

Daneshill House
Danestrete
Stevenage
Hertfordshire

13 July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council will be held in the Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage on Wednesday, 21 July 2021 at 7.15pm and you are summoned to attend to transact the following business.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Partridge
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive any communications that the Mayor may wish to put before Council.

3. MAIN DEBATE

There is no Main Debate.

4. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

None received.

5. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

None received.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A written answer to this question will be published on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Mr Jim Borchards

"I was a member of the Stevenage Citizens Panel on Climate Change that met over 4 sessions from 26th to 29th October 2020.

At the end of the process we requested that we be fully involved in future activities on Climate Change and be informed by Stevenage Borough Council on

their progress towards introducing policies to address Climate Change.

We were asked if we wanted to join a WhatsApp group.

We were informed that there would be some information forthcoming in January 2021.

To date I have heard nothing.

It is also worth noting that the current website is still advising “**we will also be establishing a citizen’s panel made up of a select group of Stevenage residents**” with no recognition that this has already taken place.

It is now over two years since this Council declared a Climate Emergency, and it is over 8 months since the Citizens Panel met.

Please can the citizens of Stevenage have an update on the priorities that the Citizens Panel voted to be taken forwards and what progress has been made towards putting them into action?”

7. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S UPDATE

In accordance with the Council’s Standing Orders, the Leader of the Opposition shall be given the opportunity to raise one matter relevant to the Borough that has arisen since the last meeting of the Council. The Leader of the Council shall then have the opportunity to advise the Council of matters relevant to the Borough that have arisen since the last meeting.

8. UPDATE FROM SCRUTINY CHAIRS

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees on the recent activities of those Committees.

9. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

(i) Town and Country Planning

To consider the following motion submitted by the Labour Group:

In the Queen’s Speech on 11th May 2021, the Conservative Government announced sweeping changes to the planning system that it is now clear to see amount to a ‘Developer’s Charter’. This plan to introduce legislation to ‘zone’ areas for development and then allow developers a free rein with no further democratic planning process, is a recipe for untrammelled and inappropriate development in every town and community. No-one here would argue that there is not a case for reform in the planning system, but these proposed reforms are taking planning absolutely in the wrong direction, away from the communities they affect.

Our Council has a very deep commitment to delivering the homes that people need, so we do not bring this motion forward as ‘nimbys’ who want no development at all. But we believe that our new town principles should continue to be upheld, we believe in homes being built alongside the infrastructure to support them and with the creation of sustainable communities at the heart of the

planning system.

Under these new proposals planning decisions will be taken away from democratically elected local councils and handed to development boards appointed by Ministers in Whitehall. It is these new quangos that will decide where the 'zones' for development are located, with little local knowledge or input from local people. Residents living in areas zoned for growth will find they no longer have an automatic right to object to individual planning applications on their own doorsteps, no right to object to inappropriate development on green space and no right to object to development that over-burdens local infrastructure like roads, doctors' surgeries, schools, health facilities or public transport.

Plans to extend the permitted development regime are also of great concern to us in Stevenage as they too, see development taking place with no local democratic and community input and this regime does not require developers to contribute to infrastructure or affordable housing. In Vista Tower where we see leaseholders facing huge and unaffordable charges to remedy fire safety issues, we see the worst of this permitted development regime.

So we bring forward the following resolution to urgently address the concerns we have relating to the Government's proposals:

"That this Council believes that planning works best when the local community, councillors and developers work together to shape local areas and deliver the new homes that are necessary and therefore calls on the government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning applications. We demand that the Secretary of State urgently re-thinks these ill-conceived planning reforms.

Council requires that our Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration write to the Secretary of State setting out our concerns about all local democratic input being stripped from the planning system.

Council also pledges to lobby the Government to reconsider the extension to the permitted development regime. Every local development should have the benefit of community input and for both objectors and supporters to be able to express their view to decision-makers in public through the democratic process."

(ii) Electric Bus Link

To consider the following motion submitted by the Labour Group:

Since 2009, this Council has had an ambition to provide a rapid electric bus link to all of the areas that comprise Central Stevenage; High Street, Town Centre, Leisure Park and Roaring Meg. It was envisaged that this should be a hop-on/hop-off service, running frequently round the loop and with a low fixed-fee fare for each journey. It could also serve a park and ride facility at Fairlands Valley Showground and may be suitable for a further extension to Gunnelwood Road to provide those working there with a fast and easy link from central Stevenage and the bus and train stations to their place of work.

