planning &amp; Regulation) Zayd Al-Jawad</b>
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Cllr Michael Downing</b>

**Environment & Economy Select Committee Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-21**  
(Including main review items, one-off meetings, review revisits and policy development items)

**Note – Due to the reduced capacity resulting from the impact of the Covid-19 there is a slimmed down work programme but individual Items can be raised at the O&S Committee and directed to the Select Committee to consider as one-off items at future meetings**

<b>Scrutiny Review items 2020/21:</b> Priority of potential scrutiny review items High/Medium/Low and suitability in 2020/21)	<b>Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) &amp; Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Provisional meeting date(s) identified</b>	<b>Other details: i.e. (i) Number of meetings item can be covered in? (ii) Whether scoping required? (iii) Expectation/ style of meeting &amp; (iv) other details</b>	<b>Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy</b>	<b>Chair/ Vice-Chair Preference &amp; Priority</b>
(High Priority) <u>Local Neighbourhood Centres</u> – Continuation of the review started in Feb 2020.	SD Tom Pike, ADs Finance & Estates, Housing Development, Communities & Neighbourhoods & Stevenage Direct Services.	Review started in February 2020 with site visits and then followed up with an action meeting in March 2020.  Meeting in Sep 2020 & will need to bring back to a future	(i) Would require a number of meetings, to be determined (ii) full scope completed (iii) Site visits and interviews with officers/Exec Member.	This should be completed in 2020/21.	The Chair has agreed that this would be the first item as the Committee resumes its meetings following the CV19 Pandemic.

<b>Scrutiny Review items 2020/21:</b> (Priority of potential scrutiny review items High/Medium/Low and suitability in 2020/21)	<b>Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) &amp; Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Provisional meeting date(s) identified</b>	<b>Other details: i.e.</b> <b>(i) Number of meetings item can be covered in?</b> <b>(ii) Whether scoping required?</b> <b>(iii) Expectation/ style of meeting &amp;</b> <b>(iv) other details</b>	<b>Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy</b>	<b>Chair/ Vice-Chair Preference &amp; Priority</b>
Page 10		meeting for final sign off of actions plus the session with the Assistant Director for Housing Development, Ash Ahmed to discuss the Regeneration plans for the Neighbourhood Centres (Jan 2021)			
Scrutinise the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy Action Plan – rather than scoping a separate review the focus would be on scrutinising the Action Plan (coincide with the consultation results)	SD Tom Pike, AD Planning & Regulation Zayd Al-Jawed. Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment & Regeneration, Cllr John Gardner	November 2020 start of the review of the Action Plan consultation responses.  Hold a further meeting in March 2021.	(i) Likely to be two meetings this municipal year and could lead to a separate piece of work in the following Municipal year; (ii) agreed that a full scope not required for reviewing the Action Plan consultation responses; (iii) this work could capture and note and potential future work streams but should concentrate on scrutinising the Action Plan.	A summary of the work undertaken to reach the Climate Emergency Action Plan could be provided by way of a presentation to Members when the Committee meets.	

<b>Scrutiny Review items 2020/21:</b> (Priority of potential scrutiny review items High/Medium/Low and suitability in 2020/21)	<b>Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) &amp; Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Provisional meeting date(s) identified</b>	<b>Other details: i.e.</b> <b>(i) Number of meetings item can be covered in?</b> <b>(ii) Whether scoping required?</b> <b>(iii) Expectation/ style of meeting &amp;</b> <b>(iv) other details</b>	<b>Comment by lead Assistant Director/Deputy</b>	<b>Chair/ Vice-Chair Preference &amp; Priority</b>
Scrutinise the impact of Covid-19 on Economic Development in Stevenage and the Council's response	SD Tom Pike, AD Planning & Regulation Zayd Al-Jawad. Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe	January 2021	(i) Would require a number of meetings; (ii) a full scope would be required; (iii) gathering evidence/data, interview witnesses.		
(Low Priority) Update on the 2016 Business Technology Centre Review	Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) Zayd Al-Jawad, Portfolio Holder for Economy , Enterprise & Transport, Lloyd Briscoe	Item to remain on the Work Programme and Possible be scheduled in 2020/21 – considering delivery of the WENTA contract (July 2019)	This could be a one-off update.	The Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) can update Members on the agreed contract renewal and expected outputs from the new contracts.	

Policy Development Items:	Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) & Portfolio Holder	Provisional meeting date(s) identified	Number of meetings item can be covered in?	Expectation/Style of meeting	Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope)	Other details	Comment by lead Assistant Director/ Deputy
Amenity Tree Management Policy & Cemetery Policy – 15 September	Tom Pike SD/ Steve Dupoy AD, Lloyd Walker, Cristian Pinta, Julia Hill, Environmental Policy & Development Manager, Exec Portfolio for Environment & Regeneration, Cllr John Gardner	15 September 2020	one meeting	Opportunity for Executive Portfolio Holder to meet with officers and Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome.	N/A	These meetings are informal private meetings not open to the public. They are arranged by Constitutional Services but not clerked.	