Successive attempts to carry out feasibility studies on this project have failed or, in one case, only resulted in a traditional and non-sustainable form of bus service being outlined which proved not to meet the commercial barriers set by operators

and could not deliver the improvement in carbon output that a fully sustainable service would be designed to do.

“That Council asks that every effort now be made to carry out a feasibility study on this rapid electric bus link initiative complete with costings. This work should explore the possibility of delivering this service with partners, the highway authority (Hertfordshire County Council), the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Town Development Board and Hertfordshire Growth Board and explore all options for funding the project including use of grants, government initiatives, community infrastructure levy and section 106 funding and specific funds for sustainable transport initiatives.

That a report be brought before the Council’s Executive setting out the options as quickly as possible and no later than the first quarter of 2022.”

(iii) Supporting tougher action on pet thefts

To consider the following motion submitted by Councillor Alex Farquharson and seconded by Councillor Jody Hanafin.

Theft of pets has been on the rise both locally and nationally. Pets are a key part of many families here in Stevenage, and the emotional damage caused by the theft of pets is often as painful as the loss of a loved one.

While the Council's formal role in dealing with this issue is very limited, there are some gestures this authority can make to help tackle pet theft.

“That this Council notes:

- Hertfordshire Constabulary data shows a 54% increase in dog thefts in the county during 2019/20 compared to the previous year.
- Data for England and Wales shows an 11% increase in dog thefts nationally during 2020/21 compared to the previous year.
- There are currently discussions in central government and parliament about increasing penalties for pet theft, which could potentially include custodial sentences.

That this Council resolves:

- To encourage residents to ensure their pets, especially cats and dogs, are microchipped and that their microchip information is up to date. This is the best precaution to hinder the sale of stolen pets as well as identifying them once recovered by police.
- To request that the Chief Executive of the Council writes to the Home Secretary to express this Council’s support for tougher pet theft penalties.
- To request that the Chief Executive of the Council writes to Stephen McPartland MP to thank him for signing a parliamentary amendment calling for tougher action on pet theft and to request that the MP continues pursuing this issue.”

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS / PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Councillor Margaret Notley

“I am fully aware that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused major financial problems for SLL, but why was careful financial monitoring not carried out to highlight problems earlier and will there be strict monitoring with any new contract, when the present one expires in 2023?”

(B) Question from Councillor Adam Mitchell CC

“Do you believe the Council has done enough to move towards paperless working?”

(C) Question from Councillor Nicholas Leech

“How would you describe your record on delivering more electric car charging devices?”

(D) Question from Councillor Wendy Kerby

“I would like to ask the following question with regard to the article in the Comet “*Council breaks safety laws in major refurb of flat blocks*” and the Council's subsequent response:

Have the Council reviewed the results of the contractor's internal investigation into this incident? What corrective action have they taken to mitigate the situation and what further action are they taking to prevent recurrence?”

(E) Question from Councillor Graham Lawrence CC

“Is the Council’s support for thousands of new flats in Stevenage appropriate and realistic for the Post-COVID world?”

(F) Question from Councillor Alex Farquharson

“Do you believe the current relationship between the Council and staff trade unions is appropriate and in the tax payers’ best interest?”

(G) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

“What is the Council doing to maintain our town’s cherished woodlands?”

(H) Question from Councillor Graham Snell

“Given that the proposed changes to Lytton Way will not take place for several years, what changes will be made to help passengers with mobility difficulties travel between the new Bus Station and the Train Station?”

11. OFFICER REPORT - COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2021 - 2024

To consider and approve the Council's Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024.

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12. OFFICER REPORT - EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

To consider and approve the proposed Employee Code of Conduct 2021.

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13. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

To consider the Annual Scrutiny Report 2020/21.

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14. AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

To note the Minutes of the Audit Committee meetings held on 3 February 2021, 24 March 2021 and 8 June 2021.

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15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A 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.

16. REPORT ON URGENT PART II DECISION MADE BY THE EXECUTIVE ON 9 JUNE 2021 - DANESTRETE ROUNDABOUT SITE DISPOSAL

To consider a report on an Urgent Part II decision made by the Executive at its meeting held on 9 June 2021 in respect of the Danestrete Roundabout Site Disposal.

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