<b>Policy Development Items:</b>	<b>Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Lead Officer(s) &amp; Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Provisional meeting date(s) identified</b>	<b>Number of meetings item can be covered in?</b>	<b>Expectation/Style of meeting</b>	<b>Scoping details (whether full scope or simple scope)</b>	<b>Other details</b>	<b>Comment by lead Assistant Director/ Deputy</b>
Housing Waste Strategy – 29 September	Tom Pike SD/ Steve Dupoy AD, Lloyd Walker, Julia Hill, Environmental Policy & Development Manager Exec Portfolio for Environ & Regen, Cllr John Gardner	29 September 2020	one-meeting	Opportunity for Executive Portfolio Holder to meet with officers and Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome.		These meetings are informal private meetings not open to the public. They are arranged by Constitutional Services but not clerked.	
Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Tom Pike SD/ Zayd Al-Jawed AD	Member comments via email – closing date for comments Thursday 17 September	This is being conducted via email not a virtual or physical meeting.	Opportunity for AD to get the views of Scrutiny Members to discuss content and shape of a Policy document before it is finalised in order to shape the final outcome.			

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**Environment & Economy Select Committee - Review of Neighbourhood Centres**  
**22 September 2020**

Questions regarding issues identified at February site visits and at the meeting in March 2020	Update comments September 2020	Suggested follow up from September meeting (to be agreed at the meeting) list as either complete, ongoing or still waiting for action.
<b>Oaks Cross</b>		
<p><b>Fly-tipping</b> Can you comment on the fly-tipping at the back of the shops at Oaks Cross and in the garage compound? When Members did their site visit there was an old mattress and shopping trolley tipped in the garage compound. Do these areas get regularly scouted or do you rely on it being flagged by residents etc.?</p>	<p><i>Stevenage Direct Services - The areas are regularly inspected as part of the cleansing beat team's duties. Items of fly tip are reported by the team. Information from residents is valued and an important means of highlighting issues to us.</i></p>	<p>Complete/ongoing</p>
<p><b>Replace missing trees</b> Can you comment on any plans to replace the missing trees in the designated planters in the pedestrian areas at Oak Cross (some at the front of the shops in the pedestrian area by the car park and some at the rear and not due to last winter storms), is this being actioned in the autumn planting season?</p>	<p><i>Cristian Pinta (SBC Arboriculture &amp; Conservation Manager)</i>  <i>Following on from the councillors site visit I have been in touch and plans were made, funded by LCB to plant a new Oak tree in the empty pit to the front of the shops.</i></p> <p><i>The plan was to plant the tree by early spring this year (at the end of the planting season). Unfortunately, with the lockdown settling in in March, the nursery were no longer available to deliver the said tree.</i></p> <p><i>I have been in touch with the nursery since and</i></p>	<p>Action ongoing.</p>

	<i>the tree will be delivered and planted in November this year, at the beginning of the planting season.</i>	
<p><b><u>Possible evidence of drug use</u></b> When Members carried out their site visit there was a strong smell of cannabis coming from the rear of the flats above the shops and some drug paraphernalia and litter detritus in the communal stairs and walkways.</p>	<i>CDO response. This needs to be raised with the Neighbourhood Wardens and the Police to monitor the situation.</i>	Still awaiting action
<p><b><u>Exterior paint on the flats/shops</u></b> The area could be enhanced by changing colours of the concrete around the centre which was all one colour and very drab. An area by the steps had been half painted but not completed.</p> <p>Do you know who would be responsible for painting the exterior of the Oaks Cross shops and residential area above the shops, is this down to the tenants, or SBC as landowner?</p> <p>(Note - Major appearance changes would only be addressed when each neighbourhood centre is regenerated.)</p>	<i>Estates – If the area in question is the shops then it is the leaseholders responsibility, if it's the flats above the shops then it will be the responsibility of SBC Housing.</i>	Still awaiting action
<b>St Nicholas</b>		
<p><b><u>Security Fence</u></b> Updating of unsightly security fence</p>	<i>No update</i>	Still awaiting action



<p>probably from the 1990's</p>		
<p><b><u>Telephone box</u></b> The redundant and vandalised telephone box had now been removed</p>		<p>Complete</p>
<p><b><u>Two relocated concrete planters &amp; a noticeboard</u></b> Two concrete planters previously situated in the Town Centre had been purchased through a Member's LCB allocation which would be installed shortly.</p> <p>Clarification was sought regarding whether or not a fee should be payable for these previously used planters which were currently stored at Cavendish Road Depot to be redeployed in Neighbourhood Centres.</p> <p>Previously officers from Stevenage Direct Services had commented that they were waiting for detail from Community Development regarding the Notice Board before the planters are installed at St Nicholas. The Notice board is now installed. Can you now confirm that the planters have been installed? And is it now clear who will be maintaining the planters?</p>	<p><i>Stevenage Direct Services - There was never a charge for the planters. The LCB funding covered delivery / installation / soil / plants / labour only</i></p> <p><i>Stevenage Direct Services - Notice board and planters have been installed. Resident group to maintain the planters.</i></p> <p><i>Community Development Officers - Planters have now been installed. Neighbourhood Warden Sue Amey is due to (or may already have) get them painted to improve the look and Cllr Barr has a list of names of local volunteers who will help maintain them once they are planted up by Waste Not Want Not charity nursery. A new freestanding noticeboard has been erected by the pillar box near the Canterbury Way car park.</i></p>	<p>Complete</p>

<p><b><u>Tidy up shrub bed and remove/replace broken knee rail</u></b></p> <p>Can the area to the rear/side of the health centre be included in the replacement shrub bed programme or is it due to be grassed over as it looks in a dilapidated state (lots of the knee rail is missing and hardly any shrubs remaining)?</p>	<p><i>Stevenage Direct Services initial response - Not aware of any requests for additional planting of shrub bed, just the planters.</i></p> <p><i>SDS updated response - Plans to complete shrub bed improvement works have been severely impacted for this winter due to Coronavirus. It is anticipated as the CNM initiative commences shrub bed surveys will form part of the programme to be completed over several years. This would also include as to whether knee-rail fencing is still required. Damaged knee-rail will be removed as part of the winter prune programme this year</i></p>	<p>Still awaiting action</p>
<p><b><u>Broken wall and flagstones</u></b></p> <p>There was a dispute regarding the ownership and responsibility for the damaged wall and flagstones to the rear of the community centre which was currently being looked into. Has this been resolved?</p>	<p><i>Community Development Officers – The Flagstones and wall have now been repaired. I believe wall was the brewery’s responsibility. Flagstones were SBC responsibility.</i></p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p><b><u>The Oval</u></b></p>		
<p><b><u>Planting area near the underpass</u></b></p> <p>Regarding the planting areas near the underpass at the Oval (Jessops Close) it was noted that the flower beds would be full of wild flowers in the summer. Local Ward Councillor Teresa Callaghan as Chair of the Community Garden advised</p>	<p><i>Stevenage Direct Services - I had a request from Neighbourhood Wardens for daff bulbs last year. I offered a bag, but they were not collected. I do not believe this happened.</i></p> <p><i>Community Development Officers - Daff bulbs came too late to plant for this year, then other</i></p>	<p>Still awaiting action.</p>

<p>that a national charity offering crocus bulbs had been approached and that these would be planted late in the year for flowers to come up early next year.</p> <p>Regarding Bulb planting at The Oval would it be possible for this to happen this autumn?</p>	<p><i>bulbs were due to be planted by Community Payback Service (CPS) but Covid came. Bulbs had to be given away.</i></p>	
<p><b><u>New signage and new mural</u></b> New signage and a new mural would shortly be in place.</p>	<p><i>Community Development Officers - There was some discussion regarding this but then Covid hit. We have not heard anything since.</i></p>	<p>Still awaiting action.</p>
<p><b><u>Dangerous damaged steps</u></b> The damaged steps at Jessops Close beyond the underpass were dangerous and could easily result in accidents and potential claims. There is no dispute regarding ownership as they appear on a HCC Highways map, so the responsibility for the repairs and maintenance sits with HCC.</p>	<p><i>The matter has been raised with HCC by SBC Engineers on numerous occasions, so far no action has been taken to repair the dangerous steps. HCC have recently acknowledged the issue and have agreed to investigate it and report back.</i></p>	<p>Still awaiting action.</p>
<p><b><u>Bedwell</u></b></p>		
<p><b><u>Deep clean and renewed paint work</u></b> Paint was peeling on some of the railings and a deep clean was required.</p>	<p><i>Stevenage Direct Services – The Bedwell Shops are visited daily by a cleansing team and weekly by the sweeper. An inspection will be completed to ascertain what is required to remove any highlighted issues, such as cigarette butts as soon as possible.</i></p>	<p>Still awaiting action.</p>

	<i>SBC Engineers visited the site and established it is HCC adopted highway and have reported it to them to investigate and action. The handrail runs for a length of 29m and there are two other handrails at either side of the car park. All three sections are very rusty and the paint is very sharp. They are in need of repainting.</i>	
<b><u>Graffiti on wall including the mural which needed updating</u></b>	<i>Community Development Officers – The Neighbourhood Wardens would investigate and arrange for the graffiti to be removed without damaging the original mural. If this is not possible CD &amp; NW officers would look into commissioning a new one if funding and artist can be secured.</i>	Still awaiting action.